

INTEGRATING LOCAL CULTURE AND DIGITAL TOOLS IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ENGLISH TEACHING

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: December 2025 Revised: January 2026 Accepted: June 2026 Published: July 2026	<i>This study explores the integration of local cultural content and digital tools in culturally responsive English teaching at UNIMUDA Sorong, West Papua. The study emerged from the challenges of teaching English in multicultural and resource-diverse classrooms where students come from different linguistic, cultural, and technological backgrounds. In this context, English is often learned as a third or fourth language, while unequal access to digital resources continues to shape classroom participation. This study aimed to investigate how lecturers integrate local culture and digital tools in English learning and how students respond to these practices. This study employed a descriptive qualitative design involving 30 second-semester students and five English lecturers in the General English course at UNIMUDA Sorong. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations and analyzed using data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The findings revealed four major themes. First, the integration of Papuan cultural content increased students' motivation and confidence across speaking, reading, listening, and writing activities. Second, digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok supported student engagement and encouraged more interactive English learning experiences. Third, unequal internet access and differences in digital literacy limited some students' participation in technology-based activities. Finally, lecturers played an important role as mediators who connected local culture with digital learning practices in multicultural classrooms. The study suggests that integrating local culture and digital tools can support more inclusive and meaningful English learning in culturally diverse contexts. However, institutional support and equitable digital access remain essential for the sustainable implementation of culturally responsive and technology-enhanced pedagogy in Eastern Indonesia.</i>
Keywords Culturally responsive teaching; English learning; Local culture; Digital tools;	
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INTRODUCTION

English language classrooms in Eastern Indonesia reflect a complex multicultural reality. At UNIMUDA Sorong, West Papua, students come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, such as Java, Raja Ampat, Highland Papua, and Ambon. These students bring different traditions, local languages, and learning experiences into the classroom, shaping how they understand and use English. For many learners, English is not only a foreign language but also the third or fourth language they must learn after their mother tongue and Indonesian. This

condition creates unique challenges in English language teaching because many standard textbooks and teaching approaches are often disconnected from students' cultural and social realities.

In multicultural classrooms, culturally responsive teaching has been recognized as an important pedagogical approach that helps students connect learning materials with their own cultural identities. Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the use of students' cultural experiences, values, traditions, and perspectives as meaningful resources in the learning process (Gay, 2021; Johnson, 2022). In English language teaching, this approach may include the use of local stories, traditional ceremonies, community practices, and culturally familiar situations as part of classroom instruction. Previous studies have shown that culturally responsive teaching can improve students' motivation, confidence, participation, and sense of belonging because students feel that their identities are acknowledged and respected in the classroom (Abacioglu et al., 2019). In the context of Sorong, where cultural diversity is highly visible, culturally responsive English teaching becomes especially relevant.

At the same time, the integration of digital tools has become increasingly important in English language education. The rapid development of technology, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, has changed how teachers and students interact in the learning process. Platforms such as Google Classroom, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and interactive quiz applications are now commonly used to support English learning activities. Digital tools can provide flexible, interactive, and multimodal learning experiences that encourage students to practice English more actively through videos, online discussions, collaborative projects, and digital storytelling (Mulya & Putro, 2024). In culturally diverse classrooms, digital platforms also create opportunities for students to express their cultural identities in English through creative and authentic activities (Grigoryeva & Zakirova, 2022; Zhussupova & Shadiev, 2023).

The combination of culturally responsive teaching and digital tools offers important possibilities for English learning in Eastern Indonesia. Students may use English not only to learn grammar and vocabulary but also to communicate cultural experiences and local knowledge. For example, Papuan students may retell traditional folktales through digital storytelling videos, while students from Ambon or Raja Ampat may present local traditions and community practices through social media-based projects. Such activities allow English learning to become more contextual, meaningful, and connected to students' everyday lives.

However, despite the growing discussion of culturally responsive pedagogy and technology-enhanced learning, previous studies have often examined these two areas separately. Some studies focus on culturally responsive teaching, while others emphasize the benefits of digital learning in EFL classrooms. Limited research has explored how local cultural content and digital tools are integrated simultaneously in multicultural and resource-diverse classrooms, particularly in Eastern Indonesia. Most previous studies were conducted in urban or well-resourced educational settings, making their findings less representative for institutions such as UNIMUDA Sorong, where students experience unequal digital access, unstable internet connectivity, and varying levels of digital literacy (Basnet, 2024; Chandramoulesh, 2025).

Another important issue is that many discussions about pedagogy remain highly theoretical and rarely include the direct experiences of teachers and students (Nurteteng et al., 2024; Phillips & Condry, 2023). In practice, lecturers are often required to adapt generic English materials to suit students' cultural backgrounds and classroom realities. Students themselves may also have different perspectives regarding the use of local culture and digital tools in English learning, yet these voices are still underrepresented in the literature (Chenget al., 2022). As a result, there is still limited understanding of how culturally responsive and technology-supported English teaching is implemented in real classroom contexts in Eastern Indonesia.

Despite the increasing attention to culturally responsive pedagogy and technology-enhanced language learning, limited studies have examined how local cultural content and

digital tools are integrated simultaneously in multicultural EFL classrooms in Eastern Indonesia. Previous research in Indonesia has largely focused either on culturally responsive teaching or on digital learning practices as separate areas of inquiry (Ersyad et al., 2026; Nurhayati & Judijanto, 2025; Zuhri et al., 2025), with little attention given to how these approaches interact within resource-diverse contexts such as West Papua. In addition, the perspectives of both lecturers and students regarding the challenges of digital inequality, multicultural interaction, and culturally grounded English learning remain underexplored. Therefore, this study offers a contextual contribution by examining how lecturers at UNIMUDA Sorong integrate local culture and digital tools in English teaching while navigating the realities of multicultural classrooms and unequal digital access.

This study was conducted to explore the integration of local culture and digital tools in culturally responsive English teaching at UNIMUDA Sorong, West Papua. The study investigates how lecturers incorporate cultural elements from communities such as Papua, Raja Ampat, Java, and Ambon into English learning activities, how digital tools are used to support these practices, how students respond to culturally responsive and technology-supported instruction, and what challenges emerge during the implementation of digital learning in multicultural classrooms. This research is significant both theoretically and practically because it contributes to discussions of culturally responsive pedagogy by connecting it with digital learning practices in multicultural EFL contexts, an area that remains underexplored in Indonesia. In addition, the findings may provide insights for lecturers, curriculum developers, institutions, and policymakers in designing English learning environments that are culturally relevant, inclusive, and adaptable to resource-diverse contexts while also highlighting the importance of addressing digital inequality to support more equitable technology-enhanced learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore the integration of local culture and digital tools in culturally responsive English teaching at UNIMUDA Sorong, West Papua. This design was chosen because the study aimed to describe and interpret the experiences, perceptions, and classroom practices of students and lecturers in a natural educational setting. The focus of the study was not to measure the effectiveness of a treatment or to test a hypothesis, but to understand how culturally responsive teaching practices were implemented and how digital tools supported English learning in a multicultural classroom context. A descriptive qualitative design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to present a detailed account of how local cultural content, digital platforms, classroom interaction, and students' learning experiences were connected in English instruction. This design also provided flexibility to examine participants' responses to culturally grounded and technology-supported learning activities.

Unlike experimental research, this study did not compare groups or measure learning outcomes statistically. It was also not framed as a case study, ethnography, or phenomenology because the purpose was not to investigate a bounded case in depth, study a cultural group over an extended period, or explore the essence of lived experience. Instead, the study aimed to provide a clear descriptive understanding of classroom practices and participant perspectives related to culturally responsive English teaching supported by digital tools (Takona, 2023). The study was conducted in the General English course at UNIMUDA Sorong. This classroom context was selected because it represented a multicultural EFL learning environment where students came from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and had different levels of access to digital learning resources. Therefore, the setting was relevant for examining how local culture and digital tools were integrated in English teaching in Eastern Indonesia.

Research Subject

The participants of this study consisted of 30 second-semester students and five English lecturers at UNIMUDA Sorong, West Papua. The students were enrolled in the compulsory General English course. They came from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Papua, Highland Papua, Raja Ampat, Java, and Ambon. This diversity reflected the multicultural reality of English classrooms in Eastern Indonesia and made the participants relevant to the focus of the study. The 30 students participated in the questionnaire to provide general information about their perceptions of culturally responsive and technology-supported English learning. From these students, five were selected for semi-structured interviews to obtain deeper qualitative insights. The interviewed students were chosen through purposive sampling based on three criteria: they were actively involved in General English learning activities, they represented different cultural backgrounds, and they had direct experience with lessons that integrated local culture and digital tools.

In addition, five English lecturers were involved as teacher participants. They were selected because they had experience teaching English in multicultural classrooms and had used local cultural content or digital tools in their instructional practices. The inclusion of five lecturers was important to provide broader pedagogical perspectives. The lecturers provided information about their strategies, classroom decisions, challenges, and reflections in implementing culturally responsive and technology-supported English teaching. Purposive sampling was used in this study because the participants were selected based on their relevance to the research focus. The number of participants was not intended for statistical generalization but to obtain rich and varied information about cultural integration, digital tool use, student engagement, and implementation challenges in the classroom. In qualitative research, the depth and relevance of information are more important than the size of the sample (Guest et al., 2020).

Instruments

Data were collected using three main instruments: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. These instruments were used to obtain complementary data from different sources and to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The questionnaire was distributed to all 30 student participants. It consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions used a Likert-scale format to identify general patterns in students' responses toward the use of local culture and digital tools in English learning. The indicators included students' motivation, engagement, confidence, perception of cultural relevance, use of digital tools, and challenges related to digital access. The questionnaire results were presented using simple frequencies and percentages only as descriptive support, not as statistical evidence. The open-ended questions allowed students to explain their experiences and opinions in their own words.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five selected students and five English lecturers. The student interviews focused on their experiences in learning English through local cultural content, their responses to digital learning activities, their motivation and confidence, and the challenges they faced in using digital tools. The lecturer interviews focused on teaching strategies, selection of local cultural materials, use of platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram and presentation tools, classroom management, and challenges related to digital inequality and students' different cultural backgrounds. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions while keeping the interview aligned with the research objectives.

Classroom observations were conducted during General English learning activities. The observation checklist was developed based on the research focus and the concept of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018). The observation focused on four main aspects: lecturers' strategies in integrating local culture, the use of digital tools in classroom activities, students' participation and responses, and challenges that appeared during the learning process. Field

notes were used to document classroom interaction, students' engagement, difficulties in using technology, and moments where cultural content was highlighted in English learning. Before data collection, the instruments were reviewed by two academic colleagues who had experience in English language teaching and qualitative research. Their feedback was used to improve the clarity, relevance, and organization of the questionnaire, interview questions, and observation checklist. This validation process helped ensure that the instruments were aligned with the research questions and suitable for the context of the study.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis, which includes data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Bingham, 2023). This model was appropriate because the analysis was conducted continuously during and after the data collection process. In the data collection stage, the researcher gathered information from questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and supporting documentation. The different sources of data were used to obtain a more complete understanding of the integration of local culture and digital tools in English teaching. In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, simplified, and organized the raw data. Interview transcripts, open-ended questionnaire responses, and observation notes were read repeatedly to identify important information. Initial codes were developed based on recurring ideas such as cultural integration, Papuan cultural content, digital engagement, student motivation, digital access, digital literacy, and teacher mediation. These codes were then grouped into broader categories. In the data display stage, the categorized data were organized into thematic descriptions, tables, and matrices.

Questionnaire frequencies and percentages were used only to support the qualitative findings by showing general response patterns among students. Interview excerpts and observation notes were used to provide deeper explanation and evidence for each theme. In the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researcher identified major themes that answered the research focus. The final themes included the role of cultural content in increasing student motivation, the role of digital tools in supporting engagement, the challenges of digital inequality, and the role of lecturers as mediators of culture and technology. These themes were verified by comparing data from questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. This triangulation process helped strengthen the credibility of the findings. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied methodological triangulation by comparing evidence from different data sources. Member checking was also conducted by asking selected participants to confirm the accuracy of their interview responses. In addition, peer review was used by discussing the coding and theme development with academic colleagues. These steps were taken to reduce researcher bias and to improve the dependability of the qualitative interpretation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The findings of this study were drawn from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The data show that the integration of local cultural content and digital tools supported students' engagement in English learning at UNIMUDA Sorong. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: the motivational value of Papuan cultural content, the role of digital tools in increasing engagement, the challenges of digital inequality, and the role of lecturers as mediators of culture and technology. These themes respond to the focus of the study by showing how local culture and digital tools were used in English teaching, how students responded to these practices, and what challenges appeared during implementation.

Table 1
Summary of Major Findings

Major Theme	Supporting Data	Key Pattern
Cultural content and student motivation	Questionnaire, interviews, and classroom observations	Students showed stronger motivation, confidence, and participation when English lessons used Papuan stories, traditions, and familiar daily activities.
Digital tools and student engagement	Questionnaire, interviews, and classroom observations	Digital projects using YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, videos, and presentation tools encouraged students to practice English more actively and creatively.
Challenges of digital inequality	Questionnaire, interviews, and classroom observations	Some students experienced unstable internet access, limited digital devices, and different levels of digital literacy, which affected their participation in digital tasks.
Lecturers as mediators of culture and technology	Lecturer interviews and classroom observations	Lecturers connected local cultural content with digital learning activities and adjusted tasks based on students' cultural backgrounds and digital access.

Cultural Content and Student Motivation

The first theme shows that the integration of Papuan and local cultural content played an important role in shaping students' motivation, confidence, and classroom participation in English learning. The questionnaire results indicated that most students responded positively when English lessons were connected to familiar cultural references. Around 81% of students stated that they felt more motivated when the learning materials included local stories, traditions, daily routines, and community practices. This pattern was also supported by interview and observation data, which showed that students were more willing to participate when the learning topics were close to their cultural background and everyday experiences.

In the classroom, local cultural content helped reduce students' anxiety toward English. Many students perceived English as difficult because it was not part of their daily communication and, for some of them, it was learned after their mother tongue and Indonesian. However, when lecturers used familiar cultural topics, students appeared more comfortable because they already understood the content before trying to express it in English. One student from Highland Papua explained: *"When the lecturer uses our stories or talks about things from our village, I feel more confident to speak. I already know the story, so I can focus on the English."* (Student 3, Q.1).

This statement indicates that familiar cultural content functioned as a scaffold for language learning. Students did not need to struggle with both content and language at the same time. Instead, their prior cultural knowledge helped them focus on vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and expression. This finding was also reflected in classroom observations, where students showed more confidence when discussing local stories than when responding to unfamiliar textbook topics.

In reading activities, lecturers frequently used Papuan folktales, local legends, and culturally familiar texts to support reading comprehension. These texts were used either as alternatives to generic textbook passages or as supplementary materials. For example, one lecturer used the story of Manarmakeri as a reading text because many students were already familiar with the story. The lecturer explained: *"I used the story of Manarmakeri for reading comprehension. Since students already know the story, they can focus on learning new vocabulary and grammar."* (Lecturer 1, Q.1).

The use of familiar reading materials helped students engage more actively with the text. During observation, students were more willing to guess meanings, ask questions, and relate the text to their own knowledge. They were also able to discuss characters, events, and moral values because the content was meaningful to them. Non-Papuan students also benefited from these activities because they could learn about Papuan culture while practicing English. In this way, local cultural texts did not only support comprehension but also created intercultural learning among students from different backgrounds.

Digital Tools as a Source of Engagement

The second theme shows that digital tools supported student engagement in English learning, especially when the activities were connected to students' cultural background and daily digital practices. Questionnaire results indicated that around 72% of students felt more motivated when technology was integrated into English lessons. Interview and observation data also showed that digital tools made learning activities more interactive, creative, and meaningful. Students were not only asked to complete conventional classroom tasks but also to create videos, write scripts, upload captions, present local stories, and share their work through digital platforms.

Digital tools were used to create more active learning experiences. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and video-recording applications allowed students to practice English beyond the usual classroom format. These tools helped students become more involved because they could use media that were already familiar to them. One student explained:

"When the teacher asks us to make a video and upload it, I feel proud because my friends and family can watch. It makes me practice more seriously." (Student 2, Q.7).

This statement shows that the presence of a real or wider audience encouraged students to take their English practice more seriously. When students knew that their work might be watched by classmates, friends, or family members, they became more careful in preparing their scripts, practicing pronunciation, and recording their performance. Classroom observations also showed that students repeated their speaking practice several times before submitting or presenting their videos. This process created more opportunities for language practice than a single oral presentation in class.

Digital tools also encouraged students to connect English learning with local cultural expression. Lecturers used digital storytelling projects to help students retell Papuan legends, describe local traditions, and present cultural experiences in English. These projects required students to read or understand the story first, prepare the English version, practice speaking, and record their performance. One lecturer shared: *"In some speaking projects, I ask students to make storytelling videos using Papuan legends and upload them on YouTube or TikTok. They practice speaking many times before recording, so their confidence improves."* (Lecturer 3, Q.7).

This finding indicates that digital storytelling supported more than one language skill. Students practiced reading when they studied the story, writing when they prepared scripts, speaking when they recorded the video, and listening when they reviewed their own recordings or watched their friends' videos. In this sense, digital tools helped create integrated English learning activities. The activity also made local culture more visible in the classroom because students used English to present stories and traditions from their own communities.

Digital media were also used to support pronunciation, fluency, and self-correction. When students recorded videos or voice notes, they had the opportunity to listen to their own pronunciation and identify mistakes before submitting the final version. In several observed activities, students repeated their recordings because they wanted to sound clearer and more confident. This process encouraged independent practice. Students were not only waiting for correction from the lecturer but also trying to improve their own performance through repeated recording.

Reading activities were also supported through digital assignments. One lecturer asked students to choose local news articles, translate or summarize them in English, and then present the news in a video format. This activity connected reading comprehension with speaking practice and local awareness. The lecturer stated: *“I asked them to read a piece of local news in English and upload it to Instagram. They enjoyed acting like reporters, and it made them practice pronunciation more carefully.”* (Lecturer 1, Q.8).

This activity made reading more purposeful because students had to understand the content before presenting it to an audience. Students often selected news related to their communities, such as local events, environmental issues, education, or sports. By using local news, the task became more relevant to students' lives. Observation data showed that students were more interested when the reading material was related to their surroundings rather than distant or unfamiliar textbook topics.

Writing was also integrated into digital projects. Before students created videos, they were often required to prepare short scripts in English. This step helped them organize ideas and reduce errors before speaking. A lecturer explained: *“I asked them to write short scripts about their daily routines, then record themselves speaking. Writing first helped them organize their thoughts and reduce mistakes.”* (Lecturer 2, Q.8).

The script-writing stage was important because it connected writing and speaking practice. Students first arranged their ideas in written form, then transformed the text into spoken English. This process helped them become more aware of vocabulary choice, grammar, sentence structure, and pronunciation. In addition, some students wrote English captions when uploading their videos or photos to social media platforms. Although the captions were short, they gave students a chance to practice concise written communication for a real audience.

Challenges of Digital Inequality

The third theme shows that the use of digital tools in English learning was not experienced equally by all students. Although digital platforms created more interactive and creative learning opportunities, the findings also revealed that unequal access to technology limited some students' participation. Questionnaire results showed that nearly one-third of the students experienced difficulties related to internet connection, access to devices, and confidence in using digital applications. This indicates that digital tools can support engagement, but they can also create barriers when students do not have the same technological resources.

The problem of digital inequality was closely related to students' geographical and social backgrounds. Students from urban areas were generally more familiar with social media platforms, video recording, and online submission systems. In contrast, students from rural or remote areas often faced unstable internet connection and limited access to digital devices. These differences affected how students completed technology-based English assignments, especially tasks that required video recording, uploading, or online sharing. One student from Highland Papua admitted: *“Sometimes the signal is too weak, so I cannot send my video on time. I have to wait until I go to town.”* (Student 4, Q.8).

This statement shows that digital participation was not only a matter of students' willingness or motivation. For some students, participation depended on whether they could access a stable signal or find a place with better internet connection. This situation made some students submit assignments late or spend more time dealing with technical problems than preparing the language content of their tasks. Lecturers also recognized this challenge. One lecturer explained that students' digital experience varied depending on their background: *“Urban students use social media every day, but rural students often need more guidance, especially when the task involves recording or uploading.”* (Lecturer 1, Q.8).

This finding suggests that digital inequality was not limited to internet access. It also involved differences in digital literacy. Some students could easily record, edit, upload, and

share digital assignments, while others needed step-by-step guidance. For students with limited digital experience, technology-based tasks could become stressful because they had to learn how to use the tools while also trying to complete the English assignment.

Classroom observations confirmed that students with stronger digital access and better digital skills were more confident during technology-based activities. They were able to complete video projects, upload assignments, and participate in peer-viewing sessions more easily. Meanwhile, some students with limited access became passive or delayed their submissions. In some cases, students asked friends for help because they did not know how to edit videos, compress files, or upload assignments to online platforms. Another lecturer described how technical difficulties sometimes shifted students' focus away from English learning: *"A few students get frustrated because they spend too much time figuring out the tools, and then they lose focus on the English practice."* (Lecturer 2, Q.8).

This statement indicates that digital tools may become a burden when students are not supported with adequate guidance. Instead of focusing on vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, or communication, some students became more concerned with technical issues. This problem shows that technology-enhanced English learning requires more than assigning digital projects. It also requires careful preparation, clear instruction, and support for students who have limited digital skills. The findings also showed that digital inequality affected the quality of student participation. Students with good internet access and strong digital skills were more likely to submit polished videos and participate actively in online sharing activities. In contrast, students with weak internet connection or limited devices sometimes submitted simpler work or avoided digital tasks when possible. This situation created unequal opportunities for students to practice English through digital media.

Lecturers as Mediators of Culture and Technology

The fourth theme highlights the central role of lecturers as mediators between local culture, digital tools, and English learning. The findings show that lecturers did not simply use cultural content and technology as separate teaching resources. Instead, they connected both elements to create learning activities that were more meaningful, inclusive, and relevant to students' lives. In this study, lecturers acted as cultural mediators by bringing local traditions, stories, and community practices into English lessons. At the same time, they acted as technological mediators by guiding students to use digital tools for expressing ideas, practicing English, and sharing cultural experiences.

Questionnaire responses indicated that many students felt that their lecturers helped them connect English learning with both cultural identity and technology use. Around 72% of students agreed that their lecturers supported them in connecting English lessons with cultural content and digital platforms. This pattern was also supported by interview and observation data, which showed that lecturers played an active role in selecting cultural materials, designing digital tasks, guiding student participation, and adjusting activities based on students' different levels of access and ability. One explained: *"Our task is not only teaching English structure but also showing students that their culture is valuable and can be expressed in English through media they use every day."* (Teacher 2, Q.9).

This statement reflects the lecturer's awareness that English teaching in a multicultural classroom should not only focus on grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation. It should also help students see that their cultural knowledge can become meaningful learning material. In this sense, lecturers helped students view English as a tool for expressing identity and sharing local knowledge, not merely as a foreign language disconnected from their lives.

Lecturers used several strategies to connect culture and technology. One common strategy was using Papuan legends or local stories as reading materials and then asking students to retell the stories through digital media. A lecturer explained: *"I often use Papuan legends in reading lessons, then ask students to retell the story as a video or short performance they upload online."*

This way, their culture becomes alive in English, and they also practice using technology.” (Teacher 3, Q.9).

This strategy shows how lecturers linked reading, speaking, cultural understanding, and digital production in one learning activity. Students first engaged with local cultural texts, then transformed the content into spoken English through video or performance. The use of digital media gave students a space to present their cultural knowledge in a more creative and public form. Classroom observations showed that students became more involved when they were asked to present local stories through videos, slides, or short performances because the activities allowed them to combine familiar content with English practice.

Lecturers also mediated learning by adjusting digital tasks according to students’ different levels of digital literacy. They recognized that not all students had the same ability to use video editing applications, social media platforms, or online submission systems. Therefore, they provided task options so that students with limited digital skills could still participate. One lecturer explained: *“I try to give options for some students only make slides, and others create videos for YouTube or TikTok. What matters is that they all tell their own story in English.”* (Teacher 1, Q.10).

This adjustment is important because it shows that culturally responsive teaching was not only about selecting local content but also about making learning accessible. By allowing students to choose simpler or more advanced digital formats, lecturers reduced the pressure on students who had limited digital skills or unstable internet access. At the same time, students with stronger digital skills were still able to develop more creative projects. This flexible approach helped maintain inclusiveness in the classroom.

Another important role of lecturers was as cultural gatekeepers. They selected local cultural materials carefully and encouraged students from different ethnic backgrounds to share their own traditions. Since the classroom consisted of Papuan and non-Papuan students, lecturers needed to create a learning space where Papuan culture was recognized without excluding other cultural identities. One lecturer shared: *“Most of my students are Papuan, but there are also Javanese and Ambonese. I begin with Papuan legends or songs because they are closer to the majority’s identity, but then I invite students from other groups to share their own traditions in English.”* (Teacher 4, Q.10).

This statement shows that lecturers tried to balance local relevance and multicultural inclusion. Papuan cultural content was important because the study was located in West Papua and many students were familiar with it. However, lecturers also gave space for students from Java, Ambon, Raja Ampat, and other backgrounds to contribute their own cultural experiences. Observation data showed that this practice encouraged students to listen to one another, compare cultural practices, and use English to discuss similarities and differences among their communities. Lecturers also helped students understand that digital tools could be used not only for entertainment but also for learning and cultural expression. Many students were familiar with social media, but they did not always see it as a space for academic English practice. Through video projects, English captions, digital storytelling, and online presentations, lecturers guided students to use familiar platforms for educational purposes. This mediation helped shift students’ use of technology from casual communication to purposeful language practice.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a contextual understanding of how local cultural content and digital tools were integrated into culturally responsive English teaching at UNIMUDA Sorong. Rather than showing a causal relationship, the findings indicate that culturally familiar materials and digital learning activities supported students’ motivation, engagement, and participation in a multicultural EFL classroom. The discussion is organized around four major issues: local culture as a pedagogical bridge, digital tools as multimodal

spaces for English learning, digital inequality as a challenge to inclusive pedagogy, and lecturers as mediators of culture and technology.

The first important finding is that local cultural content helped students connect English learning with their own lived experiences. This suggests that culture was not only used as a supporting example in the classroom but also functioned as a pedagogical bridge between students' prior knowledge and new English learning materials. In the context of UNIMUDA Sorong, many students came from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and English was often learned after their mother tongue and Indonesian. Therefore, familiar cultural content helped reduce the distance between English as a foreign language and students' everyday realities. This finding supports the view (Gay, 2021; A. Johnson, 2022; D. Johnson & Johnson, 2006) that culturally responsive teaching uses students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and frames of reference to make learning more meaningful and inclusive. It is also in line with (Caingcoy, 2023; Weidl & Erling, 2025) who argues that effective pedagogy should recognize students' cultural identities as valuable resources in the learning process.

The use of Papuan folktales, local routines, traditional food, ceremonies, and community practices in English learning also reflects the idea of culturally sustaining pedagogy. (Paris, 2012) explains that culturally sustaining pedagogy does not only acknowledge students' culture but also supports the maintenance and development of cultural and linguistic diversity in education. In this study, Papuan cultural content allowed students to see their local knowledge as something valuable in English learning. For Papuan students, this created a sense of recognition and confidence because their traditions and experiences became part of classroom instruction. For non-Papuan students, local cultural materials created opportunities to understand the cultural context of West Papua and engage in intercultural learning. This finding extends previous studies on culturally responsive teaching by showing that local culture can support both language learning and intercultural understanding in a diverse EFL classroom.

The findings also show that culturally responsive English teaching is particularly important in multilingual contexts. Students in Eastern Indonesia often bring different language backgrounds into the classroom, including local languages, Indonesian, and English. In such settings, English learning cannot be separated from students' cultural and linguistic identities. This supports (Hirosh & Degani, 2017) argument that students' prior linguistic and cultural knowledge can serve as a foundation for learning additional languages. In this study, when students were asked to read, listen, speak, or write about familiar cultural topics, they were able to use their existing knowledge to understand and express ideas in English. This indicates that culturally relevant content can make English learning more accessible, especially for students who may feel distant from generic textbook materials.

The second major finding concerns the role of digital tools in increasing student engagement. Digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and video-recording applications provided students with opportunities to practice English through multimodal and creative activities. These tools allowed students to write scripts, record videos, prepare captions, retell local stories, and share their work with peers or wider audiences. This finding supports studies on digital storytelling which suggest that digital media can help students combine language, images, sound, and personal experience in meaningful learning activities (Gunawan et al., 2025; Kendrick et al., 2022; Moradi & Chen, 2019). In this study, digital storytelling became a way for students to express local culture in English, not merely a technical classroom task

The use of social media-based assignments also shows that digital tools can create more authentic and participatory English learning experiences. Students were more engaged when their work could be seen, commented on, or appreciated by classmates, friends, or family members. This finding is consistent with (Lokollo, 2025; Reinhardt, 2018), who argues that social media can support language learning by providing spaces for interaction, identity

expression, and authentic communication. However, the findings of this study add a more contextual dimension by showing that social media-based English tasks in West Papua were meaningful when they were connected to local stories, daily routines, and cultural experiences. In other words, the value of digital tools did not come only from the technology itself but from how lecturers connected the technology with students' cultural realities.

The integration of digital tools also supported the development of multiple language skills. For example, students practiced reading when they studied local stories or news, writing when they prepared scripts or captions, speaking when they recorded videos, and listening when they reviewed their own work or watched their peers' videos. This confirms the view that digital learning can support multimodal literacy and integrated language practice (Anderson et al., 2018; Eka et al., 2024). In this study, digital tools helped transform English learning from a single-skill activity into a more integrated process. However, this process depended strongly on task design. Digital tools became useful when they were linked to meaningful topics, clear instructions, and opportunities for repeated practice.

The third finding highlights the challenge of digital inequality. Although digital tools supported engagement for many students, unequal access to internet connection, devices, and digital literacy limited participation for some learners. This finding challenges the assumption that technology automatically makes learning more inclusive. In resource-diverse contexts, digital tools can create new barriers when students do not have equal access to digital infrastructure. This supports (Tate & Warschauer, 2022) argument that digital inequality is not only about physical access to technology, but also about skills, support, and meaningful use. It also aligns with Van Deursen & Van Dijk, (2015), who emphasize that digital inequality includes differences in access, skills, and outcomes.

In the context of UNIMUDA Sorong, students from rural or remote backgrounds were more likely to face unstable internet connection and limited digital experience. This affected their ability to complete video-based assignments, upload projects, and participate in online sharing activities. Therefore, the findings suggest that technology-enhanced English learning should be designed with attention to equity. Digital tasks should not assume that all students have the same level of access or digital skill. Instead, lecturers need to provide flexible formats, offline alternatives, peer support, and technical guidance. This point is important for culturally responsive pedagogy because inclusiveness should not only refer to cultural recognition but also to equitable participation in learning activities.

The issue of digital inequality also has institutional implications. If universities encourage the use of digital tools in English learning, they need to provide adequate digital support for students. This may include stronger campus internet access, access to digital learning spaces, basic digital literacy training, and institutional policies that recognize the different realities of rural and urban students. Without such support, digital learning may benefit students who are already digitally advantaged while leaving behind those with limited access. This finding extends previous discussions of digital pedagogy by showing that culturally responsive digital teaching in Eastern Indonesia must consider both cultural relevance and technological equity.

The fourth finding emphasizes the role of lecturers as mediators of culture and technology. The findings show that lecturers were not passive users of teaching materials or digital platforms. They actively selected local cultural content, adapted tasks, guided students in using digital tools, and created flexible learning options based on students' cultural and technological realities. This supports the concept of teacher agency, which refers to teachers' capacity to make pedagogical decisions in response to contextual needs (Priestley et al., 2015). In this study, teacher agency was visible in how lecturers transformed local stories, cultural practices, and digital tools into meaningful English learning activities.

Lecturers also functioned as cultural mediators. They helped students see local culture as a valid source of English learning. This is important because many English materials used in EFL classrooms are often based on generic or foreign contexts that may not reflect students' lives. By bringing Papuan stories, local food, community routines, and multicultural experiences into the classroom, lecturers made English learning more relevant to students' identities. This supports the argument that culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to adapt content, interaction, and assessment to students' cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2021; Johnson, 2022).

At the same time, lecturers acted as technological mediators. They guided students in using digital tools not only for entertainment but also for academic and cultural expression. Through digital storytelling, video projects, and social media-based assignments, lecturers helped students use familiar platforms for purposeful English practice. However, because students had different levels of digital access and skill, lecturers also needed to adjust task formats and provide alternatives. This shows that teacher mediation is central to culturally responsive digital pedagogy. Technology alone cannot create inclusive learning; it requires teachers who can connect digital tools with students' cultural identities, learning needs, and access conditions.

The findings have several implications. For students, the integration of local culture and digital tools can make English learning more meaningful because it allows them to use English to express personal, cultural, and community experiences. For Papuan students, this approach can strengthen confidence because their culture is recognized in the learning process. For non-Papuan students, it can support intercultural understanding and help them engage with the local context of West Papua. For lecturers, the findings suggest that culturally responsive teaching should be planned intentionally. Local culture should not be used only as a decorative example, but as a meaningful resource for reading, listening, speaking, and writing activities.

For curriculum developers, the findings indicate the need to design English learning materials that reflect local cultural realities and multilingual student backgrounds. English curriculum in Eastern Indonesia should provide space for local stories, community practices, and culturally grounded digital projects. For higher education institutions, the findings highlight the need to support digital access and digital literacy. If institutions want lecturers to use digital tools effectively, they must also ensure that students have enough access and support to participate. For policymakers, the findings suggest that digital transformation in education should pay attention to regional inequality, especially in areas where internet access and digital infrastructure remain uneven.

This study also has limitations. First, the research was conducted in one institutional context, namely UNIMUDA Sorong, so the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL classrooms in Eastern Indonesia. Second, although the study involved students and lecturers, the data focused on classroom perceptions and practices rather than measurable changes in English proficiency. Third, the study examined the integration of culture and digital tools within a limited classroom context, so broader institutional and policy-level factors were not explored in depth. Future research may involve several universities in Eastern Indonesia to compare how culturally responsive digital pedagogy is practiced across different institutional contexts. Comparative studies between urban and rural classrooms would also be useful to understand how digital inequality shapes students' participation in English learning.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the integration of local cultural content and digital tools in culturally responsive English teaching at UNIMUDA Sorong, West Papua. The findings show that the use of Papuan and other local cultural materials supported students' motivation, confidence, and participation in English learning. When English lessons were connected to familiar stories, traditions, daily routines, and community practices, students were more willing to engage in

reading, listening, speaking, and writing activities. The study also found that digital tools such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, video projects, and presentation media supported student engagement by creating more interactive and creative learning experiences. However, the benefits of digital learning were not experienced equally by all students. Unstable internet access, limited devices, and different levels of digital literacy limited the participation of some learners, especially those from rural or remote backgrounds. In this context, lecturers played an important role as mediators who connected local culture with digital tools, guided students in completing digital tasks, and adjusted learning activities based on students' needs and access.

These findings suggest that culturally responsive and technology-supported English teaching can create more meaningful and inclusive learning experiences in multicultural EFL classrooms. However, its successful implementation depends on intentional teacher mediation and equitable digital access. Lecturers need to integrate local cultural content not only as examples but as meaningful learning resources. At the same time, digital tasks should be designed flexibly so that students with different levels of access and digital literacy can participate. This study has several limitations. It was conducted in a single institutional context, namely UNIMUDA Sorong, and involved a limited number of lecturers and students. The study also focused on classroom practices and participants' perceptions rather than measuring students' English proficiency quantitatively. Therefore, future research may involve more institutions, compare urban and rural learning contexts, and examine how culturally responsive and technology-supported English teaching influences students' English proficiency and digital literacy over time.

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DECLARATION OF USING AI TOOLS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used AI tools to assist with language refinement, grammar correction, and the improvement of academic clarity. The AI tool was used only to support the writing and editing process. It was not used to generate research data, conduct independent data analysis, or replace the authors' interpretation of the findings. All research data, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were developed, reviewed, and verified by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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