



Original Research

Narrative Literacy and Digital Storytelling in Indonesian Language Education: A Humanistic Framework for Values, Identity, and Critical Digital Literacies

Zathu Restie Utami, Agus Kurniawan

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received 13 February 2026

Revised 01 April 2026

Accepted 03 April 2026

Keywords:

Narrative literacy

Digital storytelling

Multiliteracies

Critical digital literacy

Indonesian language education

Abstract

This article examines how digital storytelling can be positioned within Indonesian language education as a humanistic pedagogy that strengthens narrative literacy, cultural identity, and critical digital literacy. The study synthesizes recent scholarship on digital storytelling, multimodal composing, and ethical digital participation, and translates that scholarship into a classroom-ready framework. Using a structured review of studies and policy documents published between 2021 and 2025, the article identifies recurring themes related to narrative craft, student engagement, cultural representation, access, assessment, and GenAI-era ethical concerns. The synthesis shows that digital storytelling is pedagogically valuable when it is implemented as narrative writing practice rather than as a technology demonstration. Its benefits are strongest when teachers foreground story development, guided revision, multimodal meaning-making, and reflective dialogue. The review also indicates that digital storytelling must be supported by access-sensitive design and explicit norms for authorship, consent, privacy, and source transparency. Based on these findings, the article proposes design principles, an instructional sequence, and assessment indicators for Indonesian language classrooms.



Corresponding Author: Zathu Restie Utami, zathurestieutami@radenintan.ac.id

1. Introduction

Language education in the humanities tradition treats reading and writing as practices through which learners interpret experience, negotiate values, and imagine their relationship to others. Within this tradition, narrative literacy is more than the ability to retell events; it includes understanding perspective, temporality, voice, and the ethical consequences of representation (Sevilla-Liu, 2021). As communication becomes increasingly multimodal and platform-mediated, narrative literacy in Indonesian language education must now include the capacity to compose meaning across words, images, sound, and digital interfaces (Jiang & Hafner, 2024).

This need is particularly relevant in Indonesia. PISA 2022 results and the Education GPS country profile continue to show challenges in reading performance, while OECD analyses of 21st-century reading underline that literacy in digital environments requires students to evaluate information, navigate multimodal texts, and distinguish reliable from unreliable content (OECD, 2021, 2023a, 2023b). At the same time, national digital-literacy reporting in Indonesia emphasizes the interrelated pillars of skills, ethics, safety, and culture, suggesting that language instruction cannot focus on technical competence alone (Katadata & Sibercakap Digital, 2023).

Digital storytelling (DST) offers a promising response because it positions students as authors who plan, draft, revise, narrate, and publish multimodal stories. Recent research links DST with gains in writing development, engagement, collaboration, and multimodal meaning-making when it is treated as a pedagogical process rather than as a technology showcase (Ajabshir, 2024; Ergül Sönmez & Urfalı Dadandı, 2023; Veyis et al., 2025; Yu & Wang, 2024). This wider shift is consistent with broader accounts of educational digital transformation that emphasize flexible, learner-centered, technology-mediated ecosystems (Mukul & Büyüközkan, 2023).

However, the literature also reveals an important gap. Many studies discuss motivation, writing performance, or tool use, but fewer studies integrate four elements in one framework: narrative craftsmanship, culturally responsive identity work, critical digital literacy, and GenAI-era ethical responsibility. This gap is particularly visible for Indonesian language education, where locally relevant guidance is needed to align narrative pedagogy with cultural representation, access constraints, and responsible digital participation (Darvin & Hafner, 2022; Kim et al., 2025; Zhang & Dikilitaş, 2025).

Accordingly, this article has two objectives. First, it synthesizes recent scholarship and policy literature published between 2021 and 2025 to identify the pedagogical conditions under which DST supports narrative literacy in language education. Second, it proposes a classroom-ready humanistic DST framework for Indonesian language teaching. The article contributes conceptually by connecting humanities-based narrative education with critical digital literacies, and practically by offering design principles, instructional phases, and assessment indicators for classroom use.

2. Method

This study uses a structured narrative review rather than an exhaustive systematic review. The aim is to build a conceptually coherent and pedagogically usable framework for Indonesian language education by synthesizing recent empirical studies, review articles, and major policy documents related to DST, narrative pedagogy, multimodal composing, and digital literacy.

The source search focused on publications from 2021–2025 and used databases and repositories that are widely used in education and applied linguistics, namely ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Cambridge Core, and official policy repositories from OECD and UNESCO. Search strings combined keywords such as "digital storytelling," "narrative literacy," "multimodal composing," "critical digital literacy," "generative AI," "Indonesian language education," and "writing pedagogy." Sources in English and Indonesian were prioritized because both are relevant for the intended pedagogical context.

Inclusion criteria covered (1) peer-reviewed journal articles or authoritative policy reports, (2) explicit relevance to language learning, literacy, multimodal composing, or digital ethics, (3) publication within the 2021–2025 window, and (4) sufficient methodological or conceptual transparency to support pedagogical interpretation. Excluded sources included duplicate records, purely technical tool descriptions, opinion pieces without analytical substance, and studies whose primary focus was media production without clear educational implications.

The final analytical corpus comprised the 20 sources retained and cited in this article: 13 journal articles and 7 institutional or policy reports. Each source was read for evidence about learning goals, instructional design, student outcomes, constraints, and ethical concerns. The synthesis used thematic comparison to group findings into five domains: narrative craft, cultural identity and values, critical digital literacy, access and equity, and classroom design and assessment. These themes were then translated into a humanistic DST framework and an example analytic rubric.

3. Result and Discussions

The synthesis shows that DST is most educationally powerful when it is framed as narrative composition rather than software training. Across recent studies, students benefit when teachers foreground plot development, voice, sequencing, audience awareness, storyboarding, and revision before focusing on editing effects or visual polish. In this sense, DST extends writing pedagogy into multimodal composition without

removing the centrality of narrative craft (Ajabshir, 2024; Ciğerci & Yıldırım, 2023; Ergül Sönmez & Urfalı Dadandı, 2023; Jiang & Hafner, 2024).

A second pattern concerns engagement and identity. Humanities-centered DST allows students to connect classroom tasks with lived experience, local culture, memory, and community narratives. This strengthens the relevance of Indonesian language learning because students do not merely reproduce information; they interpret values, represent voices, and negotiate how stories should be told for different audiences. The review therefore suggests that DST becomes especially meaningful when it uses culturally responsive prompts and invites students to rework folktales, family histories, or social issues into contemporary narrative forms (Sevilla-Liu, 2021; UNESCO, 2024).

A third theme is that critical digital literacy cannot be separated from DST practice. Digital stories circulate within platform environments shaped by visibility rules, data extraction, unequal access, and varying norms of participation. Students therefore need opportunities to discuss attribution, consent, privacy, representation, and source credibility as part of composing, not as an afterthought. This point becomes even more important in the GenAI era, where scripts, images, audio, and translations can be generated quickly but may also reproduce bias, factual inaccuracy, or unclear authorship (Darvin & Hafner, 2022; Kim et al., 2025; Rapanta et al., 2025).

The fourth finding concerns equity and implementation. Studies repeatedly note that the pedagogical value of DST can be weakened by limited bandwidth, unequal device access, uneven digital confidence, and time-intensive production demands. For Indonesian classrooms, this means the narrative objective should remain constant while the technical pathway remains flexible. Students can meet the same learning goals through audio-first stories, slideshow narration, or simple video formats, so that multimodal participation is widened rather than restricted to those with the best devices or editing experience (Katadata & Sibercakap Digital, 2023; Meletiadou, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Based on these themes, the proposed humanistic DST framework consists of four instructional phases. Story Grounding invites students to gather ideas, experiences, or community narratives ethically and reflectively. Narrative Craft focuses on plot, perspective, scene selection, and revision. Multimodal Design guides students in choosing images, sound, pacing, and platform conventions that strengthen meaning rather than distract from it. Reflection and Dialogue asks students to articulate what the story communicates, what values it conveys, and what responsibilities follow when the story is shared in digital spaces. Across all four phases, an ethics-and-safety layer addresses attribution, consent, privacy, and transparent use of GenAI assistance.

This framework has three implications. Pedagogically, Indonesian language teachers should assess DST primarily as narrative learning supported by multimodal resources, not as a contest in technical editing. Conceptually, the framework links humanities-based narrative education with multiliteracies and critical digital literacy by showing that story making is also ethical world making. At the policy and teacher-education level, the synthesis suggests that successful DST implementation requires teacher preparation in multimodal pedagogy, platform ethics, and access-sensitive assessment design (Mukul & Büyüközkan, 2023; UNESCO, 2021; Zhang & Dikilitaş, 2025).

Assessment is crucial because it signals what counts as learning. When rubrics privilege transitions, filters, and visual polish more than coherence, voice, reflection, and ethical sourcing, students may optimize appearance rather than meaning. An analytic rubric should therefore separate narrative craft, multimodal meaning, critical digital literacy, and process documentation so that feedback remains focused and fair across different levels of technological access (Jiang & Hafner, 2024; Meletiadou, 2022; Veyis et al., 2025).

An access-sensitive implementation can combine classroom studio time, tiered tool choices, and process logs that document drafting, peer feedback, and any use of AI assistance. These measures help teachers protect equity, make authorship visible, and ensure that digital storytelling remains anchored in reflective language learning rather than mere product display (Katadata & Sibercakap Digital, 2023; Rapanta et al., 2025; Yu & Wang, 2024).

Table 1. a sample analytical rubric for humanities-based DST projects in Indonesian language education.

Criterion	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Narrative craft (40%) (Ciğerci & Yıldırım, 2023)	Clear plot arc; strong voice; coherent scenes; effective language choices.	Mostly coherent plot; voice present; minor gaps; adequate language control.	Plot/voice uneven; coherence issues; limited revision evidence.	Fragmented story; unclear purpose; minimal drafting/revision.
Multimodal meaning (25%) (Jiang & Hafner, 2024)	Modes enhance meaning; strong pacing; intentional design choices.	Modes mostly support meaning; minor mismatches or pacing issues.	Modes sometimes decorative; limited rationale for choices.	Modes unrelated or distracting; little control of design.
Critical digital literacy (20%) (Kim et al., 2025)	Ethical sourcing; accurate credits; privacy/consent ensured; bias awareness.	Mostly ethical sourcing; credits present; privacy considered.	Incomplete credits; limited privacy/bias reflection.	Uncredited assets; privacy risks; no ethical reflection.
Process collaboration (15%) (Yu & Wang, 2024)	Detailed logs; responsive to feedback; constructive collaboration.	Adequate logs; some revision; cooperative participation.	Sparse logs; limited revision; uneven collaboration.	No logs; minimal revision; collaboration not evident.

4. Conclusion

This article set out to identify how recent research can inform a humanistic use of digital storytelling in Indonesian language education and to propose a practical instructional framework. The review indicates that DST most effectively supports narrative literacy when it is organized as a craft-first writing process, supported by multimodal design, reflective dialogue, and access-sensitive implementation. It also shows that DST can strengthen value formation and cultural identity when students engage with locally meaningful stories and consider how representation affects others.

The main theoretical contribution of this article is to connect narrative literacy, humanities-based education, multiliteracies, and critical digital literacy within one framework for Indonesian language learning. Its practical contribution is a classroom-ready model that includes instructional phases, ethical safeguards, and assessment dimensions that teachers can adapt across school contexts. These findings also carry pedagogical and policy implications: teachers need support in guiding multimodal composing, schools need flexible low-bandwidth implementation options, and teacher education programs need clearer preparation for GenAI-related transparency, attribution, and privacy issues.

This article is limited by its review-based design and by the still limited number of Indonesian empirical studies that examine DST through a combined lens of narrative craft, cultural identity, and critical digital literacy. The proposed framework should therefore be read as a theoretically grounded pedagogical model rather than as the result of a classroom intervention study. Future research should test the framework through design-based classroom studies, compare implementation across urban and non-urban schools, and examine how students and teachers negotiate authorship and ethics when GenAI tools are incorporated into narrative production.

5. Acknowledgments

The author thanks colleagues and peer reviewers who provided feedback on the conceptual framework and manuscript clarity. Appreciation is extended to educators who continue to innovate humanities-based literacy practices in Indonesian language classrooms.

Referensi

- Ajabshir, Z. F. (2024). Empowering EFL writing through digital storytelling: A quasi-experimental assessment of CALF measures and multidimensional engagement. *Acta Psychologica*, 252, 104564. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104564>
- Ciğerci, F. M., & Yıldırım, M. (2023). From Freytag pyramid story structure to digital storytelling: Adventures of pre-service teachers as story writers and digital story tellers. *Education and Information Technologies*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12042-7>
- Darvin, R., & Hafner, C. A. (2022). Digital literacies in TESOL: Mapping out the terrain. *TESOL Quarterly*, 56(3), 865–882. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3161>
- Ergül Sönmez, E., & Urfalı Dadandı, P. (2023). Does digital storytelling have an effect on writing outcomes? *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 11(2), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.52380/mojet.2023.11.2.441>
- Jiang, L. G., & Hafner, C. A. (2024). Digital multimodal composing in L2 classrooms: A research agenda. *Language Teaching*, 58(4), 528–546. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444824000107>
- Katadata & Sibercakap Digital. (2023). Status literasi digital di Indonesia 2023. https://cdn1.katadata.co.id/media/Report_LITDIG_2023.pdf
- Kim, N., Lee, V. W. Y., Mecham, S., & De Costa, P. I. (2025). Problematizing and addressing equity issues in multiliteracies and the use of generative AI: Why critical ethical literacy matters. *Pedagogies*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2025.2557481>
- Meletiadou, E. (2022). Using educational digital storytelling to enhance multilingual students' writing skills in higher education. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 10(2), 111–130. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.10.2.06>
- Mukul, E., & Büyüközkan, G. (2023). Digital transformation in education: A systematic review of education 4.0. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 194, 122664. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122664>
- OECD. (2021). 21st-century readers: Developing literacy skills in a digital world. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a83d84cb-en>
- OECD. (2023a). Education GPS: Indonesia—Student performance (PISA 2022). <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=IDN&topic=PI>
- OECD. (2023b). PISA 2022 results (Volumes I and II): Country notes—Indonesia. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbc5-en/indonesia_c2e1ae0e-en.html
- Rapanta, C., Bhatt, I., Bozkurt, A., Chubb, L. A., Erb, C., Forsler, I., ... Jandrić, P. (2025). Critical GenAI literacy: Postdigital configurations. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 7, 1296–1333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-025-00573-w>
- Sevilla-Liu, A. (2021). From Mori Akira to narrative education: Weaving the tapestry of narrative philosophy, analysis, therapy, pedagogy, and research. *Human Arenas*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00202-5>
- UNESCO. (2021). AI and education: Guidance for policy-makers. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-and-education-guidance-policy-makers>
- UNESCO. (2023). Digital learning and transformation of education. <https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education>
- UNESCO. (2024). UNESCO framework for culture and arts education. https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/02/WCCAE_UNESCO%20Framework_EN_0.pdf
- Veyis, F., Gözüyeşil, E., & Ciğerci, F. M. (2025). The effect of digital storytelling on students' language skills performance: A meta-analytic study. *Education and Information Technologies*, 30, 24463–24501. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-025-13722-2>

- Yu, B., & Wang, W. (2025). Using digital storytelling to promote language learning, digital skills and digital collaboration among English pre-service teachers. *System*, *129*, 103577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103577>
- Zhang, Y., & Dikilitaş, K. (2025). Investing in critical digital literacies involving generative AI: A multiple-case study of second language novice teachers. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, *250626*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.58304/ijts.250626>