



The Correlation Between Familiarity with Biak Folklore and English Reading Comprehension Competence Among Senior High School Students in Biak Papua

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on the issue that English reading materials used in schools are often not connected to students' local cultural backgrounds, making it difficult for learners to relate texts to their prior knowledge and daily experiences. In Biak, Papua, folklore remains an important cultural resource that is familiar to students and has the potential to support English reading comprehension through cultural familiarity and schema activation. This study aims to identify students' familiarity with Biak folklore, assess their English reading comprehension competence, and examine the correlation between these two variables. This research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The participants consisted of 120 senior high school students in Biak, Papua. The instruments were a Biak folklore familiarity questionnaire and an English reading comprehension test adapted to the local cultural context. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The findings show that students had a fairly high familiarity with Biak folklore, with a mean score of 43.38, and a high English reading comprehension competence, with a mean score of 43.25. The correlation analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between familiarity with Biak folklore and English reading comprehension competence, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.518. It can be concluded that students who are more familiar with Biak folklore tend to have better English reading comprehension. This study implies that local folklore can be integrated into English reading materials to create contextual and culturally responsive learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, possesses a vast wealth of folklore that has existed long before the introduction of formal education. In educational studies, folklore is viewed not only as cultural

heritage but also as a pedagogical resource that supports contextual learning and value transmission in formal education Helsel (2020) Folklore contains cultural values, moral lessons, social norms, and local wisdom that are closely connected to the daily lives of learners. Therefore, folklore has strong potential to be integrated into educational practices, particularly in language learning, because it provides familiar contexts that can support students' understanding and engagement.

However, English language learning in Indonesia still faces several challenges, particularly in reading comprehension. Many students experience difficulties in understanding English texts because learning materials are often dominated by foreign cultural contexts that are unfamiliar to learners. Learning materials that are not contextualized with local culture tend to make students struggle in connecting textual information with their daily experiences (Savitri, 2018). Norton & Kramersch (2013) further emphasize that language learning is closely connected to learners' cultural identity, which shapes how they interact with texts and learning materials. Similarly, culturally responsive learning emphasizes the importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into classroom instruction to create more meaningful and inclusive learning experiences (Guberina, 2023). As a result, students' reading comprehension achievement is often relatively low because learners cannot fully relate to the cultural content presented in English texts.

This phenomenon is also experienced by senior high school students in Biak, Papua. Students often encounter difficulties in comprehending English reading materials due to the incompatibility between learning materials and their local cultural backgrounds. In contrast, Biak folklore remains closely connected to students' social and cultural lives because these stories are still transmitted orally within families and communities. Biak folklore contains narratives, symbols, moral values, and traditional beliefs that are already familiar to students. Therefore, local folklore can potentially become a meaningful and contextual learning resource for English instruction. Culture-based learning has been recognized as an effective approach to connecting educational content with students' cultural backgrounds, thereby fostering meaningful learning and strengthening cultural identity (Patras et al., 2023).

The integration of local wisdom in education also helps improve students' learning interest and strengthens their appreciation of local culture (Erwin Arianto et al., 2026). In addition, the importance of integrating local culture into education is also reflected in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 79 of 2014 concerning Local Content in the Curriculum.

Theoretically, reading comprehension is influenced not only by linguistic competence but also by learners' background knowledge and cultural familiarity. Schema Theory explains that comprehension occurs when readers activate their prior knowledge while processing new information (Grabe & Stoller (2013). Similarly, Koda (2011) explains that second language reading comprehension is strongly influenced by readers' background knowledge because prior knowledge helps learners interpret meaning beyond linguistic forms. Cultural familiarity also plays a significant role in reading comprehension because learners can understand texts more effectively when the content aligns with their cultural experiences (Steffensen, M. S., Joag-Dev, C., & Anderson, 1979). In this context, local folklore can function as an effective cognitive bridge that facilitates students' understanding of foreign-language texts.

Furthermore, culturally inclusive learning practices have been shown to positively influence students' academic achievement and learning engagement because learners are better able to relate new information to their existing cultural frameworks (Yu, 2018).

Several previous studies have demonstrated the importance of folklore and local culture in English language learning. Savitri (2018) found that folklore-based reading materials help students understand English texts more easily because the themes and contexts are already familiar to learners. Likewise, Hamral (2018) reports that folklore functions as an effective learning resource in supporting reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Fadhli (2020) further explains that Indonesian folktales can serve as effective media for integrating local wisdom into English instruction without distancing students from their cultural identity. This argument is reinforced by Tomlinson (2011) who states that learning materials grounded in learners' own cultural experiences promote deeper cognitive and emotional engagement.

More recent studies also support the relationship between cultural familiarity and reading comprehension. Rukminingsih (2020) found that students' content schemata significantly influence reading comprehension performance, particularly when reading materials align with learners' cultural backgrounds. In addition, Ishak et al (2020) report that integrating folklore into reading instruction enhances students' comprehension because familiar narratives help learners predict content and infer meaning more effectively. Ni'mah & Mubarak (2025) also demonstrate that English learning materials based on local wisdom significantly improve students' reading comprehension achievement. In addition, local wisdom-based education has been found to enhance students' engagement, contextual understanding, and appreciation of cultural heritage (Wayan et al., 2025). These findings indicate that culturally

familiar materials can reduce cognitive burden and support learners in constructing meaning during the reading process.

Biak folklore itself represents an important cultural resource that reflects the values, beliefs, and worldview of the Biak community. Fatubun (2021) explains that Biak folktales contain archetypal characters, cultural symbols, and belief concepts deeply embedded in local identity. Likewise, (Orun et al (2024) state that local narratives presented in English remain accessible to learners because the cultural content is already familiar to them. Supporting this argument, Alptekin (2006) explains that culturally familiar texts are processed more efficiently because readers rely on existing cultural schemas. These studies suggest that Biak folklore can function as an effective cultural and cognitive bridge in English reading instruction.

Based on these considerations, this study argues that familiarity with Biak folklore contributes positively to students' English reading comprehension competence because learners are able to activate relevant background knowledge and connect textual information with their cultural experiences. Nevertheless, studies specifically examining the relationship between familiarity with Biak folklore and English reading comprehension competence among senior high school students in Papua remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to identify students' familiarity with Biak folklore, measure their English reading comprehension competence, and determine the correlation between familiarity with Biak folklore and English reading comprehension competence among senior high school students in Biak, Papua. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of culturally responsive English language teaching while also supporting the preservation of local culture through educational practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between students' familiarity with Biak folklore and their competence in English reading comprehension. This design was selected because it aligns with the research objectives, namely to determine the extent to which the two variables are related and to identify the degree to which familiarity with local folklore influences students' ability to comprehend English texts. The study is theoretically grounded in Schema Theory and the concept of cultural familiarity, both of which emphasize that learners' prior knowledge, including local cultural knowledge, can function as a cognitive bridge in understanding foreign-language texts. In line with this perspective, reading texts embedded in local cultural contexts were used to ensure that the learning materials were

meaningful and relevant to students' lived experiences, as contextualized materials have been shown to enhance comprehension and engagement in EFL learning (Tomlinson, 2011).

To collect quantitative data, this study utilized a survey method involving a questionnaire and a reading comprehension test. The questionnaire was designed to measure students' level of familiarity with Biak folklore, covering aspects such as knowledge of story titles, characters, plot structures, moral values, and cultural contexts. Meanwhile, the reading test consisted of English texts that incorporated local cultural elements. Prior to data collection, the instruments were validated by experts and piloted with a small group of students to ensure clarity and appropriateness. After validation, the instruments were administered to 120 senior high school students from two schools in Biak, representing both urban and rural settings. The data obtained from the questionnaires and reading tests were subsequently coded and analyzed statistically.

The correlational method was employed to analyze the relationship between variable X, namely familiarity with Biak folklore, and variable Y, English reading comprehension competence. Before conducting the main analysis, a normality test was performed to determine whether parametric or non-parametric statistical techniques were appropriate. Correlation analysis was then carried out using Pearson or Spearman correlation to identify the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis was conducted to measure the extent to which familiarity with Biak folklore influenced students' reading comprehension competence. Additional analyses also considered demographic factors, such as school location and students' backgrounds, and hypothesis testing was conducted at a significance level of 0.05.

In addition to survey data, this study also involved the documentation of Biak folklore to enrich the research context. In-depth interviews were conducted with community elders to collect local folktales that are not widely documented. Folklore elements, including archetypal characters, cultural symbols, and belief systems, were identified and categorized based on themes, moral values, and narrative structures. Data collection was carried out through several techniques, including the administration of research instruments, interviews with community elders, English teachers, and selected students, as well as documentation studies involving primary and secondary sources of Biak folktales and relevant learning materials.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments, content validation was conducted by two folklore experts and two English language

teaching experts. A pilot study involving 30 students was also carried out to test the instruments. Instrument reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha and test-retest techniques to ensure the consistency and stability of the results. Through these procedures, the study sought to ensure that the data collected were accurate, reliable, and suitable for answering the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the research findings based on the data obtained from the Biak folklore familiarity questionnaire and the English reading comprehension test. The results are presented in three parts: students' familiarity with Biak folklore, students' English reading comprehension competence, and the correlation between the two variables.

Students' Familiarity with Biak Folklore

The descriptive statistical analysis shows that senior high school students in Biak had a fairly high level of familiarity with Biak folklore. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Familiarity of Senior High School Students in Biak with Biak Folklore

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Biak Folklore Familiarity	120	33	49	43.38	2.606
Valid N (listwise)	120				

The mean score of 43.38 indicates that students generally had a good level of familiarity with Biak folklore. The minimum score was 33, while the maximum score was 49, indicating considerable familiarity among participants. The standard deviation of 2.606 shows that the students' responses were relatively homogeneous, meaning that most students had similar levels of familiarity with Biak folktales, including story content, characters, plot, moral values, and cultural contexts.

English Reading Comprehension Competence

Students' English reading comprehension competence is categorized as high, with a mean score of 43.25. This indicates that most students are able to comprehend English texts, identify main ideas, understand detailed information, and draw conclusions.

Table 2.
Reading Comprehension Competence in English

	Descriptive Statistics				Std. Deviation
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	
English Reading Comprehension Competence	120	38	48	43.25	2.331
Valid N (listwise)	120				

The mean score of 43.25 indicates that most students were able to comprehend English reading texts well. The minimum score was 38, while the maximum score was 48. The standard deviation of 2.331 shows that the students' reading comprehension scores were relatively close to the mean. This result indicates that most students had similar levels of competence in identifying main ideas, understanding detailed information, interpreting meanings, and drawing conclusions from English texts.

Correlation between Biak Folklore Familiarity and English Reading Comprehension Competence

The correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between students' familiarity with Biak folklore and their English reading comprehension competence. This analysis was important to identify whether students who had higher familiarity with local folklore also tended to demonstrate better competence in comprehending English reading texts. The result of the correlation analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Correlation between Biak Folklore Familiarity and English Reading Comprehension Competence

Correlations		
	Biak Folklore Familiarity	English Reading Comprehension Competence
Pearson	1	1.000**
Biak Folklore Familiarity	Correlation	
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
	N	120

The result shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.518 with a significance value of 0.000. This indicates a positive and significant correlation

between students' familiarity with Biak folklore and their English reading comprehension competence. The correlation coefficient shows a moderate positive relationship, meaning that students with higher familiarity with Biak folklore tend to have better English reading comprehension competence.

In addition to the correlation result, the descriptive findings indicate that both variables demonstrated relatively high mean scores. The mean score of Biak folklore familiarity was 43.38, while the mean score of English reading comprehension competence was 43.25. These findings suggest that the participants generally possessed both a strong understanding of local folklore and a good level of reading comprehension competence. Furthermore, the relatively low standard deviation values indicate that the distribution of scores was fairly homogeneous among participants. This means that the majority of students shared similar levels of familiarity with Biak folklore and similar levels of competence in comprehending English texts. Overall, the findings show a consistent pattern in which students demonstrated positive achievement in both variables examined in this study. This pattern supports the relevance of examining the relationship between students' cultural familiarity and their reading comprehension competence in the present study.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students' familiarity with Biak folklore is positively related to their English reading comprehension competence. This result shows that local cultural knowledge can support students in understanding English texts. Students who are familiar with Biak folktales have prior knowledge related to story themes, characters, moral values, and narrative structures. This familiarity helps them connect the information in English texts with cultural knowledge they already possess.

This finding is relevant to Schema Theory, which explains that reading comprehension is influenced by readers' prior knowledge. Grabe and Stoller (2013) state that successful reading comprehension involves interaction between textual information and readers' existing knowledge. Similarly, Koda (2011) explains that second language reading comprehension is strongly supported by background knowledge because it helps learners interpret meaning beyond linguistic forms. In this study, Biak folklore functions as a form of cultural schema that helps students understand English texts more effectively.

The findings also support the concept of cultural familiarity in reading comprehension. Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979) argue that readers understand texts more easily when the cultural content is familiar to them. This explains why students who are familiar with Biak folklore tend to show better reading comprehension. Familiar cultural content reduces students' cognitive

burden because they do not have to struggle with unfamiliar contexts. Instead, they can focus more on understanding vocabulary, sentence meaning, main ideas, and implied messages in the text.

This result is also in line with previous studies on folklore and local culture-based English learning. Savitri (2018) found that folklore-based reading materials help students understand English texts because the themes and contexts are familiar to learners. Hamral (2018) also explains that folktales can support vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. In addition, Fadhli (2020) emphasizes that Indonesian folktales can be used as learning media to integrate local wisdom into EFL classrooms. These studies show that folklore has pedagogical value in language learning because it connects English texts with students' cultural experiences.

However, this study has a different focus from previous studies. While earlier research generally discussed folklore as teaching material in English learning, this study specifically examines the correlation between students' familiarity with Biak folklore and their English reading comprehension competence. The local context of Biak, Papua, also gives this study a distinctive contribution because Biak folklore has not been widely examined in relation to English reading comprehension. Therefore, this study strengthens the argument that local cultural resources from Papua can be used not only for cultural preservation but also for improving English learning.

Another important aspect highlighted by this study is the relevance of contextual learning in English language education. Learning becomes more meaningful when students are able to connect classroom materials with their everyday experiences and socio-cultural environment. In the context of Biak, folklore represents a form of cultural knowledge that students have acquired through family interactions, community activities, and local traditions. Consequently, when cultural elements familiar to students are incorporated into reading materials, learners are more likely to engage actively with the text and interpret information more effectively.

The findings also suggest that the integration of local culture into English instruction should not be viewed merely as an effort to preserve cultural heritage. Rather, local culture can serve as an instructional resource that supports the achievement of language learning objectives. Through culturally relevant materials, students are encouraged to interact with English texts in a way that feels familiar and meaningful. This condition may contribute to increased motivation and reading engagement, which are important factors in the development of reading competence.

Furthermore, the present study contributes to the growing body of literature on culturally responsive language teaching. While previous studies have generally examined folklore as a teaching material, this study specifically demonstrates that students' familiarity with local folklore is associated with their reading comprehension competence. This distinction provides additional evidence that cultural knowledge should be considered an important element in the design of English learning materials, particularly in culturally diverse regions such as Papua.

The positive correlation found in this study implies that English teachers should consider integrating Biak folklore into reading materials. Biak folktales can be adapted into English texts so that students can learn English through familiar cultural content. This approach may increase students' motivation, make reading activities more meaningful, and strengthen students' cultural identity. Thus, the integration of Biak folklore in English reading instruction can serve both pedagogical and cultural purposes.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the relationship between senior high school students' familiarity with Biak folklore and their competence in English reading comprehension. Using a quantitative correlational design involving 120 students, the findings reveal that students generally demonstrate a fairly high level of familiarity with Biak folklore as well as a high level of English reading comprehension competence. The results further indicate a positive and statistically significant correlation between these two variables, showing that students who are more familiar with Biak folklore tend to have better comprehension of English reading texts.

Beyond the correlational relationship, the regression analysis confirms that familiarity with Biak folklore has a significant effect on students' English reading comprehension competence. This suggests that local cultural knowledge functions as more than background information; it actively supports students' ability to interpret meaning, understand narrative structures, and engage with English texts more effectively. These findings align with theories of schema and cultural familiarity, which emphasize the role of prior knowledge in facilitating reading comprehension in a foreign language.

The study highlights the pedagogical value of integrating local folklore into English language instruction, particularly in culturally rich contexts such as Biak. Incorporating Biak folklore into reading materials not only enhances students' comprehension but also strengthens their cultural identity and learning motivation. Nevertheless, this study is limited to a correlational design and a

specific regional context. Future research may explore experimental approaches or broader samples to further examine the impact of local culture-based materials on English reading comprehension. Such studies are expected to contribute more widely to the development of contextualized and culturally responsive English language teaching practices.

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