



Culturally Sustaining Writing Instruction: The Role of Maluku Local Wisdom Values in EFL Descriptive Text

Natalia Manuhutu^{1*}, Zulfa Sakhiyya²

¹Universitas Musamus, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

*Correspondence to: manuhutu_fkip@unmus.ac.id

Abstract: This study investigates the integration of Maluku local wisdom into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction in a junior high school in Maluku, Indonesia. It aims to explore: 1) how Maluku wisdom values can be integrated into EFL writing lessons; 2) the impact of this integration on students' writing performance, and 3) students' perceptions of culturally responsive writing tasks. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observation, document analysis, teacher interviews, student writing samples (pre-test and post-test), and student reflections. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis within the culturally sustaining pedagogy framework. The findings revealed that Maluku wisdom values were embedded across writing stages through culturally contextualized topics, teacher prompts, and feedback. Students' post-integration writing showed notable improvements in content development, organization, vocabulary use, and connection to local culture. Reflections and interviews revealed that students felt more engaged, confident, and proud of expressing their identity in English. The study concludes that integrating local wisdom into EFL writing enhances both language proficiency and cultural awareness. This research contributes to the field of culturally sustaining pedagogy and highlights the importance of localizing EFL instruction to promote meaningful learning and identity formation in multilingual contexts.

Keywords: EFL descriptive text; Maluku local wisdom values; writing instruction

Recommended citation: Manuhutu, N., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2026). Culturally Sustaining Writing Instruction: The Role of Maluku Local Wisdom Values in EFL Descriptive Text. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*, 7(2), 206-215.

INTRODUCTION

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, writing has traditionally been taught through formulaic models that emphasize structure, coherence, and grammar, without fully considering students' cultural identities or lived experiences (Ardhi et al., 2025; Barrot, 2021). While such models may improve linguistic accuracy, they often leave students disengaged and disconnected from the content they produce. This disconnect is particularly pronounced in settings where students possess rich local traditions and cultural knowledge that are rarely acknowledged in classroom instruction (Karomah et al., 2024; Septiyana et al., 2024). In Indonesia, where more than 700 local languages and cultural identities coexist, the marginalization of local wisdom in EFL classrooms has become a growing concern for educators aiming to promote both language development and cultural sustainability (Huszka et al., 2024; Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014; Paldi, 2017). As globalized pedagogies dominate curriculum development, the integration of indigenous knowledge systems remains minimal (Shahjahan et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2011).

A preliminary study found that writing tasks were often limited to generic prompts in commercial textbooks, with little connection to students' lived cultural experiences. When interviewed, several students expressed that they struggled to find personal meaning in the topics and often resorted to copying sample texts. Teachers also noted students' lack of enthusiasm and the shallow content of their writing assignments. Interestingly, when asked to describe local traditions such as village clean-up events or family ceremonies, students responded with greater confidence, emotional investment, and fluency, even if their grammar was imperfect. It highlights a clear gap between the writing curriculum and students' cultural realities. It suggests that integrating local culture could serve as a culturally responsive foundation for writing instruction (Fu, 2018).

Kalesang is a traditional value system in Maluku that centers on communal responsibility for care, environmental stewardship, and social harmony (Acim et al., 2019; Umanailo, 2020). The term derives from local expressions that emphasize collective effort to clean, protect, and maintain the environment as a moral and social obligation (Manuhutu et al., 2025a, 2025b). It encapsulates both physical acts, such as cleaning one's village, and deeper ethical principles, including mutual respect and communal solidarity (Umanailo, 2020). Despite its significance in shaping everyday social life in Maluku, *Kalesang* has received limited attention in educational contexts, particularly within the English curriculum. As a concept rooted in place, identity, and community ethics, *Kalesang* offers a meaningful framework for students to explore topics relevant to their lived experiences while practising EFL descriptive writing. Integrating such values into language education could serve dual purposes: improving students' expressive skills and sustaining the cultural narratives that define their communities. The need to make writing instruction more culturally responsive aligns with the growing

scholarship on culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Peristeris, 2017), which calls for validating and incorporating students' cultural identities in the classroom.

This approach argues that instead of merely accommodating cultural diversity, educators should actively sustain it by drawing upon students' heritage languages, traditions, and epistemologies (Sarsenbaeva, 2021). Applied to EFL contexts, this means moving beyond culturally neutral or Western-centric writing topics to include narratives and values that are locally meaningful (Hasnah et al., 2024; Ratminingsih et al., 2020; Mahardika, 2018). Several studies have shown that when students write about familiar cultural experiences, their texts demonstrate more vivid detail, greater emotional engagement, and improved organization (Abdi et al., 2024; Meletiadou, 2022; Xiao et al., 2023). However, these studies are often based in different cultural contexts and do not examine indigenous Indonesian value systems such as *Kalesang*. As such, there is a need to explore how a culturally sustaining approach can be operationalized in Indonesian high schools, especially in underrepresented regions such as Haruru, Maluku.

Moreover, research in EFL writing has long recognized writing as a meaning-making process rather than a mechanical skill. Hyland (2024) and Flowerdew (2012) emphasize that writing should not be separated from the social and cultural contexts that inform students' thinking. Previous studies on integrating local culture into English language teaching have shown multiple benefits. It enhances students' writing skills, increases their motivation, and promotes character education (Thresia, 2015). This approach also improves students' awareness of their local culture while developing their global English proficiency (Kanoksilapatham, 2015). Incorporating local culture facilitates English learning by providing familiar contexts, making materials more accessible and relevant to students (Margana, 2009). Furthermore, it supports character development by highlighting moral values and local wisdom inherent in students' cultural backgrounds (Sukarno, 2012). Teachers are thus encouraged to include local cultural content alongside target language culture, especially in lessons focused on productive skills such as writing (Margana, 2009; Sukarno, 2012).

Despite the theoretical promise of integrating local wisdom into EFL writing instruction, empirical research on its practical application remains limited, particularly in the Indonesian high school context. Prior efforts in Indonesia have largely centered on incorporating local culture into reading texts or speaking activities, often within the framework of character education (Munandar, 2023; Romrome & Ena, 2022). Writing, particularly in the descriptive genre, remains underexplored. Moreover, the limited studies that do address cultural content tend to treat it as a thematic filler rather than a core instructional component. This gap presents an opportunity to develop and document a writing instruction model that is rooted in local values, responsive to students' cultural identities, and aligned with national curriculum goals. Such a model could contribute not only to improved pedagogical practice but also to a deeper theoretical understanding of how local knowledge systems can inform the development of second language writing.

This study, therefore, aims to fill a gap at the intersection of local wisdom, EFL writing instruction, and student identity. It offers a novel contribution by positioning local cultural knowledge, specifically the Maluku value of *Kalesang*, not merely as content but as a pedagogical foundation for designing writing instruction. By doing so, it reframes culture from being an optional supplement to becoming a driving force in EFL pedagogy. The innovation lies in developing a culturally responsive writing model that is contextualized, student-centered, and aligned with the competencies outlined in Indonesia's national curriculum. This research contributes to the scientific field in several ways. Theoretically, it expands the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy by illustrating how indigenous knowledge systems can shape second language writing instruction in meaningful ways. Pedagogically, it provides practical strategies and classroom-tested tasks that show how local wisdom can enhance student engagement, linguistic performance, and identity expression in writing.

This study sets out to achieve three key objectives. First, it seeks to explore how the local cultural values embedded in *Kalesang* can be meaningfully integrated into high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction. Second, it aims to examine the extent to which this cultural integration impacts students' writing performance, particularly in terms of content richness, language use, and engagement. Finally, the study investigates students' perceptions of incorporating *Kalesang* wisdom into their English writing tasks, focusing on how this cultural relevance influences their motivation, identity expression, and overall learning experience.

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018) to explore how local wisdom, specifically *Kalesang* from Maluku, can be integrated into high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction, and how this integration affects students' writing performance, cultural awareness, and perceptions. A case study approach was selected due to its suitability for in-depth, context-bound investigations of educational phenomena in real-life classroom settings (Spector et al., 2014). The research was grounded in the theoretical framework of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), which emphasizes the importance of preserving and validating students' cultural backgrounds in formal learning environments. The study was conducted at SMP Kristen Haruru, a private junior high school in Amahai District, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku, Indonesia, specifically in a ninth-grade EFL classroom. A total of 30 students (aged 15-16) participated

in the study. Participants were selected purposively based on their enrollment in an EFL writing course that aligned with the national curriculum, which requires students to produce descriptive texts. All students had prior exposure to descriptive writing but had not previously encountered the integration of local wisdom into English writing tasks. In addition to student participants, the study involved three EFL teachers who participated in semi-structured interviews to provide insights into instructional practices and perceptions regarding the integration of *Kalesang* values. Furthermore, ten students were selected for follow-up interviews using maximum variation sampling, with selection criteria based on differences in writing performance, levels of engagement in the culturally informed tasks, and gender.

Data were collected through classroom observations, document analysis, teacher interviews, students' writing tests (pre-test and post-test), reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews with students. The observations and document analysis helped capture how *Kalesang* values were integrated into the EFL writing instruction, while the teacher interviews provided further explanation of instructional choices and perceptions. The first writing task served as a baseline to capture their initial ability, while the second reflected their writing after engaging with materials and prompts that incorporated *Kalesang* values. These writing tasks were assessed using an analytical scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2001), which included five indicators: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Construct validity was established through expert judgment by two EFL lecturers and one curriculum developer, confirming that the tasks measured the intended construct: descriptive writing ability enriched with culturally embedded content (Lander & Brown, 1995). In addition to the writing tasks, students' reflective journals offered insights into their engagement with the materials, personal growth, and cultural awareness during the instructional process. Finally, semi-structured interviews with selected students provided deeper insights into how they experienced and interpreted the integration of *Kalesang* values into their English writing tasks.

The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach. For classroom observations, document analysis, and teacher interview transcripts, the analysis focused on identifying strategies, materials, and teacher rationales that demonstrated the incorporation of *Kalesang* values into EFL instruction. Codes were generated to capture how local wisdom was embedded in lesson planning, instructional discourse, and learning tasks. For the students' writing tasks, a descriptive comparative analysis was conducted between pre- and post-instruction texts. While an analytical scoring rubric (content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics) was used internally to identify patterns and track improvements, numerical scores were not reported.

Instead, representative excerpts were selected to qualitatively illustrate students' growth in coherence, descriptive depth, and cultural expression. These writing samples were then coded to detect shifts in language use and cultural embedding aligned with the instructional goals. Students' reflective journal entries and semi-structured interview transcripts were also coded thematically. The analysis was informed by the theoretical lens of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012) emphasizing cultural relevance, student voice, and the use of local knowledge as a resource for meaningful language development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings related to the first research question: How are *Kalesang* values integrated into EFL writing instruction? The integration was examined through classroom observations, teaching materials and documents, and teachers' interviews. The incorporation of *Kalesang* values into writing instruction is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Integration of *Kalesang* Values in EFL Writing Instruction

Stage	<i>Kalesang</i> Integration Strategy	Example Practice	Instrument	Example of Excerpts
Brainstorming	Local context activation	Students brainstorm about local landmarks and how to care for them	Observation, Interview, Lesson Plan	T1: "I start with pictures of local beaches and ask students to say what <i>Kalesang</i> means in that place." Lesson Plan: "Ask students to list three ways to care for a place they love."
Stage	<i>Kalesang</i>	Example Practice	Instrument	Example of Excerpts

Integration Strategy				
While-Writing	Embedding action and reflection into writing content	Writing prompts encourage students to write about actions that reflect <i>Kalesang</i> values	Observation, Student Worksheet	Observation: "Students use verbs like 'protect,' 'maintain,' and 'preserve.'" T2: "I tell them to include not just what the place looks like, but what we can do to keep it beautiful."
Post-Writing	Guided reflection on values embedded in writing	Students reflect on their message and ethical value	Interview, Lesson Plan	Lesson Plan: "Post-writing task: What do you want readers to learn from your writing?" T3: "After they write, I ask them, 'What is the value behind your story?'"
Teacher's Prompt	Value-infused task framing	Tasks are adapted to include moral and cultural relevance	Document Analysis, Interview	Worksheet Prompt: "Write a paragraph about your favorite place and how to take care of it." T1: "I modify textbook prompts to include <i>Kalesang</i> , it makes the task feel closer to them."
Feedback	Emphasizing value-oriented language and message	Teachers highlight how students express care or community responsibility	Observation, Interview	Observation Notes: "Teacher praises a student's use of local values in the conclusion." T2: "You can be more specific about what people should do, that's part of <i>Kalesang</i> too."
Evaluation	Balancing formal criteria with appreciation for value integration	Moral messages acknowledged alongside grammar and structure	Interview, Student Writing Sample	T3: "If a student writes something really good about caring for our island, I mention it in my comments." Student Sample: "Let's protect our beach by not throwing trash. That is part of <i>Kalesang</i> ."

The integration of *Kalesang* values into EFL writing instruction revealed a multi-stage instructional model in which moral and cultural values were purposefully embedded within standard writing pedagogy. This integration was evident across six pedagogical stages: brainstorming, while writing, post-writing, teacher's prompt, feedback, and evaluation. Data collected through classroom observations, document analysis, interviews, and student work demonstrated how *Kalesang*, a local philosophy centered on care, responsibility, and stewardship, was operationalized to enrich students' language-learning experience. Classroom observations captured how teachers introduced and reinforced *Kalesang* themes during various writing stages, while document analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials provided evidence of how these values were

intentionally designed and integrated into instructional content. In the brainstorming stage, the activation of local context emerged as a consistent and strategic pedagogical move. Teachers initiated discussions around familiar landmarks, cultural events, and community practices, such as the value of *Kalesang*, to anchor students' thinking in their lived experiences. This emphasis on place-based, culturally embedded thinking did more than simply support topic generation; it invited students to engage in moral reflection and community-centered meaning-making from the outset of the writing task. Unlike prior studies that have addressed cultural integration as thematic decoration or supplementary content (Munandar, 2023; Romrome & Ena, 2022), this study positions local culture specifically, the moral imperative of environmental and communal care embedded in *Kalesang* as a foundational cognitive and affective entry point in the writing process. This shift represents a novel pedagogical insight that local wisdom is not merely content to write about, but a scaffolding tool that frames students' initial thinking, shapes their emotional engagement, and fosters value-based reflection even before drafting begins. Teacher reflections documented the deliberate use of culturally meaningful images and open-ended questioning to stimulate students' ethical reasoning during brainstorming, a step that was not emphasized in similar research (Abdi et al., 2024; Meletiadiou, 2022). From a theoretical standpoint, this model aligns with Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012), but advances it by demonstrating a stage-specific application that cultural values are embedded not just in the content of writing but in the early cognitive processes of composing. This adds to the literature by showing how culturally responsive strategies can be intentionally woven into each stage of writing instruction, beginning with idea generation, rather than added as surface-level themes.

During the while-writing phase, students were purposefully guided to incorporate action-oriented language that conveyed ethical responsibility toward their environment. Writing prompts moved beyond standard descriptive cues and instead challenged students to reflect on their role in sustaining communal spaces, grounded in the Maluku value of *Kalesang*. The consistent appearance of verbs such as "protect," "maintain," and "preserve" in student compositions illustrates a shift from static descriptions to ethically motivated action-based narratives. This integration of moral agency into linguistic expression marks a departure from conventional EFL writing instruction, which typically emphasizes structural coherence and vocabulary while foregrounding neither students' ethical stance nor their socio-cultural obligations (Song & Song, 2023). What distinguishes this study from prior research is the intentional alignment of moral reasoning with genre-specific language features, particularly in the descriptive writing genre, an area where such integration has rarely been explored in the Indonesian EFL context. While earlier studies (Sukarno, 2012; Thresia, 2015) have advocated character education as a separate goal, this study demonstrates how ethical reasoning can be embedded within the linguistic fabric of writing itself. This dual focus enriches the genre by transforming it into a medium for both linguistic performance and cultural reflection.

The post-writing stage further amplifies this innovation. Here, students were asked not only to revise for grammar or organization but also to reflect explicitly on the moral messages embedded in their texts. This form of reflective writing, prompted by questions such as "What values do you want your reader to understand?", reframed the revision process as a meaning-making exercise grounded in cultural identity. Prior research often treats the post-writing phase as a technical review session (Demir, 2021; Jafari & Dashtestani, 2025; Peng & Barrot, 2023). In contrast, this study positions it as a metacognitive and ethical consolidation stage where students affirm their cultural voice in English. By demonstrating that students, both introverts and extroverts, can articulate culturally rooted values through genre-appropriate English, this study adds a novel layer to the pedagogical discussion. It moves the discourse from writing as merely a communicative or grammatical exercise toward writing as a moral and cultural act, especially when guided by local wisdom such as *Kalesang*. Therefore, the contribution of this research lies in offering an instructional model where local ethics are not simply topics of writing but become discursive tools that shape language use, genre structure, and student identity simultaneously, an integration not fully explored in previous literature.

Finally, the evaluation process, which included feedback and evaluation, reflected a balanced approach in which moral substance was considered alongside formal writing criteria. Teachers awarded credit to students who effectively integrated *Kalesang* principles, emphasizing the dual goals of language proficiency and ethical expression. Student samples demonstrated the ability to integrate grammar and structure with messages about environmental responsibility and social consciousness, suggesting that cultural values can coexist with academic objectives. This kind of assessment echoes Flowerdew's (2012) assertion that effective writing pedagogy should evaluate how well students convey meaning, not just how well they adhere to form. Teachers' responses validated students' moral reflections and cultural awareness, creating a learning environment where identity, language, and values could coexist. This is especially crucial in EFL settings where students may feel pressure to conform to Western norms of writing that often neglect local voices (Hasnah et al., 2024; Xiao et al., 2023). The next objective of the study is to explore how the embedding of Maluku wisdom can enhance students' writing performance. Data from students' writing were assessed both descriptively and analytically, with reflections included to provide additional insights. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Pre- and Post-Test Student Writing with Reflections on *Kalesang* Integration

Pre-test writing	Post-test Writing	Supporting Quotes (Reflections/Interview)
Mostly physical descriptions of Kuta Beach. E.g: "I see many people on beach."	Cultural functions, environmental values, personal reflection on Kuako Beach. E.g "The musicians use local instruments, and the stories they tell are about the history and legends of Maluku."	"Now I write more because I know what to say, it's about my place, my people." (R15)
Repetitive adjectives (big, fun, good). E.g: "Beach is very big and long."	Descriptive phrases (peaceful moments, rich culture, traditional music and dance performances). E.g: "Kuako Beach is a quiet and beautiful place... stage for traditional cultural shows."	"Before I only said 'beautiful', now I use new words like 'thrilling', 'traditional', 'respect'." (R1)
List-like sentences, disjointed transitions. E.g: "I see many shop near beach. Shop sell clothes and food." Rare or no mention of environmental or cultural values. E.g: "Beach fun to watch video. I like color water very much."	Paragraph unity with topic sentences and elaboration. E.g: "These facilities make Kuako Beach a great place for families and friends to enjoy their time together." Post-test writings referenced local care for the beach and respect for nature. Reflections connected writing to personal values. E.g: "The local people take good care of the beach by keeping it clean... showing their respect for nature and their culture."	"Learning with <i>Kalesang</i> helped me organize my writing like telling a story, not just listing." (R14) "I realize writing is not just words, but can show my values. I write to share how we respect the beach." (R8)
Short responses with low engagement. E.g: Beach very crowded. I think good place visit."	Students wrote longer, more engaged responses post-integration. E.g: "Visiting Kuako Beach is not just about having fun; it is also about being part of a friendly community that loves and protects the environment while celebrating their traditions."	"It's easier to write now. I'm not just writing for score but to show something important." "I feel proud to write about my beach and my culture." (R6)

The transformation observed in students' writing between the pre- and post-test stages reveals the significant impact of integrating *Kalesang* values into EFL instruction. One key reason for the improved writing quality is the activation of culturally grounded content that is both personally relevant and emotionally resonant (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2020; Sulistyawati et al., 2022; Sutrisno et al., 2024). Before the integration of *Kalesang*, students' writing was often vague, repetitive, and structurally fragmented. This can be attributed to a lack of meaningful content to write about (Ng et al., 2022), leading students to rely on generic, surface-level descriptions of well-known tourist spots. However, the introduction of *Kalesang* principles provided them with a deeper sense of ownership and purpose in writing. As respondent 5 reflected: "*I write more because I know what to say, it's about my place, my people.*" This supports the idea that when students are given opportunities to write about topics rooted in their lived experiences and cultural knowledge, their expressive abilities expand naturally (Benaired & Benali Reguieg, 2024; Fitria, 2024; Huang & Noknoi, 2025; Kristiantari et al., 2023).

The shift from list-like, disjointed sentences to more unified and elaborated paragraphs also highlights how cultural integration supports cognitive and linguistic development. The students began to organize their ideas more coherently, as evidenced by their ability to produce topic sentences, support their details, and reflect on broader social meanings. The development of value-driven writing also reflects a deeper moral engagement with the writing process. Writing shifted from being a purely academic task to a form of ethical self-expression. One student (R8) noted: "*I realize writing is not just words but can show my values.*" This illustrates how integrating local philosophies such as *Kalesang* can turn writing instruction into a vehicle for both language acquisition and character education. Moreover, the increase in student engagement, evident in longer, more reflective responses and greater enthusiasm, suggests that value-based instruction enhances motivation and student agency. When students feel that their writing has personal and social significance, they become more invested in the process. This insight is particularly valuable for EFL contexts where motivation and meaningful content are often challenges. Lastly, the analysis of students' responses revealed four major themes that highlight the pedagogical and socio-cultural impact of using local content, specifically the concept of *Kalesang*

and local tourism, in teaching descriptive writing. These themes are discussed below with supporting excerpts and argumentation.

Table 3. Themes are discussed on Kalesang Integration

Theme	Sub-theme	Example of Excerpt
Understanding and Internalization of "Kalesang" Values	<i>Kalesang</i> as a personal and social ethic	"As a boy, I must stay away from negative things like smoking... also keep my home and school environment clean." (R8)
	<i>Kalesang</i> as a motivational concept for writing	"I used what I know about 'Kalesang' to invite others to keep the beach clean." (R7)
Empowerment through Local Content Writing as a Vehicle for Social Contribution	Familiarity as a foundation for writing	"Because I already know those tourist places, I understand what I need to write." (R6)
	Promoting eco-awareness and social responsibility	"Writing about tourist places can be a way to remind people to take care of cleanliness and the environment." (R8)
Support Writing Confidence	Linking writing to tourism and the economy	"If others read my writing, they might visit those places, and that can help the local economy."
	Content-context alignment increases motivation.	"This assignment made me excited because the topic was about a place I know and love." (R10)
	Strengthening place identity and cultural pride	"By writing about my own region, I feel proud and learn more about Masohi's tourism potential." (R9)

The thematic findings highlight how integrating *Kalesang* values into writing instruction deeply impacted students' understanding, motivation, and sense of purpose in writing. These results can be understood through four interconnected themes: 1) Understanding and Internalization of "Kalesang" Values; 2) Empowerment through Local Content; 3) Writing as a Vehicle for Social Contribution, and (4) Support for Writing Confidence. Students demonstrated a shift from abstract knowledge of *Kalesang* to a more personal and actionable understanding. They internalized *Kalesang* as a personal and social ethic, recognizing it as a guide to behaviour such as avoiding smoking and maintaining cleanliness (Umanailo, 2020). This suggests that *Kalesang* was not only understood cognitively but adopted as a meaningful life principle. For example, R8's reflection emphasizes how *Kalesang* shaped both personal habits and social responsibility. Moreover, students began to view *Kalesang* as a motivational concept for writing. Rather than writing for academic compliance, students like R7 used *Kalesang* to craft persuasive, purpose-driven messages. This points to a critical pedagogical outcome that students wrote with the intention to influence and inspire others, reflecting an elevated sense of audience awareness and ethical intent.

Many students saw writing not just as an academic activity, but as a means of contributing to the community. By writing about environmental care and local tourism, students like R8 framed their work as a public reminder of eco-responsibility. This aligns with the *Kalesang* principle, which emphasizes stewardship and collective well-being. Some students extended this view by linking their writing to tourism and local economic potential, recognizing that written texts can shape perceptions and even attract visitors. This shows a level of social foresight that goes beyond language learning in which students began to view writing as an act with real-world impact (Suhendi, 2018; Zhao, 2023). Such outcomes indicate a transformation in students' understanding of writing from a classroom task to a community-centered tool. It aligns with previous studies (Stanton et al., 2019; Winsch et al., 2025) that emphasize how writing, when connected to students' lived experiences and social contexts, can foster civic engagement, cultural awareness, and a sense of agency to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

A consistent pattern in the data is the rise in students' confidence and motivation when the content aligns with their context. R10 noted feeling more enthusiastic when writing about a topic they personally cared about. This increased engagement reflects the importance of emotional investment in writing, which has been shown to positively affect both effort and quality (Schutz & Muis, 2024). As Huang (2023) stated, when students are emotionally connected to the topic, they are more likely to invest cognitive and affective resources, resulting in deeper reflection, richer language use, and improved overall writing performance. Additionally, students like R9 expressed pride in place identity and cultural knowledge. Writing about their own regions allowed them to rediscover and celebrate local strengths, reinforcing both self-esteem and sociocultural awareness. This sense of pride and belonging is particularly important in language learning, as it validates students' voices and identities in an academic space often dominated by external norms. To sum up, the findings revealed that students internalized *Kalesang* not only as a cultural concept but also as a personal and social ethic, empowering them to write with greater intentionality and audience awareness. Familiarity with local content reduced cognitive

load and enhanced fluency, allowing students to focus on structure and coherence while drawing from lived experiences. Writing became a vehicle for social contribution, with students promoting environmental care, cultural pride, and even local economic potential, reflecting a shift from classroom-based tasks to community-centered expression. This transformation was accompanied by increased confidence and engagement, as students felt validated in writing about meaningful topics. Ultimately, the findings underscore the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy in fostering language development, identity formation, and civic-mindedness.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that integrating *Kalesang* wisdom into high school EFL writing instruction enhances students' writing performance, cultural awareness, and sense of identity. Drawing from the research purpose of exploring how local cultural values can enrich EFL pedagogy, the findings reveal that embedding *Kalesang* themes into the writing process fosters more reflective, coherent, and meaningful student writing. Students moved beyond basic descriptions to express deeper insights connected to their local environment, traditions, and personal values, indicating that culturally responsive instruction can significantly impact language development and student engagement. The findings have important pedagogical implications. Applying these results can empower educators to design more relevant, student-centered writing instruction that validates local knowledge and affirms cultural identity. Schools and curriculum developers can adopt this model to bridge the gap between national standards and local realities, fostering inclusive learning environments where students feel represented. In practice, this approach can lead to higher motivation, greater linguistic confidence, and richer classroom discourse. Moreover, by positioning students as cultural narrators in the global English landscape, this model helps prepare them to engage in intercultural communication with a strong sense of rootedness. This study contributes to the field of applied linguistics and language education by providing a replicable framework for integrating indigenous knowledge systems into EFL curriculum design. In multilingual and multicultural contexts like Indonesia, incorporating local wisdom, such as *Kalesang*, offers a sustainable path forward that values both global competencies and cultural continuity. The impact of applying this model, therefore, extends beyond writing classrooms, supporting national efforts in cultural preservation, character education, and equitable language learning.

REFERENCES

- Abdi, M. T., Bui, G., & Wang, Y. (2024). The Effects of Topic Familiarity on Emotionality and Linguistic Complexity in EAP Writing. *Language Teaching Research*, 28, 1616–1634.
- Acim, A., Situmorang, R., & Salenussa, B. J. (2019). Reviewing Maluku's Local Culture Through Multicultural Education Approaches. *Asia Proceedings of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 99-101.
- Ardhi, M. A., Dewi, D. S., & Adam, A. (2025). Exploring the Correlation Between Cultural Intelligence and Writing Performance Among EFL Learners. *Language and Education Journal*, 10(1), 123–139.
- Barrot, J. S. (2021). Effects of Facebook-Based E-Portfolio on ESL Learners' Writing Performance. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 34(1), 95–111.
- Benaired, A., & Benali Reguieg, N. (2024). Enhancing EFL Learners' Communicative Skills Through Dramatisation of Lessons. *Journal of Languages and Translation*, 4(2), 203–210.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Brown, H.D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (Edisi ke-2). Pearson Longman.
- Cohn, A. C., & Ravindranath, M. (2014). Local Languages in Indonesia: Language Maintenance or Language Shift? *Linguistik Indonesia*, 32(2), 131–148.
- Demir, C. (2021). Determining Efficient Post-Writing Activity for Error Correction: Self-Editing, Peer Review, or Teacher Feedback? *Porta Linguarum*, (36), 101–117.
- Fitria, T. N. (2024). Creative Writing Skills in English: Developing Student's Potential and Creativity. *EBONY: Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature*, 4(1), 1–17.
- Flowerdew, J. (2012). English for Research Publication Purposes. In *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*.
- Fu, W. (2018). Read from Local to Global: A Culture-Based Reading Material. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(2), 57–65.
- Hasnah, Y., Ginting, P., Saragih, M., Kharisma, A. J., & Sari, P. L. P. (2024). A Probe into Local Cultural Values

- in Locally Produced EFL Textbooks in Indonesia. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies*, 24(3), 648–661.
- Huang, J. (2023). Relations Between Teacher-Student Relationship Quality, Emotional Engagement, And Writing Performance. *Language Teaching Research*.
- Huang, Z., & Noknoi, K. (2025). The Application of Chinese Folk Ritual Dance in Teaching : The Integration of Cultural Identity Inheritance and Innovative Education. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 13(2), 460–468.
- Huszka, B., Stark, A., & Aini, I. (2024). Linguistic Sustainability: Challenges and Strategies of Preserving Minority and Indigenous Languages-The Case of Indonesia. *International Journal of Arts and Social Science*, 7(6), 147–160.
- Hyland, K. (2024). Ken Hyland’s Essential Bookshelf: Academic Writing. *Language Teaching*, 57(3), 399–407.
- Jafari, R., & Dashtestani, S. R. (2025). Investigating Iranian PhD TEFL Candidates’ Perceptions of an Online Collaborative Academic Writing Course: The Case of Writing Research Article Abstracts. *Applied Research on English Language*, 1(1), 131–162.
- Kanoksilapatham, B. (2015). Developing Young Learners' Local Culture Awareness and Global English: Integrated Instruction. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 5(9), 676–682.
- Karomah, L., & Masyuri, M. (2024, Desember). Cultural Resilience In The Era Of Globalization: Maintaining Heritage And Local Wisdom For Future Generations. In *Proceeding of International Conference on Education, Society and Humanity* (Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 1635-1641).
- Kristiantari, M. G. R., Widiyana, I. W., & Artawan, G. (2023). Enhancing the Ability to Write Poetry and Creative Thinking Skills with Rural Nature-Inspired Contextual Approach. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 12(2), 761–770.
- Lilomaiaava-Doktor, S. (2020). Oral Traditions, Cultural Significance of Storytelling, and Samoan Understandings of Place or Fanua. *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, 7(1), 121–151.
- Mahardika, I. G. N. A. W. (2018). Incorporating Local Culture in English Teaching Material for Undergraduate Students. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 42(1):00080.
- Manuhutu, N., Hartono, R., Faridi, A., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2025a). Integration of Maluku Local Wisdom “Kalesang” Values Through FRESH Technique in Writing Descriptive Text: Introvert and Extrovert Students’ Point of View. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 17, e2025303.
- Manuhutu, N., Hartono, R., Faridi, A., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2025b). Developing Introverted and Extroverted Students’ Descriptive Writing Through Kalesang Values and FRESH Technique. *Jurnal Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*, 4(2), 302-313.
- Margana, M. (2009). Integrating Local Culture Into English Teaching and Learning Process. *Kajian Linguistik Dan Sastra*, 21(2), 123–131.
- Meletiadiou, E. (2022). Using Educational Digital Storytelling to Enhance Multilingual Students’ Writing Skills in Higher Education. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 10(2), 111–130.
- Munandar, M. I. (2023). Interculturality, Native-Speakerism and Authenticity: Paradoxes in Indonesia’s EFL Pedagogy. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 1–21.
- Ng, D. T. K., Luo, W., Chan, H. M. Y., & Chu, S. K. W. (2022). Using Digital Story Writing as a Pedagogy to Develop AI Literacy Among Primary Students. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 3.
- Paldi, Z. (2017). *Go Hungary - Go Indonesia: Understanding Culture and Society* (Book 2). Budapest Business School.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93–97.
- Peng, Y., & Barrot, J. S. (2023). Post-Writing Form-Focused Instruction in Process-Genre-Oriented Writing Classrooms: Effects on Second Language Learners’ Writing Accuracy. *Porta Linguarum*, 2023(39).
- Peristeris, K. (2017). Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 11(1), 35–37.
- Ratminingsih, N. M., Budasi, I. G., & Kurnia, W. D. A. (2020). Local Culture-Based Storybook and Its Effect on Reading Competence. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(2), 253–268.
- Romrome, A. Y., & Ena, O. T. (2022). Incorporating Local Culture in English Language Teaching for Papuan

- Junior High School Students. *Journal of English Education and Teaching*, 6(2), 207–221.
- Sarsenbaeva, Z. (2021). The Development of Intercultural Competence as an Essential Element in Learning EFL. *National Association of Scientists*, 1(37(64)), 21–24.
- Schutz, P. A., & Muis, K. R. (2024). Handbook of Educational Psychology. In *Choice Reviews Online*, 34(6).
- Septiyana, L., Ali, M., & Putra, K. A. (2024). Integrating Islamic Values and Lampung Local Wisdom in Developing Literal Reading Materials for EFL Students. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*, 5(3), 464–473.
- Shahjahan, R. A., Estera, A. L., Surla, K. L., & Edwards, K. T. (2022). “Decolonizing” Curriculum and Pedagogy: A Comparative Review Across Disciplines and Global Higher Education Contexts. *Review of Educational Research*, 92(1).
- Song, C., & Song, Y. (2023). Enhancing Academic Writing Skills and Motivation: Assessing the Efficacy of ChatGPT In AI-Assisted Language Learning for EFL Students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14(Desember), 1–14.
- Spector, J. M., Merrill, M. D., Elen, J., & Bishop, M. J. (2014). *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology* (Edisi ke-4).
- Stanton, C. R., Hall, B., & Carjuzaa, J. (2019). The Digital Storywork Partnership: Community-Centered Social Studies to Revitalize Indigenous Histories and Cultural Knowledges. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 43(2), 97–108.
- Suhendi, A. (2018). Constructivist Learning Theory: The Contribution to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching. *KnE Social Sciences*, 87-95.
- Sukarno, S. (2012). Integrating Local Cultures in Teaching English as a Foreign Language for Character Building. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, (2), 123305.
- Sulistyawati, T., Mujiyanto, J., Rukmini, D., & Hartono, R. (2022). The Influence of Socio-Affective Learning and Metacognition Levels on EFL Listening and Speaking Skills in Online Learning. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(10), 436–464.
- Sutrisno, D., Abbas, A., & Annury, M. N. (2024). Enhancing Writing Skills Through Cultural Integration : Exploring the Impact of Culturally-Responsive Writing Instruction in Diverse EFL Classrooms. *Global Synthesis in Education Journal*, 2(3), 1–16.
- Thresia, F. (2015). Integrating Local Culture to Promote Character Education in Teaching Writing. *Premise Journal*, 4(2), 10–17.
- Umanailo, M. C. B. (2020). The Energy in the Context of Social. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*, 0(Maret), 2503–2508.
- Wang, J., Lin, E., Spalding, E., Odell, S. J., & Klecka, C. L. (2011). Understanding Teacher Education in An Era of Globalization. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(2), 115–120.
- Winsch, J., Thakurta, A., Wan, C., Staufert-Reyes, E., Ghiso, M. P., & Campano, G. (2025). “What Do We Want Our Book to Look Like?”: Reimagining the Academic Writing Process Through Community-Centered Composing. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 737–747.
- Xiao, M., Amzah, F., & Rong, W. (2023). Experience of Beauty: Valuing Emotional Engagement and Collaboration in Teacher-Child Storytelling Activities. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(2), 165–187.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (Edisi ke-6). Sage.
- Zhao, J. (2023). Innovative Design and Research on Cooperative Learning of English and a Second Foreign Language in a Multimedia Environment. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(2), 88–105.