A Literature Review on Local Literature as a Medium for Critical and Multicultural Literacy through the Deep Learning Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates how local literature can support the development of critical literacy and multicultural awareness with the deep learning approach. This study uses literature review method by analyzing some relevant studies published between 2020 to 2025. This review analyzed 22 studies published between 2020–2025 from Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and DOAJ. The studies reported about the usage of cultural text, critical literacy practice, multicultural and the principles of deep learning in language learning context. The study presents that local literature provides meaningful context and relate to students' local traditions, value, norm and social issues. The students can ask questions, differentiate different points of view and reflect their cultural experiences. The studies also indicated that deep learning has significant roles in strengthening the learning process. The elements like character, collaboration and creativity can help students connect with contextual learning. As a result, the students become more active, reflective and have strong cultural awareness. However, this study finds some challenges particularly the weakness of teacher professional training, limitation of learning resources and uneven availabilty of cultural textbook. Even though there were some limitations, the studies reveal that the integrations of local literature and deep learning show strong potential to improve literacy learning and make it more relevant and meaningful for students.

Keywords: *local literature, critical literacy, multicultural awareness, deep learning*

INTRODUCTION

Local literature plays a significant role in language learning because it brings cultural identities and societal experiences. It consists of oral traditions, stories, legends, myths, or traditional poems. It reflects the region's expressions which show their social beliefs and local wisdom. In the educational context, it helps the students learn through their cultural background. Many scholars argue that such texts can make learning more meaningful because students feel represented and appreciated. Kusmiatun (2022) states that local literature shows identity, collective memory, and social environments that are relevant for literacy development. In EFL classrooms, culturally familiar texts often increase students' motivation and participation. Therefore, local literature becomes not only a linguistic resource but also a cultural bridge for meaningful engagement in reading.

In Indonesia, the integration of local culture has strong potential , however, in some schools it is still not optimal. Many teachers still focus on literal comprehension activities like answering

simple questions, translating vocabulary, or identifying language forms/structures. These practices sometimes limit the students' ability to explore cultural messages, social

meanings, and symbolic interpretations in the text. Local literature is sometimes treated only as supplementary material rather than integrated fully into literacy learning. As a result, the students do not always gain the deeper understanding offered by local cultural content. This situation shows a mismatch between curriculum expectations and actual classroom practices. It also suggests the need for more systematic integration of culturally relevant texts in literacy learning

Critical literacy gives useful perspectives to integrate local literature in education. Freire (1970) emphasizes that critical literacy support the students to read words and world. It means that they should connect value, context and ideology within the text. In this situation, multicultural literacy can help the students to understand the culture differences and respect the way of life of community (Banks, 2008). By combining these perspectives, it can make the local culture can develop critical thinking and cultural awareness The students can discuss about identity and social issues through relevant stories with culture. Thus, local culture is more than as a text but also it can be stimulus for reflective and analytical learning.

Several previous studies show positive effects of cultural texts in language learning. Wutun, Arafah, and Yasi (2023) found that students' anxiety in speaking decreased when lessons used local cultural elements. This means that cultural familiarity can support students' confidence in communication. Wijayanti and Purnama (2024) also reported that performance arts such as the Lahbako Dance enhanced motivation and raised cultural awareness in students. In another study, Xu, Ahmad, and Abd Rahman (2023) found that multicultural materials helped build empathy, critical thinking, and intercultural competence. These findings highlight that cultural content has strong affective benefits for students. Although the contexts are different, all studies point to the value of integrating culture into literacy education.

Many studies still focus only on affective outcomes such as motivation or cultural attitudes. Deeper literacy skills such as critical analysis, reflective thinking, or dialogic interpretation receive less attention in most research. Teachers also face challenges in accessing appropriate local texts and applying critical or multicultural pedagogy that supports higher-order thinking. Gandanaa et al. and Murray-Orr & Mitton (2021) note that many teachers lack the competence to design inquiry-based learning activities using cultural materials. This shows that the integration of local literature into deeper literacy instruction is still limited. In Indonesian classrooms, deep analysis and critical engagement do not always occur even when cultural texts are used. These gaps show the need for more systematic models that connect local literature with deeper learning principles.

Merdeka curriculum emphasizes the importances of deep learning which is focused on meaningful task, collaboration and integrating in real life. Fullan et al. (2018) argues that deep learning need authentic learning experiences which connect learning materials with the students cultural environment. In this context, local culture has potential give positive impacts because it based on the students' context. However, it needs pedagogical preparation to change the local text become meaningful learning activities. Teacher should design the materials to develop the students skills, problem solving and reflection. Without the appropriate strategies, the rich culture in local culture is not deep. Thus, the relationship of local culture and deep learning needs careful instructional materials.

Based on these issues, this study aims to review research on local literature, multicultural literacy, and deep learning in literacy education. The review examines how cultural texts support critical literacy and multicultural awareness. It also investigates how deep learning principles are applied in literature-based classrooms.

Furthermore, the review identifies the consequences and challenges when these approaches are combined. By examining these relationships, the study seeks to understand the strengths and limitations of current practices. The review also considers what teachers need to implement culturally grounded deep learning. This provides a clearer picture of how local literature can support higher-order literacy in Indonesian schools.

From the theoretical perspective, this study uses the ideas of Freire, Banks, Bishop, and Fullan as the conceptual foundation. Freire's (1970) concept of reading the word and the world highlights the connection between literacy and social awareness. Banks (2008) explains that multicultural education aim to improve students' understanding of diversity and reduce bias. Bishop's (1990) metaphor of mirrors and windows shows how literature reflects identity while helping readers understand other cultures. Fullan et al. (2018) describe deep learning as meaningful engagement involving critical, reflective and creative skills. These theories help explain why local literature can serve both cultural and cognitive purposes. They also offer principles for designing deeper literacy instruction using culturally relevant materials.

Using these theoretical ideas, this study identifies gaps in the existing literature. Many studies mention cultural appreciation but do not fully connect local literature with critical questioning or problem-solving activities. Some research shows positive cultural awareness but limited critical literacy development. This indicates that the integration of theory and practice is not yet consistent. Teachers may understand the cultural value of local texts but struggle to design tasks that support higher-order thinking. As a result, students often remain at the level of enjoyment and motivation rather than deeper interpretation. These gaps justify the need for a more integrated approach that joins culture and deep learning.

The objectives of this study follow the issues found in previous research and aim to clarify how local literature can support deeper literacy learning. First, the study aims to examine how local literature is used to promote critical literacy and multicultural awareness. It is especially in educational contexts where cultural texts are relevant for identity and social understanding. Second, it seeks to identify how Indonesian deep learning approaches are applied in literature-based learning and to evaluate their effectiveness in supporting higher-order thinking. Third, the study aims to describe the challenges and opportunities that appear when local literature and deep learning are integrated in literacy education. These objectives reflect the need to connect cultural relevance with meaningful learning activities that promote reflection and analysis. They also address the gap between curriculum expectations and actual classroom practices. Through these goals, the study contributes to understanding how these concepts can work together in Indonesian literacy settings. Altogether, these objectives guide the analysis presented in the following sections.

Based on these objectives, the study formulates three research questions that guide the structure of the review. The first question asks: How is local literature used to promote critical literacy and multicultural awareness in educational contexts? This question focuses on how cultural texts help students develop analytical and intercultural understanding. The second research question is: How are Indonesian deep learning approaches applied in literature-based learning, and how effective are they? This question helps identify how deep learning principles translate into classroom practices. The third question asks: What challenges and opportunities appear when local literature and deep learning are integrated in literacy education? This allows the review to explore both barriers and potential benefits. Together, these research questions connect theory, practice, and classroom realities. They also ensure that the review remains focused and

consistent with its goals.

The novelty of this study lies in the integrated perspectives. This study analyzes how the interactions of the three aspects as one learning approach. Local culture, multicultural literacy and deep learning become a combination of instructional approach. Many previous studies examine these areas individually, but rarely as interconnected concepts. This integration provides a more holistic understanding of literacy development. It also helps identify how culturally root texts can be used to support reflective thinking, collaboration, and deeper comprehension. By synthesizing these area, the study contributes new insights to the field. This intersection also supports curriculum innovation in the Indonesian context.

METHOD

The method used of this study was a literature review. This study examines how local literature, critical literacy, multicultural literacy and deep learning approaches interrelate in educational settings. The literature review is a type of research that examines existing studies for patterns, state of knowledge and gaps that need exploring (Snyder, 2019). It was chosen this way because it is appropriate to answer research questions about how these related concepts support literacy education, in regional educational contexts.

A literature review helps the researcher synthesize findings across studies; identify trends, patterns, or gaps in the literature. Unlike empirical studies which collect primary data, a literature review examines secondary data sources such as academic publications which have undergone peer review or institutional validation. This gives a wider perspective of the topic since evidence from different contexts, populations and research methodologies are synthesized.

1. Data Sources

The data used for this literature review are drawn from published academic works such as reputable journal articles of local literature, critical literacy, multicultural literacy and deep learning in education. These studies were searched for systematically in five academic databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, DOAJ & Garuda. Different databases provided different sources such as international research as well as local Indonesian studies. The search was included publications from 2015 to 2025. This time range captured recent ideas and practices in literacy education. It was consistent with recent changes in national education policies including Curriculum 2013 and the Merdeka Curriculum which encourage competency based learning and deep learning methods. This review confined itself to recent studies to describe updated findings and discuss issues pertaining to present-day classroom realities.

Other studies were searched in academic databases as well as through reference tracking and citation tracking. Reference tracking is checking bibliographies of key articles for more sources, and citation tracking is looking at which studies are commonly quoted by other researchers. These methods helped include key studies not directly appearing in keyword searches. Several search strategies made the data collection completer and more reliable.

2. Data Collection Techniques
2.1. Search the Data
The information collection procedure utilized an organized search strategy with selected

keywords associated with re-search subject. These phrases were organized into many categories to help you find relevant studies. For regional and local literature, the hunt utilized phrases such as for instance "local literature," "local literature," "folklore," "local culture," "oral traditions," "indigenous literature," "sastra local," "cerita rakyat," and "kearifan lokal."For literacy approaches, the search phrases provided "critical literacy," "multicultural literacy," "cultural awareness," "culturally responsive pedagogy," "literasi kritis," and "literasi multikultural." In order to determine research plugged in to studying depth, the search used phrases like "deep learning approach," thinking," "meaningful learning," "reflective learning," "pembelajaran mendalam," and "berpikir tingkat tinggi." Finally, for the academic context, the keywords provided "literature instruction," "literacy education," "language teaching," "reading instruction," "pembelajaran sastra," and "pendidikan literasi."

These phrases were mixed utilizing Boolean operators (AND, or maybe) to develop efficient search queries. For instance, a query may make use of the combination: ("local literature" Or maybe "local literature" Or maybe "folklore") And ("critical literacy" Or maybe "multicultural literacy") AND ("education" Or maybe "literacy instruction"). The searches were carried through in both Indonesian and English to confirm complete coverage of national and international studies. Using 2 languages was crucial because numerous related studies in this particular area are printed in Indonesian academic journals, while others show up in worldwide databases. This particular method really helped supply a complete and balanced picture of investigation associated with local literature, multicultural perspectives, critical literacy, along with serious learning in literacy education.

2.2. Study Selection Process

Qualitative and relevant studies were selected in three systematic steps. In the first stage an initial screening on titles and abstracts was conducted. Database search identified about 60 possible studies, and title and abstract were reviewed for relevance to research focus. Studies clearly not related to local literature, critical or multicultural literacy, or deep learning in education were excluded. Around 40 studies were then left for further examination. Initially the screening criteria were: Relevance in relation to local or local literature, critical literacy, multicultural perspectives or deep learning in educational contexts (1) Publication between 2015 and 2025; (2) available in English or Indonesian; (4) Access to full-text articles.

At a second stage, the full texts of the remaining 40 studies were read and assessed for inclusion. A study was considered if it dealt with local literature, critical literacy, multicultural literacy, deep learning in an educational context, was published between 2015 - 2025, presented its methodology, findings in English or Indonesian and was from a peer reviewed source, an established institution. Studies were excluded if did not discuss the topic extensively, had no methodological or finding clarity, were opinion pieces with no empirical data, had poor methodological quality or were not accessible in full. A final screening step was to select studies meeting all quality standards and relevant to research questions. 22 studies were systematically screened and rated. They represent qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method studies in different educational settings including primary, higher and secondary education in addition to rural and urban settings. Together, these selected studies provide a basis for understanding how local literature, critical literacy, multicultural perspectives and deep learning have been explored in educational research.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION
Findings
1. Utilization of Local Literature for Critical and Multicultural Literacy(2023)

The evaluation of 9 studies suggests that local literature is able to help support students' critical literacy and multicultural understanding. Students' reactions to local literature are positive. Wahyuningtyas et al. (2024) found that students' fascination with learning Indonesian increased from 78.80 % to 81.10 % after using oral literature dependent on local culture. Youpika (2024) found that eighty-nine students from 5 facilities in Bengkulu liked the folk tale materials coached by their teachers. Shahril (2020) found that the majority of thirty-four teachers in Kuala Nerus preferred using local literary texts rather compared to international texts in teaching literature.

The techniques to incorporate local culture in mastering are also varied. Herdi et al. (2023) identified 8 teaching techniques utilized in English courses in Pekanbaru: brainstorming, contextualizing regional cultural topics, textbook selection, syllabus design, literature search, video projects, classroom discussions, and topic drilling. These methods had been discovered to enhance students' English skills while encouraging cross cultural understanding. Samsudin et al. (2024) found the usage of a three stage reading model (before, during, and also after reading) with literature texts grounded on North Maluku nearby wisdom in a junior high school in Ternate. Literacy activities provided perusing poems, novels, or maybe short stories; group discussions; preparing questions; gathering relevant information; and analyzing and summarizing the texts.

The effect of local literature on multicultural understanding is additionally considerable. Alonge (2024) found that multicultural children's books help kids understand and enjoy world diversity, improving empathy and global awareness. Hossain (2024) found that literature from varied cultural contexts offers genuine feedback, that will help students develop linguistic competence, cultural consciousness, along with critical thinking abilities.

The implementation of vital literacy is seen in many studies. Bobkina (2016) reported that looking at fiction in international language learning provides students special opportunities to enjoy, understand, and also comprehend the world around them. Teachers serve as who guide students to critically engage with the stories. Vlach (2025) reported that 2 elementary literacy coaches in Texas used a mix of more mature books and their very own expertise to promote inquiry and dialogue, including serious discussions about immigration.

Nevertheless, several challenges also appear. Gandanaa et al. (2021) found that teachers usually don't have knowledge about combining critical thinking abilities. Lubis et al., (2023) found that text-based teaching in SMP Budi Mulia however centered on the professor, limiting studentsparticipation. Ugwu (2022) noted issues with infrastructure, minimal learning resources, along with students' low language abilities in Nigeria. The students' environmental literacy remains minimal although local literature has been instructed (Youpika & Yandryati, 2024). The summary finding is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Summary of Findings on Local Literature

Aspect	Number of Studies	Findings
Positive student response	3	Interest increased by 2.3%; 89 students enjoyed folk tales; teachers preferred local texts
Strategies for cultural integration	2	8 strategies identified; three-stage reading model applied
Impact on multicultural understanding	3	Increased empathy, cultural awareness, and appreciation of diversity

Aspect	Number of Studies	Findings
Success in critical literacy	3	Teachers as facilitators; students engaged in critical discussions
Challenges in critical literacy	4	Teachers lacked pedagogical knowledge; teaching was teacher-centered; no change in student behavior

Based on the table, the results show that students generally responded to local literature positively with increased interest and engagement. Strategies for integrating local culture were brainstorming, discussions and project-based activities that linked language learning to cultural understanding. The studies also show that local literature can be a media for multicultural awareness through tolerance and appreciation of diversity. In some cases, critical literacy was applied because teachers helped facilitate discussion. But there are still challenges with limited teacher knowledge and persistent teacher-centered instruction. These results indicate the benefits as well as the limitations of using local literature for critical and multicultural literacy in classrooms.

2. The Applications and Effectiveness of the Deep Learning Approach

Several studies explored how the deep learning approach is applied in literacy and language education and its effectiveness. Firmansyah et al. (2025) implemented the GEMBIRA program for fifth-grade elementary students, which included mindful, meaningful, and joyful stages to encourage reading habits, reflective writing, and interactive storytelling. Hatima (2025) reviewed literature about the combination of deep learning and local wisdom, showing that learning media supported by technology, together with culturally rich content, can improve literacy skills and strengthen students' national identity and character. Maulana et al. (2025) found that integrating deep learning technology can improve students' access to information, support critical thinking, and create adaptive and reflective learning systems. Similarly, Qian Long (2025) highlighted that blended teaching, combining online and face-to-face learning, effectively supports students' intercultural competence and engagement.

Other studies focused on deep learning implementation conditions and difficulties. Firmansyah et al. (2025) found that Students develop technical literacy skills as well as critical, creative, reflective and emotional thinking when deep learning is applied in a meaningful context. According to Jamilatun and Faruq (2025) deep learning works best when instructional design is adaptive, materials are relevant, and teachers are prepared to lead students actively. Oktavianus and Rido (2025) however, pointed out that traditional teaching methods, scarcity of resources and pedagogical changes may prevent implementation. These findings indicate that deep learning could be potentially very fruitful for holistic literacy development, but requires thoughtful planning and teacher readiness. The summary of these findings are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Summary of Findings on Deep Learning Application

Aspect	Number of Studies	Findings
Implementation of deep learning programs	2 studies	GEMBIRA program with mindful-meaningful-joyful stages; integration of deep learning and local wisdom
Impact on cognitive skills	3 studies	Increased critical, creative, reflective thinking; faster access to information; development of digital literacy
Impact on intercultural competence	1 study	Increased intercultural sensitivity; facilitated virtual and real-world engagement

Conditions for effective deep learning	2 studies	Effective when contextualized, supported by adaptive instructional design, relevant materials, and trained teachers
Challenges in implementation	3 studies	Teacher readiness; limited infrastructure and technology; traditional teaching methods; limited resources

Table above shows that deep learning programs combined with local wisdom can increase students' literacy and thinking abilities. Students also get faster information access and digital literacy. Blended learning supports student intercultural awareness & engagement. Relevant materials, adaptive design and teacher readiness are required for successful implementation. Challenges still exist such as inadequate resources, tradition and infrastructure. Applied contextually deep learning has potential for holistic literacy development.

3. The Challenges & Opportunities in Integrating Local Literature through Deep Learning Approach

Seven studies investigated challenges and opportunities for integrating local literature with deep learning in literacy education. Hatima (2025) found deep learning combined with local wisdom can produce a creative, inclusive literacy ecosystem. Herdi et al. (2023) reports that including local culture in the classroom helps students learn the language and raises awareness of cultural preservation. Wahyuningtyas et al. Use of local culture-based fiction texts increased student interest in learning Indonesian by 2.3%, from 78.8% to 81.1% on test scores. Samsudin et al. (2024) found teachers used local wisdom content from libraries and online sources to create materials that help students develop character and cultural understanding.

Otherwise, Gandanaa et al. (2021)found that teachers know little about combining critical thinking with literature and are more concerned with linguistic skills than human experiences and relating words to the world. Lubis and Darmawati (2023) noted that teacher education remains teacher-centered in some schools, with little student participation and little creativity. Oktavianus and Rido (2025) stressed that traditional teaching methods, scarcity of resources and lack of pedagogical changes prevent deep learning from being adopted effectively. Other challenges are limited access to local literature, inadequate library materials and difficulty in designing tasks that combine culture and cognition. Adaptive instructional design, relevant materials and well-prepared teachers are needed for effective integration (Nafi & Faruq, 2025)

Table 3. Summary of Findings on Challenges and Opportunities in Integration

Category	Number of Studies	Specific Findings
Opportunities	3 studies	Cultural relevance increases engagement; student character development; awareness of local cultural preservation
Opportunities	2 studies	Creates adaptive, creative, inclusive learning; meaningful and enriching experiences
Opportunities	2 studies	Supports cognitive skills and cultural identity simultaneously
Challenges	3 studies	Teacher readiness: cannot design critical questions; default to lecture; difficulty linking text-context; not implementing new curriculum
Challenges	2 studies	Scarcity of materials: school libraries lack local texts; teachers create own materials; oral literature not widely used
Challenges	2 studies	Pedagogical design: task complexity; assessment pressure; limited time; limited infrastructure

Conditions for effectiveness	2 studies	Adaptive instructional design; relevant materials; trained teachers; collaborative technology-culture approach

The table above shows that local literature and deep learning bring higher student engagement, character development, and cultural awareness. It also provides a creative and meaningful literacy environment. Students increase their ability cognitively and culturally simultaneously. Teacher readiness, local material access and pedagogical design are still as the challenges. Supportive conditions such as adaptive design, relevant materials and trained teachers are important to maximize effectiveness. In general, integration can be very successful if planned and prepared by teachers.

Discussion

Based on all the findings, it shows how local literature, critical and multicultural literacy as well as deep learning approaches intersect in Indonesian literacy education. The discussion identifies theoretical and practical implications and gaps between curriculum ideals & classroom realities.The results confirm that local literature is a deep instrument for meaningful learning. For instance, the 2.3 % increase in students' interest reported by Wahyuningtyas et al. (2024) as well as teachers' choice for regional texts (Shahril & Mohaideen, 2020) support Bishop (1990).

This particular framework is particularly pertinent in Indonesia, that has over 300 ethnic groups along with 700 local languages (Ananta, & Bakhtiar, Arifin, 2015). The range of students' cultural backgrounds demands educational methods which accommodate heterogeneity while promoting interpersonal cohesion. The results from Herdi et al. (2023)that identified 8 neighborhood culture based teaching techniques, along with Alonge (2025), reporting the job of multicultural literature in fostering empathy and global awareness, support Banks (2008) argument that multicultural education needs to incorporate different cultural components to lessen prejudice and increase intercultural understanding.

However, the some studies report cultural relevance improves motivation, but not critical literacy. Seven out of nine studies reported improvements in multicultural understanding, but only three (33) reported successful critical literacy development. It was noted by Youpika (2024) that students enjoyed folk tales and valued cultural values but did not improve ecological literacy.

They were "less concerned about waste and the environment" after hearing conservation-focused stories. Freire (1970) critical pedagogy describes this phenomenon. His distinction between "reading the word" and "reading the world" is critical. "Reading the word" involves decoding textual information: Knowing the plot, identifying characters, and understanding the explicit moral lessons are important. Reading the world means analyzing broader social, political and cultural contexts, power dynamics and linking textual messages to social realities.

The teachers tend to think of literature as a linguistic tool rather than a means of social and cultural analysis (Siti et al., 2021). Often teachers struggle to help students read the word and the world. This is a reflection of a Discrepancy in designing higher-order questions, facilitating critical discussions and Teaching students how texts Make meaning and identity. Lubis & Darmawati (2023) point out that despite the Curriculum Merdeka promoting student-centered learning, lecture methods with low student participation remain the norm in classrooms. As such, it exemplifies Freire's (1970) "banking education", in which teachers "deposit" knowledge with passive students, as opposed to "dialogue with them in the co-construction of meaning".

Students' limited language proficiency is also a structural barrier, Ugwu 2022 adds.

Teacher vocabulary may be clarified in the mother tongue. That helps literal comprehension but inhibits wordplay, connotative meanings and deeper critical interpretation. That raises a pedagogical problem: How to promote critical literacy in students with limited language skills. In turn, Samsudin et al. Evidence that critical literacy can be developed is provided byBobkina (2016) and Vlach (2025)). Samsudin et al. (2024) used a three-stage structured reading model with collaborative tasks. Bobkina (2016) defined teachers as "co-conspirators who help students question narratives rather than offer authoritative interpretations. Vlach (2025) demonstrated that less radical texts could provoke critical inquiry with clear direction and probing questions.

These findings are in accordance with Janks (2013) and Luke (2000) critical literacy principles. Janks identifies four dimensions: Domination - analyzing power in texts; access ensuring diverse text availability; diversity valuing different perspectives; design allowing alternative text creation. In this sense Luke stresses developing a standpoint about how texts shape identity, social relations and power distribution.

Thus, local literature can serve to support critical and multicultural literacy if pedagogically cultivated. Cultural relevance motivates engagement but critical awareness emerges only when teachers design tasks that provoke analysis and reflection beyond mere comprehension questions. Findings show that deep learning is applied in different ways and has promising results in literacy and language development. Firmansyah et al. GEMBIRA, which includes mindful, meaningful, and joyful stages, can promote reading habits, reflective writing and interactive storytelling (2025). Hatima (2025 also reported that deep learning in combination with local wisdom improves literacy and builds students' identity and character. These findings support Fullan, Quinn & McEachen (2018) in arguing that deep learning is most effective when students perform meaningful, culturally relevant tasks. They theorized that learning occurs more deeply when students relate classroom material to real-life context, similar to how both studies motivated students with local cultural elements. A second important result was that of Maulana et al. (2025) who said incorporating deep learning technology helps with critical thinking, adaptive learning and information access. This is in agreement with Kim (2022) theoretically stating that deep learning activities enable students to interpret information, compare viewpoints and develop analytical reasoning. In a similar manner, Long et al. (2025) showed that blended learning, when combined online and in person, promotes intercultural competence as well as student engagement. This find is in agreement with sociocultural learning theory where interaction and collaboration foster knowledge construction. In this case, students learn from materials as well as from communication with others in cultural contexts.

However, few studies also presented challenges and situations which impact on the effectiveness of deep learning. Instructional design and materials for deep learning are most effective when they are relevant to students' needs (Nafi & Faruq, 2025). This finding reflects an idea from Content-Based Instruction (CBI) that learning should involve meaningful content to improve language skills and thinking. But limitations in infrastructure, traditional teaching methods and teacher readiness (Oktavianus & Rido, 2025). Those challenges are consistent with Fullan et al. (2018) and caution that deep learning involves systematic planning, professional development and supportive learning environments. So even though theory suggests deep learning as a useful strategy, implementation in the Indonesian context faces practical challenges.

At the same time, the findings support Santiago's (2022) theoretical claim that culturally rich texts induce higher-order thinking in students analyzing values, character motivations, and symbolic meanings. The studies of Firmansyah and al. the examples from Hatima (2025) show that deep learning with local wisdom promotes emotional, reflective and intercultural thinking. These are in line with critical literacy perspectives in which

students question cultural messages, reflect on personal experience and social issues. So, students develop more than just understanding language structures. They acquire deeper interpretation skills supporting long-term cognitive development.

The synthesis supports most theoretical perspectives in deep learning literature. The studies provided no support for theory directly, but demonstrate that theory alone is not enough if teachers are not prepared or resourced. This deep learning approach corresponds to constructivist theory, critical literacy theory, and culturally sensitive teaching. Nevertheless, practical barriers suggest that training, planning and appropriate technology are required for successful implementation. Data also indicate that deep learning may make literacy learning more holistic, as students become active thinkers rather than passive information receivers. Deep learning can be culturally responsive, reflective, and socially engaged, but needs support and context to become so.

CONCLUSION

This literature review shows that local literature may help students develop literacy - critical literacy and multicultural understanding. Findings suggest that students are more motivated to read culturally familiar texts and that teachers can benefit from using narratives reflecting students' local identity and lived experience. Studies reviewed further suggest that local literature may also be used as a linguistic and cultural tool to help students understand values, traditions and social messages of various regions in Indonesia. But the results also demonstrate that increased cultural interest does not necessarily induce critical thinking. Even now students require guidance, questioning and well-crafted learning activities to interpret texts beyond surface meaning.

Use of deep learning approach in literature-based learning further enhances students cognitive, digital and intercultural skills. Studies indicate that when tasks are relevant to students' real life, they can build high-order thinking skills, reflection, collaboration and digital literacy as well as digital literacy. Simultaneously, some studies identify barriers such as teacher readiness, limited learning materials, and traditional classroom practices. These challenges demonstrate that under implementation conditions which include the support of school-based decision making, with competent teachers, theoretical frameworks such as critical pedagogy, multicultural education and deep learning can be successful in helping teachers to find ways to work within political constraints on instructional practice to ensure more equitable instruction for all students.

The synthesis indicates that combining local literature with deep learning might be a promising direction in literacy education in Indonesia. Culturally rich texts in combination with meaningful learning activities may result in classrooms that are reflective, inclusive and culturally responsive. For this purpose, teachers require proper training, relevant local literature resources

and support for developing deep learning tasks. Future research might examine instructional models, teacher professional development as well as concrete strategies for enacting deep learning and multicultural issues in actual classrooms. As a conclusion, local literature supported by deep learning may promote academic, as well as cultural, reflective and social literacy for students in Indonesia.

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