

A Multimodal Approach to Language Learning: The Role of *Puragabaya* Music and Poetry Video

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study explored the integration of multimodal texts in language learning within the Merdeka Belajar curriculum framework, which emphasizes four core competencies aligned with the 21st-century educational goals. **Method:** Using Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER) with the Art in Research approach, we developed a music and poetry video depicting the *Puragabaya* Legend from Galunggung, Tasikmalaya as an innovative digital teaching material. **Result:** The creative process successfully produced digital performance that meets both aesthetic and educational requirements. The *Puragabaya* Music and Poetry Video demonstrates an effective integration of verbal metafunctions (narrative structure and cultural storytelling) and visual metafunctions (symbolic imagery and representational elements) that enhance students' comprehension and cultural understanding. The video effectively bridges traditional storytelling with contemporary digital literacy demands, providing concrete examples of metaphorical language use within authentic cultural contexts. **Novelty:** This research contributes to educational innovation by demonstrating how arts-based digital materials can serve both pedagogical and aesthetic functions, offering a replicable model for integrating local cultural content into language learning curricula through creative multimedia production.

INTRODUCTION

Language learning can be understood as a process deliberately designed by educators to facilitate students' learning of language and support their cognitive development in acquiring and expanding knowledge (T. Liu et al., 2023). This aligns with Mason et al.'s (2019) and Zhou's (2024) view that students in language learning, are taught not only in relation to the body of knowledge but also in terms of how to see, think, and communicate it. Furthermore, regardless of the subject being studied, language is the primary tool used for thinking (Maspul, 2024).

In line with these ideas, language as part of school learning must also function as a medium for conveying, carrying, and developing knowledge. This is explained by the concept of international literacy education, which has now evolved into multiliteracy. The term multiliteracy refers to the skills of using various methods to express and understand ideas and information, using both conventional and innovative texts, symbols, and multimedia (Abidin, 2015, 2022; Handiyani & Yunus Abidin, 2023).

The *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum mandates four core competencies in Indonesian language learning: religious attitudes, social attitudes, textual knowledge, and text production skills. This textual approach requires learners to understand diverse text genres and develop composition abilities while integrating religious and social values. Despite this objective, current research lacks a comprehensive exploration of how multimodal digital materials can effectively address all four competencies simultaneously, particularly in bridging traditional cultural content with contemporary educational demands. This gap necessitates innovative pedagogical approaches that integrate artistic expression with systematic language instruction.

In the 21st century, learners are expected to master key competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and deep understanding (Abidin, 2015, 2022; Handiyani & Yunus Abidin, 2023). Abidin (2015) frames these within the “Rainbow of Skills and Knowledge,” which encompasses learning and innovation skills, media and technology literacy, as well as life and career skills. These dimensions—Knowledge Work, Thinking Tools, Learning Research, and Digital Lifestyle—have shaped the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, aligning Indonesian graduates’ competencies with global demands. Within this context, the use of multimodal texts in Indonesian language learning becomes crucial, as multiliteracies integrating context, culture, and technology address the limits of purely verbal instruction and have attracted scholarly attention (Jewitt et al., 2016).

The novelty of this research lies in the idea of using music and poetry video as digital teaching materials, which are educational products based on artistic research. Music and poetry have been the subjects of extensive research, both in academic studies and in their application in educational and language learning contexts (Faturohmah, 2020; Khaerunisa, 2018; Leavy, 2017, 2020; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019; Nurmaily, 2018; Prawiyogi & Cahyani, 2016; Rahmawati, 2017). In this research, however, music and poetry are not only used as teaching materials relying solely on their audio aspects, but also incorporate visuals to strengthen the presentation, thus creating a multimodal text for language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER), which integrates artistic practice with social research in education, positioning art both as a means of inquiry and a mode of representation (Burnard et al., 2018; Greenwood, 2019; Leavy, 2017, 2020; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019). ABER encompasses various forms of art—literature, music, dance, performance, visual arts, film, and digital media—with the potential for multimodal integration (Greenwood, 2019). Within this paradigm, research methods are typically categorized into three types: Research on Art, Art as Research, and Art in Research (Wang et al., 2017). This study specifically adopted the Art in Research approach, wherein the act of artistic creation itself functions as both the site and process of knowledge construction.

This method involved the production of a music and poetry video that reinterprets the *Puragabaya*. The creative process was systematically documented using field notes, audio-visual recordings, and iterative digital drafts, ensuring that each stage could be traced and critically reviewed. Artistic outputs were collaboratively developed with poets, musicians, dancers, painters, and videographers, whose creative contributions were essential for transforming oral narratives into multimodal representations.

The creative process of the project was guided by Halliday’s theory of verbal and visual metafunctions, which provided a practical analytical framework. Specifically, the ideational metafunction informed the selection of symbolic imagery and narrative content, the interpersonal metafunction shaped the expressive and performative elements, and the textual metafunction guided the structuring and coherence of verbal-visual integration. This systematic application ensured that theoretical principles were directly embedded in creative decisions.

To maintain rigor, three production criteria were established:

1. Fidelity to cultural meaning - ensuring that the *Puragabaya* oral tradition was represented with cultural accuracy and respect.

2. Aesthetic quality – evaluating and refining literary, musical, performative, and visual components for artistic coherence and expressiveness.
3. Pedagogical applicability – ensuring that the final product could serve as an engaging and effective multimodal teaching material for language learning.

The artistic works generated were digitally archived, analyzed, and subjected to both aesthetic and pedagogical review before being edited into a complete music and poetry video. Methodologically, this approach demonstrated the dual role of art in research: as data, since the works embody oral cultural narratives, and as method, since the creative process itself constitutes a systematic mode of inquiry and representation. In doing so, this study offers a replicable model for integrating local cultural narratives into multimodal digital media for language education.

The *Puragabaya* music and poetry video is used at the junior high school, senior high school, and higher education levels, with distinct emphases according to the learning objectives. At the junior and senior high school levels, the video is utilized in Indonesian language courses, particularly in the study of poetry texts and oral literary texts. Its use is intended not only to enhance students' understanding of the structure and meaning of poetry but also to foster aesthetic appreciation through the integration of literary texts and musical media. At the higher education level, the *Puragabaya* music and poetry video is employed in the Indonesian Language Education Department, specifically in the *Literary Performance* course. In this context, students are engaged not only in theoretical studies of literary performance but also in creative practice, enabling them to interpret and present literary works through audio-visual media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For reference in results and discussion, readers may access the following a *Puragabaya* music and poetry video at link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1eC_8Jm_sM

Results

Structure and Components of the *Puragabaya* Video

The *Puragabaya* music and poetry video demonstrates a tripartite structure consisting of an opening (00:01–00:52), main content (00:55–09:50), and closing segments. This structure reflects a conventional narrative pattern that enables audiences to follow the systematic presentation flow. The proportional time distribution of each segment indicates deliberate planning in balancing information and aesthetic experience, aligning with contemporary multimedia production principles for cultural heritage documentation (Bekele and Champion, 2019). For classroom practice, this structure can help teachers scaffold activities into introduction, exploration, and reflection, providing a clear pedagogical flow.

Implementation of Visual Language Metafunctions

Opening Narration Segment

The opening visualization employs the abandoned *Engsoen* building in *Tasikmalaya*, with a single narrator delivering the introductory text. This semiotic choice establishes symbolic correspondence between the deteriorating building and the fading memory of *Puragabaya* in oral tradition. High modality features and direct gaze enhance intimacy (ALjrah et al., 2021; Bateman et al., 2017). Pedagogically, this segment can be used by teachers as a prompt for classroom discussions about the value of oral traditions and the risks of cultural erosion, fostering critical thinking and cultural awareness.

Transition and Content Identification

The brief transition (00:55–00:57) displays the title *Puragabaya*, serving as a relational identifier (Zhang, 2023). This visual strategy orients viewers while reinforcing multimodal hierarchy (Scopigno et al., 2011). In teaching contexts, this segment can function as a cue for students to activate prior knowledge and anticipate the upcoming content, supporting prediction strategies in language learning.

Visual Representation through Painting Art

The painting segment (00:58–01:15) depicts the creative process of an artist interpreting *Puragabaya*. Through high modality and compositional salience (Z. Liu, 2022; Yang, 2012), it demonstrates the ideational metafunction in practice. For pedagogical use, this segment can support visual literacy activities, where students interpret symbolic representations and connect them to narrative meaning, thus linking cultural interpretation with language practice.

Integrated Poetry Reading and Painting Process

In segment 01:16–04:54, poetry reading is combined with live painting, staged in an academic setting to reinforce knowledge transmission (Stylianou-Lambert et al., 2014). The transactional process between performer and audience through gaze, gesture, and intonation illustrates multimodal interaction (Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2018; Feng & O'Halloran, 2019). Bilingual subtitles enhance accessibility. Practically, teachers can use this segment for activities such as translation exercises, comparative interpretation, or multimodal text analysis, helping students engage with both linguistic and visual resources.

Analysis of Dance and Drama Performances

Representation through Dance Art

The dance segment (04:54–09:50) visualizes *Puragabaya* through martial arts-inspired choreography. Cinematographic multimodality (Jabour & Faisal, 2022; Thibault, 2019) and gaze dynamics (O'Halloran et al., 2018) redistribute interpretive authority. For pedagogy, teachers can invite students to describe movements, discuss symbolic meanings, or create short written or oral narratives based on the performance, thereby strengthening descriptive and interpretive skills.

Narrative Dramatization

The drama segment situates *Puragabaya's* training in the *Galunggung* forest, depicted through grayscale to signal its historical setting (Ekonomou & Vosinakis, 2018). *Mise-en-scène* and indirect gaze (Mortara et al., 2014) build immersive atmospheres. Theoretically, this reflects the textual meta function's role in coherence. Pedagogically, teachers may use this scene to encourage role-play, script-writing, or reflective writing tasks, connecting folklore with students' creative expression and narrative competence.

Overall, the analysis of each video segment demonstrates how visual, verbal, and performative resources work together to construct meaning through Halliday's meta functions. The integration of narration, painting, poetry, dance, and drama not only preserves cultural heritage but also provides pedagogical opportunities for developing multimodal literacy, critical cultural awareness, and communicative competence in the classroom. These findings indicate that the *Puragabaya* video serves a dual role: as a medium for cultural documentation and as a rich educational resource. This dual function establishes a theoretical bridge to the subsequent discussion on how multimodal art can be

situated within broader frameworks of discourse analysis, pedagogy, and cultural sustainability.

Discussion

Multimodality, Metafunction, and Cultural Preservation

The findings demonstrate that Halliday's meta functional framework is both theoretically valid and practically effective when applied to multimedia art. The integration of verbal and visual meta functions provides a multimodal approach that surpasses conventional single-medium analyses, extending the relevance of systemic functional linguistics into digital and cross-disciplinary domains (Bateman et al., 2017; Lim, 2018; Z. Liu, 2022). The transformation of *Puragabaya* oral literature into a music-poetry video illustrates how cultural narratives can maintain narrative integrity while gaining interpretive richness in new semiotic environments. Such adaptation not only ensures cultural continuity but also recontextualizes tradition for contemporary audiences, confirming that digital multimodal productions can serve as tools for both documentation and renewal of heritage (Giannini & Bowen, 2019; Giglitto et al., 2019).

Semiotic Strategies and Ecocultural Perspectives

The use of symbolic visual elements in the video demonstrates how semiotic strategies can support cultural critique and ecological awareness. The abandoned Engsoen building functions as a visual metaphor for the endangered status of oral traditions, while recurring imagery of green vegetation links cultural continuity to environmental sustainability (Bekele & Champion, 2019; Rahaman & Champion, 2019; Scopigno et al., 2011). These choices illustrate that cultural narratives are not static but embedded in ecological and social systems, aligning with global sustainability discourses. Importantly, such symbolism not only enriches artistic interpretation but also provides learners with authentic multimodal input that cultivates critical, interpretive, and communicative competencies (Jewitt et al., 2016; Katifori et al., 2014).

Pedagogical Implications for 21st-Century Language Learning

By integrating multimodal strategies into language education, the project supports the "4Cs" of 21st-century competencies—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Carcamo & Pino, 2025). Learners interpret meaning across verbal, visual, musical, and performative domains, thereby strengthening multimodal literacy and intercultural awareness (Byram, 2021). The use of bilingual subtitles further models translanguaging practices that enhance cross-linguistic awareness and intercultural communicative competence, a skill crucial for navigating globalized communication (Giglitto et al., 2019; Peng et al., 2024). These findings reinforce calls for multimodal pedagogy in EFL/ESL contexts, where authentic, culturally embedded resources enrich both linguistic proficiency and cultural literacy (Lim & Tan-Chia, 2023; Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024).

Methodological and Theoretical Contributions

This study illustrates how oral traditions can be dynamically reinterpreted through multimedia art without compromising authenticity, challenging static paradigms of heritage conservation (Giannini & Bowen, 2019; Zhang, 2023). Methodologically, it contributes to digital multimodal discourse analysis by demonstrating concrete applications of meta function theory in cultural preservation (Bateman et al., 2017; Z. Liu, 2022). Theoretically, the research highlights the role of digital technology as an active medium of cultural transmission, where traditions are transformed rather than merely

archived (Bekele et al., 2018; Lotherington, 2017). By linking cultural sustainability with language learning innovation, this study offers a replicable model for integrating heritage-based multimodal texts into curricula, showing how language education can simultaneously advance global communicative competence and safeguard local heritage.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the contributions, the study acknowledges its limitations. The production of high-modality multimedia requires significant resources, which may challenge replicability in resource-limited contexts (Zhan, 2025). There is also an inherent tension between creative adaptation and cultural authenticity, raising the need for evaluation frameworks that safeguard fidelity in multimedia reinterpretations (Scopigno et al., 2011). Future research should explore scalable models of multimedia heritage pedagogy and develop criteria for balancing innovation with authenticity.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings: This study demonstrates that the *Puragabaya* music and poetry video constitutes a methodological innovation in language education by integrating Halliday's meta function theory into multimedia art. The fundamental finding is that oral literature can be digitally recontextualized into multimodal learning resources without losing its cultural integrity, thereby proving the dual role of art as both a tool of inquiry and a medium of knowledge transmission. **Implications:** The broader implications of these findings extend beyond the preservation of the *Puragabaya* legend. Pedagogically, the research highlights the potential of arts-based multimodal texts to enrich 21st-century language learning by fostering critical, creative, communicative, and collaborative competencies. The use of bilingual subtitles and layered visual symbolism demonstrates how local cultural heritage can be transformed into accessible global learning materials while promoting intercultural sensitivity and metalinguistic awareness. Culturally, the study contributes to ongoing efforts in digital heritage preservation by offering a replicable model of how oral traditions can remain relevant and pedagogically valuable in the digital era. **Limitation:** The production of high-modality multimedia texts requires substantial resources and technical expertise, making replication difficult in less-equipped educational settings. In addition, creative adaptations, while valuable for accessibility, carry the risk of departing from the cultural authenticity of oral traditions. The study's reliance on a single narrative further restricts the generalizability of its findings. A feasible solution is to develop practical rubric-based guidelines that evaluate and ensure a balanced integration of artistic creativity and cultural authenticity in the production process. Another solution is to establish collaborative models that involve cultural experts, educators, and artists, thereby ensuring that creative adaptations remain pedagogically effective while preserving cultural authenticity. **Future Research:** Future studies should develop practical evaluative frameworks such as rubrics for balancing authenticity, creativity, and pedagogical value to guide implementation in schools and higher education. Expanding to comparative research across oral traditions, conducting longitudinal classroom studies to assess learning outcomes, and integrating immersive technologies like virtual and augmented reality can strengthen both cultural preservation and learner engagement. Investigating translanguaging practices in multimodal heritage texts may also provide insights into fostering bilingual competence and intercultural awareness, thereby advancing the role of arts-based multimodal approaches in 21st-century language education.

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