

DEEP LEARNING-BASED LOCAL LITERATURE INSTRUCTION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Local literature learning plays an important role in higher education by supporting the preservation of cultural values and the development of students' cultural identity. When implemented through a deep learning approach, literature education can foster meaningful understanding, critical reflection, and culturally grounded learning experiences. Accordingly, this study aims to examine (1) the contribution of local or regional literature education to students' cultural identity development in higher education; (2) the pedagogical applications of deep learning approaches in literature and cultural studies; and (3) how the integration of local literature and deep learning enhances students' cultural awareness and social sensitivity. This study employs a systematic literature review design by analyzing 19 peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last ten years. The findings indicate that local literature functions as a culturally contextualized knowledge system that transmits traditional values and social meanings, thereby strengthening students' cultural identity and sense of belonging. Deep learning pedagogy encourages higher-order thinking, reflective engagement, and contextual interpretation of literary texts. Furthermore, the integration of local literature and deep learning enhances students' cultural awareness, empathy, and social sensitivity. In conclusion, integrating local literature learning with deep learning pedagogy offers a culturally responsive approach to literature education in higher education.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Deep Learning, Higher Education, Local Literature.

INTRODUCTION

Local or regional literature plays a vital role in building students' cultural identity, particularly in educational systems that seek to balance global competencies with local cultural preservation. In recent years, scholars have emphasized that local literary texts function not only as aesthetic works but also as cultural representations that convey values, beliefs, and collective experiences of a community (Budiyo & Husni, 2023; Sangaji et al., 2023). Through engagement with folktales, regional narratives, and local poetry, students are able to connect learning content with their cultural roots, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging and cultural continuity.

However, the development of cultural identity among students faces growing challenges in the context of globalization and digital culture. Increased exposure to global

media and dominant cultural narratives has contributed to declining interest in local cultural products, including regional literature, particularly among younger generations (Kasiyarno & Apriyanto, 2025; Raharjo et al., 2024). This phenomenon often results in weakened cultural attachment and reduced awareness of local values. Consequently, higher education institutions are increasingly expected to design curricula and pedagogical practices that not only develop academic competence but also reinforce cultural awareness and identity formation.

In response to these challenges, recent curriculum reforms, including Indonesia's *Kurikulum Merdeka*, emphasize meaningful learning through approaches that promote critical thinking, reflection, and contextual understanding. One such approach is deep learning, which focuses on students' ability to construct meaning, analyze content deeply, and relate learning materials to real-life and sociocultural contexts (Fullan et al., 2018; Ikhsan, 2025). In contrast to surface learning, deep learning encourages learners to engage cognitively and affectively with learning materials, making it particularly suitable for literature education.

Within literature learning, deep learning enables students to explore texts beyond literal comprehension by examining cultural values, social issues, and identity representations embedded in literary works. Recent studies indicate that deep learning approaches in literature classrooms enhance students' reflective thinking, emotional engagement, and cultural awareness (Belarde et al., 2025; Ricita et al., 2025). When applied to local literature, this approach allows students to critically connect textual meanings with their own cultural experiences, thereby strengthening cultural identity and social sensitivity.

Furthermore, the integration of local literature through deep learning aligns with the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which positions students' cultural backgrounds as central resources in the learning process (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). CRT-supported instruction has been shown to foster inclusive learning environments, improve student engagement, and support identity development, particularly in culturally diverse classrooms (Banks, 2016; Porter, 2018). Through culturally responsive and deep learning-oriented pedagogy, literature learning becomes a transformative space where academic learning and cultural identity development intersect.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to local literature, deep learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy, empirical studies that explicitly integrate local literature learning with deep learning approaches remain limited. Most existing research examines cultural identity either through local literature as a medium of cultural transmission (Budiyono & Husni, 2023; Sangaji et al., 2023) or through deep learning as a general pedagogical framework that promotes meaningful and reflective learning (Belarde et al., 2025; Fullan et al., 2018).

However, these strands of research largely remain disconnected. Studies on local literature tend to emphasize cultural preservation and value transmission without sufficiently addressing the pedagogical depth needed to sustain students' cultural engagement in the context of globalization, while deep learning research predominantly focuses on cognitive and affective outcomes without grounding instruction in locally situated literary texts. Similarly, culturally responsive teaching frameworks often conceptualize

culture at a general or multicultural level, overlooking the specific role of local or regional literature as a culturally embedded knowledge system. This fragmentation reveals a critical gap in the literature, namely the lack of integrated analysis examining how deep learning-based instruction of local literature can jointly enhance students' cultural awareness, social sensitivity, and cultural identity development in higher education. Addressing this gap, the present study offers a novel contribution by synthesizing empirical and conceptual research to demonstrate the pedagogical potential of integrating local literature and deep learning as a culturally responsive strategy in higher education.

Therefore, this study investigates the role of local literature learning in building students' cultural identity through a deep learning approach. Specifically, this research aims to examine how the integration of local literary texts and deep learning pedagogy contributes to students' cultural awareness, social sensitivity, and identity formation in higher education contexts. Based on this background, the present study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How does local or regional literature education contribute to the development of students' cultural identity in higher education? (2) What are the pedagogical applications of deep learning approaches in the teaching of literature and cultural studies? and (3) In what ways can integrating local literature with deep learning methodologies enhance students' cultural awareness and social sensitivity?

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative literature review design to examine the role of local literature learning in building cultural identity through the deep learning approach. The literature review method was selected because it is appropriate for synthesizing existing theoretical and empirical findings across studies and for addressing the research questions, which focus on conceptual relationships and pedagogical practices rather than on direct measurement of participants' behavior (Snyder, 2019; Willie, 2025). This design enables a comprehensive understanding of how local literature and deep learning pedagogy intersect in educational contexts, particularly in higher education. The sources of data consisted of peer-reviewed academic journal articles, conference papers, and scholarly publications related to local or regional literature, cultural identity, deep learning pedagogy, and literature education. The population of the study comprised published research articles indexed in reputable academic databases, which was Google Scholar. To ensure relevance and currency, only studies published within the last ten years (2015–2025) were included. Articles were selected based on predefined criteria: relevance to the research topic, focus on educational contexts, clarity of methodology, and availability of full-text access. The flowchart in Figure 1 illustrates the article selection process.

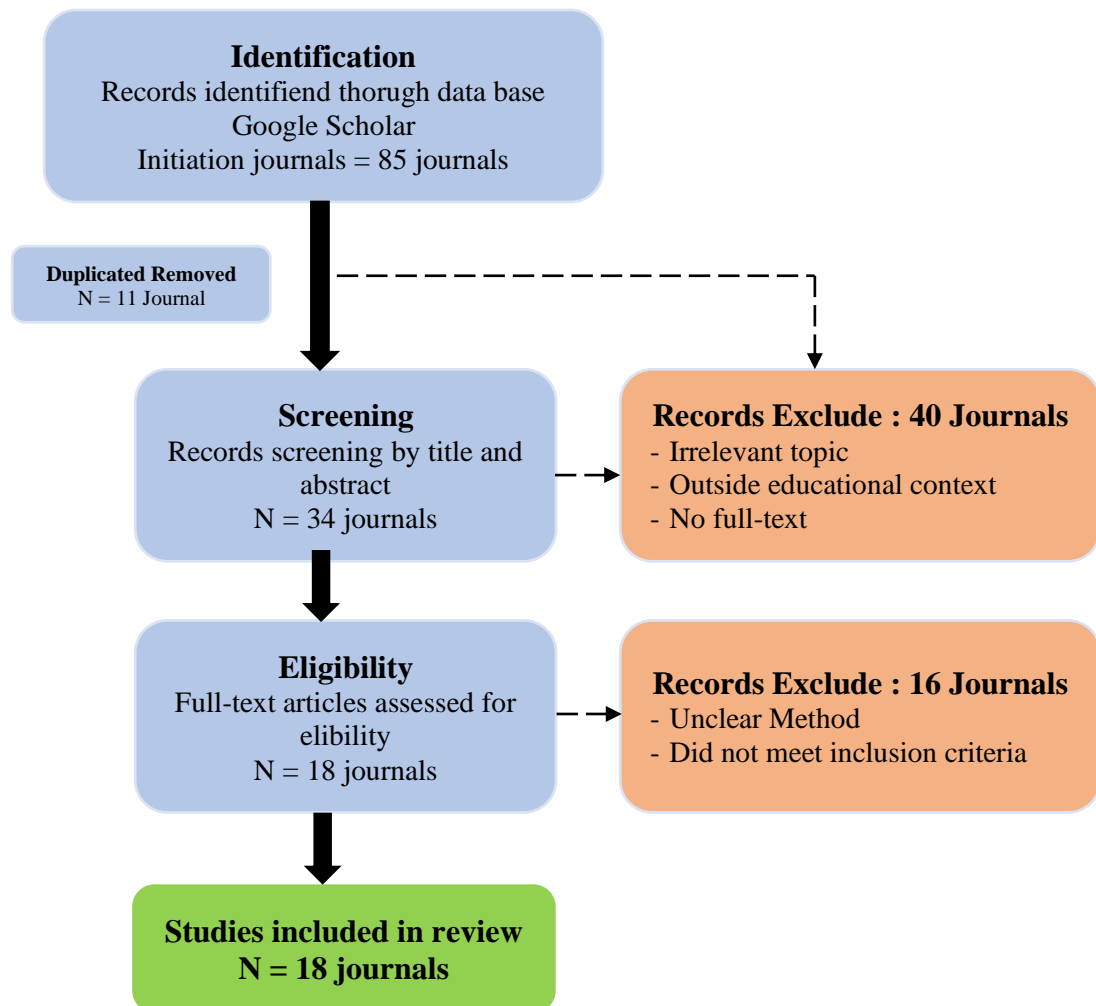


Figure 1. Flow Chart of Article Selection Process

In total, 18 research articles were reviewed after a multistage screening process that involved keyword searching, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and thematic analysis of the selected studies. Data collection was conducted through a systematic search process using specific keywords and combinations such as local literature, regional literature, cultural identity, deep learning approach, literature education, and multicultural education. The search process involved screening titles, abstracts, and keywords to identify potentially relevant studies, followed by full-text reading to confirm their suitability. An article selection checklist was used as an instrument to ensure consistency in inclusion and exclusion decisions, focusing on the study's objectives, methodology, and relevance to the research questions. The data collected from the selected literature included information on

research context, study design, pedagogical approaches, learning outcomes, and reported impacts on cultural identity or cultural awareness. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, which involved organizing, categorizing, and synthesizing findings across studies (Naeem et al., 2023). The analysis followed several stages: coding key concepts related to local literature learning, cultural identity formation, and deep learning practices; grouping similar themes; and interpreting relationships among themes to address the research questions (Williams & Moser, 2019).

RESULTS

The Contribution of Local Literature Learning to Students' Cultural Identity Formation in Higher Education

The findings of this literature review indicate that the contribution of local literature learning to students' cultural identity formation is supported by both empirical evidence and conceptual arguments. Empirical studies conducted in higher education contexts consistently demonstrate that the integration of local or regional literary texts strengthens students' cultural awareness, sense of belonging, and appreciation of indigenous values. Research in Indonesian higher education settings shows that students exposed to literature rooted in local wisdom exhibit stronger cultural pride and a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage (Disi & Hartati, 2018; Firmansyah et al., 2025; Sangaji et al., 2023). These findings suggest that local literature learning functions as an effective educational medium for fostering cultural identity and character formation (Saputra, 2025).

From a conceptual perspective, local literature is positioned as a form of cultural representation that transmits collective memory, moral norms, indigenous values, and social philosophies embedded within specific communities (Banks, 2016; Brondízio et al., 2021; Gay, 2018). Conceptual studies argue that engagement with folktales, regional poetry, traditional narratives, and local legends allows students to construct meaning about their historical roots and social identity, which is essential in increasingly globalized academic environments (Etzkorn & Reese, 2022). These theoretical insights complement empirical findings by explaining why and how local literature supports cultural identity formation.

Across both empirical and conceptual studies, the literature consistently indicates that local literature is not merely an aesthetic or linguistic resource but serves as a pedagogical medium that reinforces cultural continuity and social identity. When students critically engage with texts that reflect their own cultural realities, they are more likely to internalize cultural values and develop a stable cultural identity (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). This positions local literature learning as a strategic component of culturally responsive education that supports identity development, cultural awareness, and social sensitivity in higher education (Yunus et al., 2025).

Table 1 presents a comparative synthesis of both empirical and conceptual studies that examine the contribution of local literature learning to students' cultural identity formation. The empirical studies provide contextual evidence from educational practice, while the conceptual studies offer theoretical explanations that support and interpret these findings.

Table 1. Comparative synthesis of empirical and conceptual studies on local literature learning and cultural identity formation

Author(s)	Study Type	Educational Context	Focus	Key Findings	Contribution
Disi & Hartati (2018)	Empirical	Higher education	Local literature & character education	Local-wisdom-based literature strengthens cultural identity	Empirical evidence of identity formation
Sangaji et al. (2023)	Empirical	Higher education	Local culture-based literacy	Enhances cultural awareness and critical reading	Shows literacy-identity relationship
Firmansyah et al. (2025)	Empirical	Secondary-higher education	Local wisdom-based learning	Strengthens cultural understanding	Supports role of local culture
Budiyono & Husni (2023)	Empirical	Literacy education	Local literature & identity	Builds cultural continuity	Confirms cultural transmission
Banks (2016)	Conceptual	—	Multicultural education	Culture-centered curriculum supports identity	Theoretical foundation
Gay (2018)	Conceptual	—	Culturally Responsive Teaching	Cultural representation strengthens identity	Pedagogical framework
Brondízio et al. (2021)	Conceptual	—	Indigenous knowledge	Local knowledge transmits values	Cultural justification

Pedagogical Applications of Deep Learning Approaches in Literature and Cultural Studies

The findings also reveal a clear distinction between empirical classroom-based studies and conceptual frameworks related to deep learning pedagogy. Empirical studies show that deep learning-oriented literature instruction enhances students' engagement, critical literacy, interpretive skills, and reflective thinking. For example, Dewi et al. (2023) report that students participating in deep learning-based literary activities demonstrate improved ability to analyze themes, cultural symbols, and social issues within texts. These studies highlight that deep learning approaches encourage students to move beyond surface-level comprehension toward deeper interpretation and meaning-making.

Conceptual studies, on the other hand, define deep learning as a pedagogical framework that emphasizes meaningful understanding, critical reflection, and the integration of academic knowledge with personal and social contexts (Fullan et al., 2018; Santiani, 2025). Within literature and cultural studies, deep learning is conceptualized as a transformative learning process that aligns cognitive, emotional, and cultural dimensions.

Together, empirical and conceptual findings suggest that deep learning pedagogy provides a strong foundation for literature instruction that is reflective, student-centered, and culturally meaningful.

Table 2. summarizes empirical classroom-based studies and conceptual frameworks that explain the pedagogical applications of deep learning in literature and cultural studies. The convergence of empirical evidence and conceptual frameworks indicates that deep learning pedagogy provides a robust foundation for literature instruction that is reflective, student-centered, and culturally meaningful.

Table 2. Comparative Synthesis of Empirical and Conceptual Studies on Deep Learning Pedagogy in Literature and Cultural Studies

Author(s)	Study Type	Learning Context	Pedagogical Focus	Key Findings	Contribution
Dewi et al. (2023)	Empirical	Literature classrooms	Deep learning-oriented instruction	Improves reflective and meaningful learning	Classroom evidence
Zafirah et al. (2025)	Empirical	Language & literature	Deep learning strategies	Enhances engagement and outcomes	Effectiveness of deep learning
Sujaya (2025)	Empirical	Literature education	Deep learning & multicultural texts	Fosters empathy and social sensitivity	Social impact evidence
Fullan et al. (2018)	Conceptual	—	Deep learning pedagogy	Learning must be meaningful & contextual	Pedagogical foundation
Hammond (2015)	Conceptual	—	Brain-based learning	Emotion & culture drive learning	Cognitive support
Santiani (2025)	Conceptual	—	Deep learning review	Supports higher-order thinking	Conceptual synthesis

Integrating Local Literature and Deep Learning to Enhance Cultural Awareness and Social Sensitivity

The synthesis of findings indicates that the integration of local literature and deep learning pedagogy plays a significant role in enhancing students' cultural awareness and social sensitivity. Empirical studies demonstrate that when local literary texts are taught through deep learning strategies such as dialogic discussion, reflective writing, and interpretative analysis, students develop greater empathy, social responsibility, and sensitivity to cultural diversity (Junyanti, 2024a; Sujaya, 2025; Zafirah et al., 2025). These studies provide evidence that deep learning encourages students' active engagement with cultural and social issues embedded in local narratives.

Conceptual studies further situate this integration within the framework of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). CRT emphasizes the centrality of students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives in the learning process (Chang & Viesca, 2022; Gay, 2018). Through a CRT lens, deep learning activities become culturally meaningful and

inclusive, allowing students to connect literary themes with their lived cultural experiences. Conceptual analyses also suggest that CRT-supported deep learning fosters critical multicultural awareness by encouraging students to reflect on their cultural assumptions and challenge social stereotypes (Potter et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings suggest that integrating local literature with deep learning pedagogy through a culturally responsive framework transforms literature learning into a culturally grounded and socially meaningful educational practice. This integration not only supports academic engagement but also contributes to the development of cultural citizenship characterized by empathy, inclusivity, and social responsibility among higher education students.

Table 3. presents a comparative synthesis of empirical classroom-based studies and conceptual frameworks that examine the integration of local literature and deep learning pedagogy in fostering cultural awareness and social sensitivity.

Table 3. Empirical and Conceptual Studies on Integrating Local Literature and Deep Learning to Enhance Cultural Awareness and Social Sensitivity

Author(s)	Study Type	Focus	Pedagogical Orientation	Key Findings	Contribution
Junyanti (2024a)	Empirical	Local literature & social values	Reflective literary analysis	Enhances social sensitivity	Integration evidence
Belarde et al. (2025)	Empirical	World & local literature	Intercultural pedagogy	Builds critical cultural awareness	Multicultural perspective
Azhani et al. (2025)	Empirical	Local culture media	Cultural literacy	Strengthens cultural continuity	Media-supported learning
Gay (2018)	Conceptual	Culturally Responsive Teaching	Culture-centered pedagogy	Integrates culture & learning	CRT framework
Chang & Viesca (2022)	Conceptual	Teacher education	Culturally Responsive Teaching	Ensures inclusive learning	Pedagogical justification
Potter et al. (2020)	Conceptual	Social learning	Reflection & sensitivity	Supports social awareness	Social theory basis

DISCUSSION

This literature-based study provides a comprehensive interpretation of how local literature learning in higher education functions as a pedagogical medium for cultural identity formation when implemented through a deep learning approach. The synthesis of recent scholarship demonstrates that local and regional literary texts operate not merely as instructional materials but as culturally situated knowledge systems through which learners engage with collective memory, indigenous values, and socially constructed meanings (Ustianti, 2025). From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with sociocultural learning

theory, which emphasizes that learning and identity development are mediated through culturally meaningful tools, symbols, and social interaction. In this sense, local literature serves as a mediational artifact that enables students to internalize cultural meanings through dialogic engagement, interpretation, and reflection within academic settings (Ziraluo et al., 2024).

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that local literature learning contributes significantly to students' cultural identity formation by legitimizing local knowledge within formal educational spaces (Kuwoto & Saputra, 2024; Lubab, 2024). Drawing explicitly on identity theory, particularly sociocultural and narrative identity perspectives, identity is understood as dynamically constructed through interaction, discourse, and meaning-making rather than as a fixed personal attribute. Engagement with culturally grounded narratives allows students to negotiate personal and social identities in relation to their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of belonging, continuity, and recognition. This process is especially salient in higher education contexts, where dominant global or standardized academic discourses may marginalize local cultural perspectives. By positioning local literary texts as valid epistemic resources, universities create conditions in which students can affirm their cultural identities while simultaneously participating in academic knowledge production.

These findings strongly align with Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and multicultural education frameworks, which emphasize that meaningful learning occurs when curriculum and pedagogy validate learners' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2018). This connection highlights how the theoretical frameworks of CRT and multicultural education provide a foundation for interpreting why local literature fosters cultural identity, supporting both identity affirmation and cultural sustainability.

By positioning local literary texts as valid sources of knowledge, higher education institutions provide students with opportunities to affirm their cultural identities while engaging in academic learning. These findings align with the theoretical arguments of Banks (2016) and Gay (2018), who assert that culturally grounded curricula support identity affirmation and cultural sustainability by validating learners' cultural backgrounds. In this regard, local literature functions not merely as an instructional resource but as a symbolic and interpretive medium through which students construct meaning about cultural belonging and social positioning. This connection between theory and practice provides a clear rationale for curriculum designers to embed local literature as a core component of higher education programs.

The discussion further reveals that deep learning approaches provide a robust pedagogical framework for literature and cultural studies. Unlike surface learning models that prioritize content recall and textual reproduction, deep learning emphasizes higher-order thinking, reflective engagement, and contextual interpretation (Kuwoto & Saputra, 2024; Sujaya, 2025). The literature shows that pedagogical practices such as dialogic interaction, reflective writing, and problem-based literary analysis enable students to interrogate textual meanings, cultural symbols, and social issues embedded in literary

works. Through these strategies, learners integrate cognitive understanding with affective and cultural dimensions of learning, positioning them as active constructors of meaning rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This interpretation reinforces Fullan et al. (2018) conceptualization of deep learning, which can guide curriculum design to include reflective and problem-based activities that integrate cognitive and cultural learning objectives.

Moreover, the synthesis of findings indicates that integrating local literature with deep learning pedagogy enhances students' cultural awareness and social sensitivity (Junyanti, 2024b; Tohri et al., 2022). When students engage deeply with local literary texts, they are encouraged to critically examine cultural narratives, moral dilemmas, and social realities represented in the texts. This reflective engagement promotes empathy, reflexivity, and social responsibility, the key components of cultural citizenship in diverse societies. Deep learning strategies support this process by fostering emotional involvement and critical reflection, enabling students to connect literary representations with contemporary cultural and social issues (Junyanti, 2024b; Komariah & Wahyuni, 2024). These findings suggest implications for pedagogy, highlighting the importance of designing literature activities that promote reflective discussion, critical analysis, and social engagement.

This pedagogical integration aligns closely with the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which positions students' cultural experiences, identities, and perspectives as central elements of the learning process. CRT provides a theoretical and instructional framework that ensures deep learning activities are culturally meaningful, inclusive, and dialogic. By embedding local literature within a CRT-oriented deep learning environment, educators create spaces that encourage students to reflect critically on their own cultural assumptions, challenge dominant narratives, and engage constructively with cultural diversity (Lokteff, 2021; Ogodo, 2024). Such reflective and dialogic practices contribute to the development of critical multicultural awareness, equipping students with the interpersonal and ethical capacities required for respectful interaction in multicultural contexts. For curriculum design, this underscores the need to integrate culturally responsive strategies and local literature into course objectives, learning activities, and assessment criteria.

Overall, the discussion underscores that the role of local literature learning in higher education extends beyond the transmission of literary knowledge to encompass cultural identity construction, cultural awareness, and social engagement. The integration of local literature with deep learning pedagogy particularly when framed through culturally responsive teaching principles, emerges as a theoretically grounded and pedagogically effective approach to literature education. By explicitly connecting findings to sociocultural theory, identity theory, and CRT, this study provides actionable insights for curriculum designers and educators seeking to implement culturally meaningful and reflective pedagogical practices. This study contributes to the existing body of scholarship by synthesizing conceptual linkages between local literature, deep learning, and cultural identity formation, while also highlighting the need for future empirical research to examine how this integration operates across diverse educational contexts and disciplinary settings.

CONCLUSION

Local literature learning plays a strategic role in building students' cultural identity in higher education when implemented through a deep learning approach. Local or regional literary texts function not only as linguistic or aesthetic artifacts but as culturally situated knowledge systems that transmit collective memory, indigenous values, moral norms, and social philosophies. Engagement with these narratives allows students to construct meaning about their cultural belonging, strengthen identity continuity, and develop pride in their heritage within globalized academic environments.

Deep learning provides an effective pedagogical framework by fostering higher-order thinking, reflection, and contextual interpretation. Practices such as dialogic discussion, reflective writing, and problem-based literary analysis help students move beyond surface-level comprehension, integrating cognitive, emotional, and cultural dimensions of learning.

Integrating local literature with deep learning also enhances cultural awareness and social sensitivity. Students critically engage with narratives, moral dilemmas, and social realities, developing empathy, reflexivity, and social responsibility. This aligns with Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which centers students' cultural experiences and identities. Through CRT-oriented deep learning, literature education becomes culturally meaningful, inclusive, and dialogic, supporting cultural citizenship and critical multicultural awareness.

The study contributes theoretically by linking local literature, deep learning, and cultural identity formation, showing that identity development is most effective when culturally relevant content is paired with reflective and contextual pedagogy. Pedagogically, it suggests that educators and curriculum designers integrate local literature through deep learning and culturally responsive strategies to promote both academic achievement and sociocultural development.

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