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Marturi Oral Tradition as Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for Enhancing Speaking Skills in Indonesian EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

Background: Oral traditions represent valuable cultural resources that can be revitalized as speaking pedagogical tools. The *Marturi* tradition, a storytelling practice within Mandailing Natal society, offers significant potential as a culturally responsive strategy for developing speaking competence.

Aims: This study examines the forms and implementation processes of the *Marturi* tradition, identifies its pedagogical values, and evaluates its potential as a culturally responsive strategy for enhancing speaking skills.

Methods: Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with cultural informants knowledgeable about the tradition, direct observation of *Marturi* practice, and documentation in Simaninggir Village, Siabu District, Mandailing Natal Regency, Indonesia. Data were analyzed through manual thematic coding involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with trustworthiness established through source triangulation and member checking.

Results: *Marturi* encompasses diverse narrative genres including folktales, legends, myths, genealogical narratives, and moral advice (*poda*), performed in informal communal settings. The tradition cultivates essential speaking competencies including fluency, expressive vocal technique, nonverbal communication, narrative organization, and audience engagement. These competencies translate into concrete pedagogical strategies: a storytelling framework for sequencing speaking tasks, expressive-delivery and dramatic-reading practice, interactive question-and-answer storytelling, nonverbal-communication activities, and retelling tasks that build oral fluency and confidence.

Implications: The findings suggest practical applications for integrating *Marturi* into speaking instruction as a revitalization strategy, extending prior research on culturally responsive material development and local language barriers in EFL contexts.

Keywords: *Culturally responsive pedagogy; local wisdom; Marturi tradition; Mandailing culture; oral tradition; speaking skills*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking proficiency represents a fundamental competency in English language learning, enabling learners to communicate ideas, emotions, and information effectively across various contexts. Despite its recognized importance, many Indonesian students continue to encounter significant challenges in developing English speaking skills, including limited vocabulary, insufficient practice opportunities, lack of confidence, and mother tongue interference ([Kardana et al., 2022](#)). Research has demonstrated that mother tongue interference presents a substantial barrier for Mandailingnese students in pronouncing English words, with phonological differences between the local language and English creating persistent challenges that affect both confidence and interest in learning ([Sumardjoko & Musyiam, 2018](#)). These challenges call for innovative pedagogical approaches that address learners' needs while creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

One promising response lies in connecting instruction to learners' own cultural resources. In recent years, the integration of local culture into language instruction has gained considerable attention in educational discourse ([Sihombing et al., 2025](#)). Scholars have recognized that incorporating indigenous cultural practices into classroom activities can create more engaging learning experiences while simultaneously preserving local wisdom and cultural identity ([Ngah & Kamarudin, 2016](#)). This approach aligns with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of connecting learning content to students' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences ([Gay, 2018](#); [Ladson-Billings, 1995](#)). Tuthaes et al. (2024) argue that culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) go beyond mere cultural responsiveness by actively maintaining and revitalizing students' linguistic and cultural practices within educational spaces, recognizing that education should sustain the very identities that dominant systems seek to erase. CSP introduces the hidden curriculum of marginalized youth into the classroom, ensuring the presence and sustainability of the languages and cultures of these communities ([Paris & Alim, 2017](#)). Research on developing teaching materials based on local wisdom has demonstrated that such approaches enhance student engagement and promote culturally responsive learning ([Salqaura & Nasib, 2025](#)). Similarly, understanding students' linguistic backgrounds, as explored in research on local language barriers among Mandailingnese students, is essential for developing effective pedagogical strategies ([Kardana et al., 2022](#)).

The Mandailing people, residing primarily in North Sumatra's Mandailing Natal Regency, possess a rich cultural heritage comprising various oral traditions including *Marturi* (storytelling), *Markobar* (ceremonial speech), *Mangupah* (traditional counseling), *Marsipulut* (informal dialogue), and *Marpokat* (communal deliberation). These traditions embody communal values, social norms, and communicative competencies that have been transmitted across generations. *Marturi*, in particular, emerges as a significant practice where skilled storytellers, known as *Bayo Parturi*, narrate stories ranging from children's folktales to historical legends, thereby entertaining audiences while simultaneously transmitting moral teachings and cultural knowledge ([Sumardjoko & Musyiam, 2018](#)).

The *Marturi* tradition, however, faces the risk of extinction. Recent surveys indicate that only a very small proportion of respondents have participated in *Marturi*, and it has been described as one of the Mandailing oral traditions now almost extinct due to minimal regeneration ([Matlateh & Fawzi, 2018](#)). Revitalization efforts are nonetheless underway: cultural institutions such as Sanggar Samisara have organized Focus Group Discussions on *Marturi* revitalization ([Matlateh & Fawzi, 2018](#)). Integrating this tradition into educational contexts therefore represents a promising avenue for both cultural preservation and language development, extending the broader research agenda on culturally responsive language pedagogy at STAIN Mandailing Natal. The return of

cultural narratives to the classroom signifies more than a curriculum enhancement; it reflects a reclaiming of intergenerational knowledge once marginalized by formal schooling, with students learning not only about culture but also through culture in ways that promote agency and connection.

1.1 Research Gap and Novelty

A growing body of research has examined the integration of local wisdom and oral traditions into language instruction. Studies on developing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and local-wisdom-based teaching materials have shown that infusing local cultural elements, including Mandailing Natal's local wisdom, into learning resources responds to strong student needs and enhances engagement, producing materials rated highly for content, design, and language ([Ansori et al., 2019](#); [Pajarianto et al., 2022](#)). Needs-analysis research on folktale-integrated English materials has similarly identified three priorities: interactive and accessible materials that strengthen speaking practice, tasks that foster learner autonomy through reflective and collaborative learning, and the integration of cultural elements that connect local identity with global perspectives.

Research on oral narratives has further demonstrated that culturally grounded materials encourage students to speak more actively, reduce speaking anxiety, and strengthen learners' cultural connection, emotional engagement, and linguistic expression ([Annuar et al., 2021](#); [Rohmadi et al., 2023](#)), with storytelling acting as a catalyst for classroom interaction, motivation, and intergenerational dialogue. Within the Mandailing context specifically, prior work has examined related oral traditions such as *Markobar* and *Onang-Onang* ([Sirait, 2023](#)). Despite this growing body of work, the specific pedagogical values of *Marturi* and its potential as a speaking-instruction strategy remain underexplored; how the *Marturi* oral tradition can function as a culturally responsive pedagogical strategy for developing speaking skills has not yet been examined.

The novelty of this study lies in proposing a revitalization framework that adapts *Marturi*'s storytelling competencies, narrative structuring, expressive delivery, and audience engagement into structured speaking activities for the Indonesian EFL classroom. Rather than treating *Marturi* solely as heritage to be documented, the study repositions its performance techniques as transferable speaking skills, thereby extending research on culturally responsive material development and on local-language barriers in EFL contexts ([Fatmawaty et al., 2026](#); [Kardana et al., 2022](#); [Latifah, 2025](#); [Sumardjoko & Musyiam, 2018](#)) to a tradition that has not previously been analyzed for its pedagogical potential.

1.2 Research Questions

This study focuses on the *Marturi* tradition. The main purpose is to examine how this tradition is practiced and carried out in the community. In addition, this research aims to identify the educational values found in the tradition, especially those related to speaking skills. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore ways to use the tradition as a culturally responsive teaching strategy to improve students' speaking ability. To achieve these goals, the following research questions are proposed:

1. How is the *Marturi* tradition practiced, and what are its forms and implementation processes?
2. What pedagogical values are embedded in the *Marturi* tradition that can contribute to speaking competence development?
3. How can the *Marturi* tradition be adopted as a culturally responsive strategy for enhancing speaking skills?

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine the *Marturi* tradition in Mandailing Natal. The researchers selected qualitative inquiry because it suited an in-depth exploration of social and cultural phenomena and allowed the team to interpret participants' perspectives and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The descriptive approach enables detailed portrayal of the *Marturi* tradition's forms, implementation processes, embedded pedagogical values, and potential as a culturally responsive strategy for speaking competence development.

2.2 Research Participants

To capture multiple perspectives on the tradition, the researchers recruited three informants through purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary informant was Mr. Askolani Nasution, a recognized cultural figure and *Bayo Parturi* who has participated in preservation initiatives with the Ministry of Education and Culture. To strengthen credibility and reduce reliance on a single voice, the team also interviewed Ahmad Syukri Lubis, a community elder familiar with *Marturi* practice, and Fikri Ali Pulungan, a member of Sanggar Samisara directly involved in the tradition's revitalization. Informants were selected on the basis of their direct experience with, and deep knowledge of, the tradition's history, implementation processes, embedded values, and contemporary development. The researchers acknowledge that access to active *Bayo Parturi* is limited by the tradition's decline; this constraint is revisited in the Limitations section.

2.3 Research Procedures

The research took place at Sanggar Samisara in Simaninggir Village, Siabu District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra, a site chosen for its active preservation of Mandailing traditions, including *Marturi* and its revitalization Focus Group Discussion, "Revitalisasi *Marturi*, Warisan Sastra Lisan Mandailing". Fieldwork was conducted over three months, from September 2025 to November 2025. During this period, the researchers conducted six interviews and directly observed the *Marturi* performance, paying attention to the setting, storyteller–audience interaction, vocal delivery, and nonverbal communication; field notes from the observation complemented the interview data.

2.4 Research Instruments

Data collection employed two primary techniques: semi-structured interviews and documentation. In line with qualitative inquiry, the researchers served as the primary research instrument, collecting and interpreting the data directly; the team's familiarity with Mandailing culture aided rapport, and reflexive notes were kept to monitor potential bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview protocol was organized according to the ethnography of speaking framework (Hymes, 1974), encompassing setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre, with additional items on pedagogical values, speaking competencies, and integration into language instruction. Sample interview questions included: (a) Where and when was *Marturi* traditionally performed, and who took part? (setting, participants), (b) What kinds of stories are told, and how is a story chosen for a given audience? (genre, ends), (c) How does a *Bayo Parturi* open, pace, and close a performance? (act sequence, norms), (d) What vocal and nonverbal techniques does the storyteller use to engage listeners? (instrumentalities,

key), (e) What values or lessons are conveyed through the stories, and how? (ends), (f) How might *Marturi*'s techniques be adapted to help students speak English more confidently? (pedagogical integration). Documentation photographs of research activities and audio recordings of interview sessions served as supporting data, providing evidence of research implementation and enhancing the validity of findings.

2.5 Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed the data using descriptive qualitative techniques adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018), following three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through manual thematic coding rather than dedicated software, given the manageable size of the dataset. In data reduction, the team read the transcripts repeatedly, assigned open codes to meaningful segments (for example, "vocal technique," "moral teaching," and "audience interaction"), and grouped related codes into categories. These categories were then organized under the three research questions to form the themes of forms and processes, pedagogical values, and speaking-competence potential (data display). Conclusion drawing involved interpreting the themes in relation to the study's aims. To ensure trustworthiness, the researchers triangulated interview data with observation and documentation and conducted member checking with the informants to verify the accuracy of interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This section presents the findings under three themes aligned with the research questions: the forms and implementation processes of *Marturi* (RQ1), its embedded pedagogical values (RQ2), and its potential as a culturally responsive strategy for speaking development (RQ3). All findings derive from the interviews and observation; interpretive commentary and references appear in this part.

Forms and Implementation Processes of the Marturi Tradition

Setting and context

Historically, the *Marturi* tradition was performed in traditional communal gathering places known as *sopo-sopo*, typically in the evening after the *Isha* prayer. The origin of this tradition was explained by an informant who stated that, "*Marturi* is actually a tradition from before electricity existed. There was no electricity back then, and people had no entertainment. That is why storytelling became the only form of entertainment." In practice, this tradition also reflected specific gender dynamics, as participation was primarily limited to men; the informant further explained, "At night, only men would gather; women did not join. The men would assemble, and then a person who was known for storytelling would come." This pattern reflects the traditional social structure of the Mandailing community, although contemporary practice may involve more diverse participation from various groups.

Participants and roles

The tradition involves clearly defined roles, with the storyteller, known as *Bayo Parturi*, serving as the central figure. As the informant explained, "*The storyteller is called Bayo Parturi, which means the person who tells stories.*" The term *Bayo* refers to a man and *Parturi* to one who tells stories, marking the storyteller as a specialized and respected member of the community. The audience, on the other hand, consisted of community members, primarily men and boys, with no strict age distinctions among them. Interestingly, storytellers achieved their status not through formal appointment

but through demonstrated storytelling skill; as the informant noted, "In every village, there is usually a figure who is an engaging storyteller." This indicates that the role was earned based on natural ability and experience, rather than official designation.

Narrative genres and content

Marturi encompasses diverse genres that respond to audience preferences and the storyteller's repertoire. As the informant explained, "Mandailing stories are actually for all ages... there are stories for children and stories for adults." The tradition includes various genres such as folktales (for example, the story of the mouse deer and Balun-balun Piding), legends (such as Bujing Sambilan Jogi), myths, genealogical histories, and moral advice known as *poda*. The informant highlighted the distinctiveness of Mandailing versions of well-known stories, stating, "For example, the story of the mouse deer and Balun-balun Piding... in the Mandailing version, the mouse deer actually loses." Furthermore, story selection was not fixed but often responded to listeners' wishes; as the informant noted, "It depends on the audience's preference." This establishes the interactive and participatory nature of the Marturi tradition, where the audience played an active role in shaping the storytelling experience.

Narrative structure and performance sequence

Performances of the Marturi tradition followed a recognizable sequence consisting of an opening, the storytelling itself, and a closing. The opening served to establish the context and express respect toward the audience. As the informant explained, "The first part explains the background, the reason for choosing the story to be told." In addition, the opening also involved a gesture of courtesy, as noted by the informant: "There is a respect gesture toward those present, for example apologizing in case there are mistakes in the delivery." Once the storytelling began, it proceeded with flexible pacing that allowed for pauses, rest, and even interaction. The informant described this dynamic by stating, "The story can be paused or interrupted... the storyteller smokes, others who smoke also smoke, and then the story continues." In some cases, the storytelling extended beyond a single night; as the informant further explained, "There are stories that are not finished in one night; they can continue for several nights." This reflects the fluid and adaptable nature of Marturi performances, where both the storyteller and the audience shaped the pacing and duration of the tradition.

Vocal and nonverbal techniques

The storyteller employed a range of vocal techniques to bring the stories to life. As the informant explained, "Vocal techniques... with clear pronunciation... emphasis on certain words, changes in speech speed, changes in intonation, changes in pitch, changes in expression." These techniques served to distinguish different characters and create the appropriate atmosphere throughout the performance. The informant further described this dramatic quality by stating, "When it's funny, it's delivered humorously; when it's angry, it's delivered angrily... it's like actually performing a drama." In addition to vocal techniques, the tradition also incorporated nonverbal movements to enhance the storytelling experience. The informant noted, "There are nonverbal movements... body movements, hands, eyes, and everything... for emphasis," which were used to reinforce the content being delivered and sustain the audience's attention throughout the performance. This combination of vocal and physical expression made Marturi a dynamic and engaging form of oral tradition.

Pedagogical Values Embedded in the Marturi Tradition

The interviews revealed significant pedagogical values embedded within the Marturi tradition. Moral education and character development emerged as a primary function, with the tradition serving as an informal educational medium. The informant explained, "First is entertainment. Second is the transmission of behavior. In the past, there were

no schools... the only way to transmit behavior was through stories." This highlights how Marturi functioned as a vehicle for instilling values and social norms in the absence of formal schooling. The teaching strategy employed was indirect moral instruction through narrative. As the informant further noted, "Through the story, the audience can capture the messages... even if it's not explicitly stated... the listeners can understand, oh, apparently, I should love my mother, I should do this, I should do that." This approach allowed listeners to internalize moral lessons naturally, without feeling directly instructed, making the learning experience more subtle and meaningful.

Values transmitted included respect for elders, care for younger people, appropriate behavior in social relationships, and consideration for others' feelings. The tradition also transmitted cultural knowledge, including historical narratives and local wisdom — "Every village has its legend, for example, the legend of Sirambas which is related to Sampuraga" and social structure: "In Mandailing culture, there are three levels of social status; each level has its own etiquette." Through these stories, the community-maintained connection to its history, cultural landscape, and identity.

Table 1 Pedagogical Values Identified in the Marturi Tradition

Value Category	Specific Values	Educational Significance
Moral Education	Respect for elders, care for younger, social etiquette	Character development
Cultural Knowledge	Historical narratives, social structures, local wisdom	Cultural preservation
Communicative Competence	Narrative organization, expressive delivery, audience engagement	Speaking skill development
Emotional Intelligence	Empathy, emotional expression, perspective-taking	Social-emotional learning

Potential as a Culturally Responsive Strategy for Speaking Development

The findings show several features of Marturi that align with contemporary speaking-competence frameworks. Narrative organization emerged as a recurring emphasis in the tradition, as storytellers arranged events in a clear and structured manner. The informant explained, "Arranging the story in a logical sequence so that the audience can follow the story easily." This focus on logical sequencing reflects key principles of effective oral communication, where clarity and coherence are essential for audience comprehension. By organizing narratives systematically, storytellers demonstrated an ability to structure ideas and guide listeners through the story, which is a fundamental component of speaking competence in modern pedagogical contexts.

The narrative framework of *Marturi*, orientation, complication, climax, resolution, and moral lesson, parallels the narrative patterns commonly taught in English instruction, providing familiar scaffolding for narrative competence. Expressive speaking was equally prominent: storytellers used intonation variation, tempo adjustment, volume control, and strategic pauses, alongside nonverbal reinforcement through gesture, eye movement, and facial expression, to convey meaning and sustain engagement.

Audience engagement emerged as a further strength of the Marturi tradition. The informant described how storytellers built emotional connection with their listeners, stating, "The way to build emotional connection when some people seem unfocused, the storyteller will create new tricks, emphasizing the voice, strengthening the voice, or using a sad expression." This demonstrates the storyteller's ability to adapt and re-engage the audience through various vocal and expressive techniques. Additionally, the interactive nature of Marturi, in which listeners may interrupt with questions or comments, developed the storyteller's responsiveness. The informant explained, "The audience can interrupt, then I answer spontaneously, and the story continues again." This practice cultivated the ability to respond to listeners in real time while maintaining narrative coherence, which is a valuable competence for language learners who need to think and speak spontaneously in communicative situations.

Table 2 Alignment between Marturi Competencies and Speaking Skill Development

<i>Marturi</i> Competency	Speaking Skill Dimension	Pedagogical Application
Narrative organization	Coherence and cohesion	Storytelling framework, sequencing tasks
Vocal technique variation	Expressive speaking	Intonation practice, dramatic reading
Nonverbal communication	Pragmatic competence	Gesture and expression activities
Audience engagement	Interactive competence	Q&A sessions, interactive presentations
Moral message integration	Critical thinking	Discussion of values, reflection tasks

3.2 Discussion

This section interprets the findings in relation to the three research questions and to prior scholarship, and it foregrounds the study's claimed novelty: a revitalization framework that converts *Marturi's* storytelling competencies into structured speaking activities. The tradition's development of narrative organization, expressive delivery, and audience engagement directly aligns with the dimensions of effective speaking identified by contemporary researchers ([Matullah Al-Jauhariyah et al., 2025](#)). This supports the argument that indigenous oral traditions inherently develop speaking competence through sustained authentic practice.

Marturi as an Authentic Site for Developing Speaking Competence

The *Marturi* tradition demonstrates features consistent with culturally responsive pedagogy as articulated by Matullah Al-Jauhariyah et al. (2025): utilizing culturally familiar content, validating indigenous knowledge systems, and creating meaningful learning contexts rooted in community practices. Its integration into language education aligns with culturally responsive principles while preserving local cultural heritage. Annuar et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of sustaining rather than simply acknowledging cultural practices in education; *Marturi* represents precisely the kind of cultural resource that can be sustained through educational integration. This perspective aligns with the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which positions students' languages and cultures as central components of all stages of learning across contexts ([Pedro et al., 2021](#)).

The tradition's emphasis on moral education through narrative aligns with contemporary character education objectives (Piper et al., 2018). As noted by Peng et al. (2024), incorporating local values into language learning can make moral education more meaningful for students by connecting abstract principles to familiar cultural contexts. The findings of this study resonate with research on the *Markobar* tradition, which demonstrated that applying Mandailing oral traditions as learning strategies significantly enhances speaking skills. Students who learned speaking through the *Markobar* strategy showed significant improvement in expression, fluency, sentence structure, word choice, and content accuracy compared to students who received conventional instruction.

Research on developing local wisdom-based teaching materials has demonstrated that integrating local cultural elements into language instruction significantly enhances student engagement and promotes culturally responsive learning (Piper et al., 2018). The study found that students expressed strong needs for materials that integrate local wisdom, and expert reviews affirmed the high quality of such materials in terms of content, design, and language. Similarly, studies on local folktales in EFL education have found that such culturally grounded materials effectively encourage students to speak more actively and reduce speaking anxiety (Mulyantini et al., 2025; Suhartawan et al., 2025). The integration of the *Mangambat* tradition into language teaching materials has also shown positive results, with students responding well to materials incorporating local wisdom (Matullah Al-Jauhariyah et al., 2025).

The success of oral narratives in language education can be attributed to their multimodal and participatory nature. Storytelling engages multiple skills, listening, speaking, interpreting, and composing, while inviting students to bring their own experiences and familial knowledge into the classroom. This reduces the distance between school knowledge and home culture, especially in societies where oral tradition remains active in daily life (Yusda et al., 2022). The authenticity and relevance of storytelling content help students perceive language education as personally meaningful rather than abstract or obligatory, fostering deeper engagement and a stronger affective bond with the language (Pedro et al., 2021).

From Moral Storytelling to Character-Rich, Meaningful Language Learning

The findings of this study contribute to ongoing revitalization efforts for the *Marturi* tradition. The informant's concern about the tradition's decline reflects broader patterns documented in cultural research, where several Mandailing oral traditions have been identified as nearly extinct (Andayani et al., 2017). *Marturi* has been described as one of the Mandailing oral traditions that is now almost extinct due to minimal regeneration (Ritonga, 2019; Sihombing et al., 2025). However, revitalization efforts are underway, with Sanggar Samisara organizing Focus Group Discussions on *Marturi* revitalization (Matlateh & Fawzi, 2018).

Recent surveys indicate that very few respondents have participated in *Marturi* traditions, highlighting the urgent need for revitalization efforts. Educational integration represents a promising strategy for cultural preservation while simultaneously developing language skills. By incorporating *Marturi* into language learning contexts, students can develop speaking competence while engaging with and preserving their cultural heritage. This aligns with the broader research agenda on local wisdom-based material development that has demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating local cultural elements into language teaching. As Sharipov et al. (2025) note, the return of cultural narratives to the classroom signifies more than a curriculum enhancement; it reflects a reclaiming of intergenerational knowledge once marginalized by formal schooling, with profound linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical rewards.

A Revitalization Framework: Repositioning Heritage as Transferable Speaking Skills

The third research question concerns *Marturi*'s potential as a culturally responsive strategy, and here the study's novelty becomes concrete. The claimed contribution in the Introduction, a revitalization framework adapting *Marturi*'s competencies into structured speaking activities is realized in the alignment shown in Table 2 and operationalized in the strategies. Rather than treating *Marturi* only as heritage to be documented, the framework repositions its narrative structuring, expressive delivery, and audience-engagement techniques as transferable speaking skills for the Indonesian EFL classroom (Latifah, 2025; Yoanduanda & Halim, 2025). This extends culturally sustaining pedagogy, which places students' languages and cultures at the center of learning by offering a region-specific application of principles usually theorized in Western contexts (Adika, 2026; Tuthaes et al., 2024).

The principal contribution of this study is therefore twofold: it documents an endangered Mandailing oral tradition in explicitly pedagogical terms, and it translates that tradition into a concrete, classroom-ready framework for speaking instruction. In doing so, it offers a regionally grounded model that other communities can adapt to sustain their own oral heritage through language education, while addressing the persistent challenge of developing learners' speaking confidence in the Indonesian EFL context (Aprillia & Torres, 2024; Siregar et al., 2023).

Practical Implications for Speaking Instruction

Based on the findings, several culturally responsive strategies can be adapted from the *Marturi* tradition:

Building upon the pedagogical values identified in the findings, the *Marturi* tradition offers several practical strategies for enhancing speaking instruction in culturally responsive ways. These strategies draw directly from the traditional practices observed and can be adapted to modern language learning contexts.

First, the storytelling framework strategy utilizes *Marturi*'s narrative structure, consisting of introduction, conflict, climax, resolution, and moral lesson as a model for organizing speaking tasks. This framework helps students structure their ideas coherently and aligns with research emphasizing that narrative competence develops through sustained practice in authentic communicative contexts.

Second, expressive delivery practice involves training students to employ various vocal techniques observed in *Marturi* performances, including intonation variation, volume control, strategic pausing, and emotional expression. These techniques enable learners to convey meaning more effectively and engage their listeners.

Third, interactive storytelling incorporates audience participation elements, allowing listeners to ask questions and engage with the storyteller. This approach creates a communicative learning environment where students practice spontaneous interaction. The effectiveness of this strategy stems from its inclusive pedagogy, offering multiple entry points for learners with varying linguistic strengths and cultural familiarity (Madkur, 2024).

Fourth, nonverbal communication integration teaches students to use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to support verbal communication. Recognizing that such nonverbal elements are essential for effective communication, this strategy helps learners develop more comprehensive and natural speaking skills.

Finally, retelling activities involve having students retell familiar *Marturi* stories in English. By building on prior cultural knowledge, this approach supports language production and develops learner confidence. Studies have shown that oral narratives offer multiple entry points for learners with varying linguistic strengths, with students who struggle with conventional grammar-based instruction often thriving in storytelling activities by drawing on non-academic knowledge and community experiences.

Table 3 Culturally Responsive Strategies Adapted from Marturi

Marturi Practice	Adapted Strategy	Learning Outcome
Narrative opening with context	Set context and background before speaking	Improved comprehension
Expressive vocal techniques	Practice intonation, volume, pacing	Enhanced expressiveness
Nonverbal communication	Incorporate gestures and facial expressions	Improved pragmatics
Interactive audience engagement	Include Q&A and audience interaction	Developed interactional competence
Moral message integration	Discuss values and lessons	Critical thinking development
Flexible pacing with pauses	Use strategic pauses for effect	Enhanced audience engagement

This study should be read as design principles rather than tested interventions. The informant also identified practical challenges to adaptation, including limited English vocabulary, difficulty translating culture-specific concepts, low speaking confidence, and pronunciation differences between the local language and English, constraints consistent with documented mother-tongue interference among Mandailingnese learners (Sumardjoko & Musyiam, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations qualify these findings. First, the study drew on a small number of informants centered on a primary cultural expert; although triangulation and member checking were used, additional *Bayo Parturi* and community voices would strengthen the account of the tradition's forms and variation. Second, the research was conducted at a single site (Sanggar Samisara, Simaninggir Village), which limits transferability to other Mandailing communities. Third, the design is qualitative and descriptive: it characterizes *Marturi's* pedagogical potential but does not measure learning gains, so the proposed strategies remain untested in classrooms. Finally, the analysis relied on interview and observational self-report rather than longitudinal classroom data. These limitations frame the agenda for future research set out in the Conclusion.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the *Marturi* tradition of the Mandailing Natal community, its forms, pedagogical values, and potential as a culturally responsive strategy for enhancing speaking skills. Addressing the first research question, the findings show that *Marturi* is a structured oral tradition with diverse narrative genres and a clear performance sequence of opening, storytelling, and closing. In response to the second, the tradition embeds pedagogical values including moral education, cultural transmission, and communicative modeling. Addressing the third, its cultivation of narrative organization, expressive delivery, and audience engagement aligns with contemporary speaking-competence frameworks, and the structural parallels between *Marturi* and English narrative patterns indicate strong potential for classroom adaptation through the proposed revitalization framework.

These contributions should be weighed against the study's limitations: a small, primarily single-expert informant base, a single research site, and a descriptive design that identifies potential rather than measuring learning outcomes. By connecting a local

oral tradition to contemporary pedagogical objectives, the study nonetheless offers a basis for developing culturally responsive approaches to speaking instruction while supporting cultural preservation.

Future research should test *Marturi*-based speaking activities in EFL classrooms using experimental or quasi-experimental designs to measure effects on fluency, expressiveness, and confidence; develop and validate *Marturi*-based teaching materials and a repository of Mandailing oral texts adaptable across levels; broaden the informant base and sites to capture regional variation; and conduct comparative studies with other oral traditions to examine how shared narrative structures function across languages.

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Authors' Contribution

Ayu Meita Puteri Siregar conceptualized the study, designed the research instruments, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Suadi contributed to the study design, participated in data collection and analysis, and critically revised the manuscript. Diah Safitri Armin contributed to data collection, the theoretical framework, and the interpretation of findings, validated the analysis, and reviewed and edited the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

AI Generative Statement

The authors declare that artificial intelligence tools were used in a limited capacity to support language refinement and clarity of expression during manuscript preparation. All conceptual development, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and final academic decisions were conducted independently by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the content presented in this article.

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