

EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES OF AN EFL TEACHER AGENCY IN TRANSFORMING BANGKA MANUSCRIPTS INTO INTERACTIVE MULTIMODAL MATERIALS FOR RURAL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the emotional geographies of an EFL teacher's agency in developing and teaching BookCreator-based reading materials derived from philological and historical interpretations of Bangka manuscripts. Employing narrative inquiry, the study examined the teacher's stories, reflections, and classroom experiences through Hargreaves' dimensions of emotional geography, including moral, sociocultural, professional, physical, and political dimensions. The findings revealed that the teacher's agency was shaped by emotional ambivalence. Pride in preserving Bangka heritage was accompanied by anxiety about simplifying manuscript knowledge, designing interactive digital materials, and engaging learners with low motivation to study English and limited aspirations for higher education. BookCreator emerged not merely as a technological platform but as a mediating pedagogical space where local history, English literacy, multimodal design, and teacher emotion intersected. This study suggested that culturally sustaining digital EFL pedagogy in peripheral contexts depends not only on technological innovation but also on teachers' emotional negotiations with curriculum demands, local knowledge, institutional expectations, and student realities, contributing to international debates on teacher agency and equitable digital learning.

Keywords: *Digital materials development, Emotional geography, Interactive book, Local culture, Narrative inquiry*

INTRODUCTION

Reading in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has become increasingly complex because reading is no longer understood merely as the ability to decode printed words or answer literal comprehension questions. Recent EFL reading scholarship shows that successful reading involves vocabulary knowledge, strategic awareness, inference-making, motivation, multimodal interpretation, and the ability to connect textual meaning with learners' social and cultural worlds (Li et al., 2022; Murphy & Arciuli, 2024; Rianto, 2021; Rochanaphapayon, 2023; Xia et al., 2024). In digital learning environments, this complexity has intensified because learners encounter texts through multiple modes, including written language, images, audio, video, hyperlinks, screen navigation, and interactive tasks (Brown et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024; López-Escribano et al., 2021; O'Brien et al., 2022; Vorobel et al., 2021). Studies on digital and multimodal reading indicate that technology can support comprehension when it is pedagogically scaffolded, linguistically accessible, and meaningfully connected to learners' experiences (Kaban & Karadeniz, 2021; Lim et al., 2021; Murphy & Arciuli, 2024). However, digital tools do not automatically improve reading; their value depends on how teachers design, mediate, and emotionally sustain the learning process (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Xu et al., 2024; Zhang, 2023).

This issue is particularly important in EFL contexts where English is institutionally required but socially distant from learners' everyday lives. Many students experience English reading as examination-oriented, linguistically intimidating, and disconnected from local identity, especially when classroom materials privilege external cultural references rather than students' own histories and communities (Ayu, 2020; Heng & Yeh, 2022; Indrayadi, 2021; Sangaji et al., 2023). Research on motivation and engagement in EFL reading suggests that students' willingness to read is shaped not only by proficiency but also by perceived relevance, task design, teacher support, and the degree to which reading materials speak to their aspirations and lived realities (Fitriyah, 2021; Indrayadi, 2021; Sun, 2021; Zhao & Li, 2021). In peripheral or semi-rural educational settings, this challenge becomes more pronounced because learners may have limited exposure to English, fragile confidence, uneven access to digital learning resources, and restricted aspirations for higher education. Under such conditions, teachers are required to do more than teach reading strategies; they must reimagine English as a meaningful medium through which learners can encounter local knowledge, cultural memory, and possible futures.

Culturally responsive and culturally sustaining approaches have therefore become increasingly relevant to language education. Recent scholarship argues that local culture should not be inserted into English lessons as decorative content,

but should be treated as a knowledge system that can reposition learners as legitimate cultural subjects in the language classroom (Heng & Yeh, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Miqawati et al., 2024; Sangaji et al., 2023). In Indonesian EFL contexts, locally grounded materials have been shown to support cultural awareness, learner engagement, and more meaningful literacy practices when they are connected to students' social environments (Ayu, 2020; Sangaji et al., 2023). This perspective is highly relevant to Bangka manuscripts, which contain traces of local history, social values, religious life, customary practices, legal discourse, and intercultural relations. If such manuscripts are pedagogically transformed into English reading materials, they may enable students to read English not only as a foreign language but also as a medium for interpreting their own cultural heritage.

At the same time, heritage-based digital material development is not a simple act of transferring cultural content into an online format. Transforming philological and historical interpretations of Bangka manuscripts into BookCreator-based materials requires a chain of pedagogical decisions: selecting manuscript content, simplifying complex historical meanings, translating local concepts into accessible English, designing multimodal pages, recording audio, inserting images, preparing vocabulary scaffolds, and creating comprehension tasks. Digital reading studies have emphasized that interactive books and screen-based texts can support comprehension when multimodal elements are carefully integrated rather than merely added for visual appeal (Brown et al., 2022; Kaban & Karadeniz, 2021; Lim et al., 2021; Murphy & Arciuli, 2024). However, there remains a risk that digital platforms may reduce heritage knowledge to attractive but shallow classroom content if teachers are not critically attentive to meaning, representation, and learner readiness. Thus, the use of BookCreator in this study is not merely technological; it is pedagogical, cultural, and emotional.

Although recent research has expanded understanding of digital reading, EFL motivation, teacher digital literacy, and culturally responsive pedagogy, several gaps remain. First, many studies on technology-mediated EFL reading focus on measurable outcomes such as comprehension scores, vocabulary growth, digital literacy, or student attitudes (Bi et al., 2024; Han, 2025; Karaarslan & Polat, 2025; Li et al., 2022; Rochanaphapayon, 2023). These studies are valuable, but they often position teachers mainly as implementers of digital interventions rather than as emotional and cultural agents who experience uncertainty, pride, anxiety, hope, and vulnerability while designing materials. Second, studies on local culture in EFL classrooms have tended to examine cultural representation, material feasibility, or student responses, while giving less attention to the teacher's emotional negotiations when transforming local heritage into English pedagogical texts (Heng & Yeh, 2022; Miqawati et al., 2024; Sangaji et al., 2023). Third, research on language teacher emotion has grown rapidly, especially in

relation to online teaching, resilience, professional identity, and instructional change (Dong et al., 2022; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Xu et al., 2024; Xue, 2021). Yet little is known about how EFL teacher emotion operates when the teacher simultaneously becomes a cultural translator, digital material designer, and classroom practitioner in a peripheral educational context.

This gap matters because language teaching is not only cognitive and technical but also deeply emotional. Recent studies show that teachers' emotions influence instructional choices, professional agency, classroom interaction, resilience, and willingness to innovate (Dong et al., 2022; Lu, 2024; Wang et al., 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Zhang, 2021). Teachers' positive emotions may encourage creativity, care, and experimentation, while negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, helplessness, and vulnerability may emerge when pedagogical goals are blocked by student disengagement, institutional constraints, technological uncertainty, or professional self-doubt (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2024; Xue, 2021). In technology-mediated teaching, emotions become even more visible because teachers must negotiate between the promise of digital innovation and the realities of classroom infrastructure, student participation, and their own digital confidence (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Ulla & Perales, 2021; Zhang, 2023). Therefore, understanding the emotional dimension of BookCreator-based material development is necessary for explaining how culturally grounded digital pedagogy is actually lived by teachers.

To address this gap, the present article examines the emotional geographies of an EFL teacher's agency in transforming Bangka philological-historical manuscripts into BookCreator-based multimodal reading materials. The study shifts attention from the digital book as a product to the teacher's lived experience of designing, revising, and teaching it. The concept of emotional geography is useful because it allows teacher emotion to be understood through patterns of closeness and distance between the teacher and the people, institutions, values, spaces, and expectations surrounding her work. In this study, emotional closeness may appear in the teacher's pride in preserving Bangka heritage, care for students, and commitment to meaningful English reading. Emotional distance may emerge through anxiety about simplifying manuscript knowledge, uncertainty about digital design, frustration with students' low motivation, and tension between curriculum demands and local cultural responsibility.

This study is guided by three research questions. First, how does an EFL teacher narrate her emotional experience while developing BookCreator-based reading materials from Bangka philological-historical manuscripts? Second, what forms of emotional closeness and distance emerge when she teaches the materials to learners with limited motivation to learn English and limited aspiration to continue to higher education? Third, how do these emotional geographies shape

her understanding of teacher agency, cultural responsibility, and digital pedagogy? By answering these questions, this article makes three contributions. Conceptually, it connects emotional geography, teacher agency, heritage-based pedagogy, and multimodal EFL reading in a single analytical frame. Empirically, it offers a narrative account of how one EFL teacher becomes emotionally entangled with manuscripts, technology, students, and institutional expectations. Internationally, it contributes to debates on equitable digital learning by showing that innovation in peripheral EFL contexts depends not only on access to digital platforms but also on teachers' emotional capacity to translate local knowledge into meaningful, accessible, and culturally sustaining English literacy practices. In doing so, the article argues that BookCreator-based heritage pedagogy should be understood not simply as a digital material-development project, but as an emotionally mediated act of teacher agency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hargreaves' Emotional Geographies

Hargreaves' concept of emotional geographies provides an important framework for understanding how teachers' emotions are shaped by relationships, institutional structures, and pedagogical contexts. Hargreaves (2001) defines emotional geographies as patterns of closeness and distance that influence how teachers experience their work, interact with others, and respond to educational change. Rather than treating emotion as an individual psychological state, this concept views emotion as relational, situated, and socially produced. Teachers feel pride, anxiety, frustration, hope, or vulnerability because of their relationships with students, colleagues, curriculum, policy, professional expectations, and the wider community (Hargreaves, 2001; Hargreaves, 2005). Hargreaves identifies five main characteristics of emotional geographies: sociocultural, moral, professional, physical, and political. Sociocultural geography refers to emotional distance created by differences in language, culture, social background, and life experience. Moral geography concerns closeness or distance between teachers' educational purposes and the values of students, parents, or institutions. Professional geography refers to boundaries between teachers' expertise, role expectations, and professional judgement. Physical geography relates to spatial and material distance, including classroom arrangement, access, and technological conditions. Political geography refers to power relations, institutional control, curriculum demands, and recognition of certain forms of knowledge (Hargreaves, 2001; Hargreaves, 2005). Recent research confirms that teacher emotion is central to teaching quality, professional identity, agency, and resilience. Language teachers' emotions influence how they respond to classroom challenges, digital teaching demands, and learner disengagement (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Moorhouse

& Kohnke, 2021; Xu et al., 2024). Studies also show that positive emotions such as hope, care, and enjoyment can strengthen teacher agency, while anxiety, frustration, and vulnerability may emerge when teachers face limited resources or uncertain learner responses (Dong et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2022; Lu, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). In EFL contexts, teacher emotion is closely related to student engagement, motivation, and classroom relationships (Sun, 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Zhao & Li, 2021). These studies suggest that teaching innovation cannot be understood only through methods or materials; it must also be understood through teachers' emotional labour.

Previous research on digital language teaching also supports Hargreaves' framework. Teachers may feel professionally empowered by digital tools, yet physically and emotionally distant from students when technology fails, access is uneven, or interaction becomes difficult (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Ulla & Perales, 2021; Zhang, 2023). Similarly, studies on culturally responsive pedagogy show that local culture can increase relevance, but teachers must carefully mediate cultural knowledge so that it becomes meaningful rather than tokenistic (Ayu, 2020; Heng & Yeh, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Miqawati et al., 2024; Sangaji et al., 2023).

This framework is directly related to the present paper because participant's development of BookCreator-based reading materials from Bangka manuscripts involved multiple emotional geographies. She experienced moral closeness to local heritage, professional anxiety in translating manuscript knowledge, physical uncertainty in using digital tools, sociocultural distance from students' limited motivation, and political tension in positioning local manuscripts as legitimate EFL reading materials. Thus, Hargreaves' emotional geographies help explain how teacher agency emerges not only from skill or creativity, but also from the emotional negotiation of culture, technology, language, and students' futures.

METHOD

This study employed narrative inquiry as a qualitative research design. Narrative inquiry was chosen because the central object of analysis was not merely a teaching product, a media platform, or a set of reading scores, but the lived and storied experience of a teacher who attempted to transform local manuscript knowledge into a digital EFL reading resource. Narrative inquiry assumes that human beings make sense of their lives through stories and that educational experience is constructed through temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It does not only ask what happened in a teaching process, but how participants interpret, remember, and give meaning to what happened across time (Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008). This orientation was

relevant because the study examined how the teacher connected past manuscript knowledge, present classroom realities, and future hopes for students' English learning and educational aspiration.

The study was situated in one of the regions in Bangka Belitung Island, an area with strong historical significance in Bangka and with cultural memory connected to trade, colonial encounters, religious networks, and local social formations. The broader research project focused on developing an interactive audio-visual digital textbook for English reading through BookCreator. The material development process involved philological and historical engagement with selected Bangka manuscript content, adaptation into English reading passages, and integration of multimodal features such as images, audio narration, vocabulary support, comprehension tasks, and reflective activities. The present article focused on the teacher's experience within that process. Rather than evaluating the product through a conventional development-research model, it examined how the teacher experienced the emotional and relational demands of becoming a materials developer and cultural mediator. This methodological decision follows qualitative traditions that prioritize meaning-making, context, and participant experience rather than measurement alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

The participant was one English teacher, referred to here by the pseudonym Maya. Maya was selected purposively because she was directly involved in the development and classroom use of the BookCreator-based material. Purposive sampling was used because the study required a participant who could provide rich information about the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). She had experience teaching English to secondary-school students whose engagement with English was uneven and whose motivation to continue to higher education was often limited by economic, familial, social, and aspirational constraints. Maya's position was significant because she stood at the intersection of several worlds: the world of English language education, the world of local manuscript heritage, the world of digital pedagogy, and the everyday world of students who did not always see English or university education as relevant to their lives. Her narrative therefore provided a rich case for exploring emotional geography in EFL materials innovation.

Data generation was designed around narrative principles. The primary data sources consisted of semi-structured narrative interviews, teacher reflective journals, classroom observations, informal conversations, and artefact analysis of the BookCreator material. Narrative interviews invited Maya to tell the story of how she first encountered the manuscript-based project, how she selected and adapted content, how she learned to use BookCreator, how she anticipated student responses, how the lesson unfolded, and how she interpreted students' reactions.

Interviews were designed to elicit not only factual descriptions but also emotions, dilemmas, turning points, and professional reflections (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008). The reflective journal invited Maya to write after each major stage of materials development and classroom implementation. Classroom observations focused on interactional moments where students showed curiosity, resistance, silence, confusion, laughter, or unexpected engagement. Artefact analysis examined the digital pages, images, audio elements, reading tasks, glossaries, and activity sequences as material traces of the teacher's pedagogical and emotional decisions.

The data were analysed through a combination of restorying, holistic-content analysis, and thematic analysis informed by emotional geography. Restorying involved reorganizing field texts into a coherent narrative that respected chronology, context, and turning points (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016). Holistic-content analysis focused on the overall meaning of Maya's story rather than fragmenting the data into isolated codes (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis was then used to identify recurring emotional patterns related to closeness and distance (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Hargreaves' five emotional geographies served as sensitizing concepts: physical, moral, sociocultural, professional, and political distance (Hargreaves, 2001, 2005). These concepts guided interpretation without forcing the data into fixed categories. The five dimensions of emotional geography provided sensitising concepts rather than rigid categories. Physical geography referred to spatial and material closeness or distance, such as access to manuscripts, classrooms, internet connection, devices, and digital platforms. Moral geography referred to shared or conflicting purposes, such as the teacher's belief that local culture should be valued through English learning versus students' perception that English had little relevance. Sociocultural geography referred to differences in linguistic repertoire, cultural capital, family aspiration, and students' everyday realities. Professional geography referred to the teacher's identity, expertise, and vulnerability as she moved beyond routine textbook teaching into digital and heritage-based materials design. Political geography referred to institutional expectations, curriculum demands, assessment culture, and the broader politics of whose knowledge counts as legitimate in the English classroom.

Trustworthiness was addressed through triangulation of data sources, prolonged engagement with the teacher's process, member reflection, and transparent analytical memoing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017; Tracy, 2010). Interview accounts were compared with journal entries, classroom observations, and digital artefacts. The developing narrative was shared with the participant to ensure that the interpretation did not misrepresent her experience. Analytical memos recorded the researcher's decisions, uncertainties, and

interpretive shifts. Because narrative inquiry values situated meaning rather than statistical generalization, the aim was not to claim that Maya's experience represents all EFL teachers in Bangka or Indonesia. Rather, the study sought to produce a resonant and theoretically informed account that may illuminate similar tensions experienced by teachers who attempt to develop culturally rooted digital materials in low-motivation contexts.

Ethical considerations were central to the study. Pseudonyms were used for the teacher, school, and students. Student responses were described in aggregate or through anonymized narrative scenes, without exposing personal identities. The manuscript content was treated respectfully as cultural heritage, and the pedagogical adaptation was guided by the principle that local knowledge should not be extracted merely as attractive classroom content. Instead, it should be interpreted with attention to historical meaning, cultural sensitivity, and educational relevance. The teacher's emotions were also handled ethically. The analysis did not treat frustration, doubt, or vulnerability as personal weakness; it interpreted them as situated responses to the demands of teaching across cultural, linguistic, technological, and aspirational distances.

FINDING

The findings are presented as a narrative reconstruction of Maya's experience. They are organized into five interrelated themes that correspond to the emotional geographies emerging from her work: encountering the manuscript as a source of pride and burden; translating local heritage into teachable English; designing BookCreator pages as a space of creative hope and technical anxiety; facing students' reluctance and fragile aspirations; and reimagining teacher agency as cultural mediation. These themes are not separate stages in a linear process. They overlap and recur as Maya moves between manuscript, screen, classroom, and reflection.

Encountering the Manuscript: Pride, Responsibility, and the Weight of Cultural Meaning

Maya's engagement with the Bangka manuscript began with pride. For her, the manuscript opened a new possibility for English teaching beyond grammar exercises, vocabulary memorization, and examination-oriented reading. It showed that English could be connected to local history, cultural memory, and social values. In her previous teaching practice, most reading materials were taken from textbooks or internet sources and usually discussed general topics such as tourism, animals, technology, famous figures, or global culture. Although these topics were useful, they rarely reflected students' own world. The Bangka manuscript offered a different direction because it allowed students to encounter their locality through English. Maya explained this emotional response in the interview:

"When I first read the manuscript, I felt proud. Usually, English texts talk about other places or other cultures. But this manuscript came from Bangka. I felt that students could learn English while also learning about their own history."(Maya, Interview 1)

This statement shows that the manuscript was not merely a source of reading content. It became an emotional bridge between Maya's local identity and her professional role as an English teacher. Through the manuscript, she began to imagine English not only as a foreign language but also as a medium for presenting Bangka's cultural heritage. However, this pride was accompanied by pressure. Maya did not see the manuscript as a text that could simply be translated into English. It contained historical references, cultural terms, customary meanings, and social values that required careful interpretation. She worried that excessive simplification would weaken the manuscript's meaning, while too much complexity would make the text difficult for students with limited English proficiency. She described this tension as follows:

"The hardest part was deciding what to keep and what to simplify. If I made it too simple, I was afraid the meaning would disappear. But if I kept it too difficult, the students would not understand. I felt responsible to the manuscript and also to the students." (Maya, Interview 2)

This excerpt reveals the first major emotional geography in the study: the distance between cultural depth and pedagogical accessibility. The manuscript felt close to Maya because it belonged to her cultural environment, yet it also felt professionally distant because it was not originally written for EFL reading instruction. To bridge this distance, Maya had to select content, simplify language, arrange the storyline, prepare vocabulary support, and design comprehension tasks. BookCreator helped her transform the manuscript into a multimodal learning material, but it did not remove the emotional burden of adaptation. Maya stated:

"BookCreator helped because I could add pictures, audio, vocabulary notes, and questions. But I still had to revise many pages. I kept asking

myself whether the material was still faithful to the manuscript and whether students could read it.”(Maya, Interview 2)

The project also changed Maya’s understanding of English. Previously, she often viewed English as a language that helped students access wider opportunities beyond their local environment. Through this project, she began to see English as a medium for re-voicing Bangka’s local memory.

“I used to think English was mainly for reaching the outside world. But through this manuscript, I realized English can also bring our local stories to other people.”(Maya, Interview 3)

Nevertheless, this emotional closeness remained fragile. Students did not automatically share Maya’s pride. Some were interested in the digital features, but not immediately in the manuscript itself.

“Some students liked the pictures and audio, but when I said the story came from an old manuscript, they asked why they had to read something old. I felt disappointed, but I understood that I had to help them see the connection.” (Maya, Interview 3)

Thus, Maya’s agency emerged through emotional negotiation. She moved between pride and burden, cultural responsibility and classroom practicality, digital creativity and student indifference. The Bangka manuscript became both a source of local pride and a pedagogical challenge, while BookCreator became a space where Maya attempted to connect heritage, English literacy, and students’ learning realities.

Translating Heritage into Teachable English: Linguistic Anxiety and Pedagogical Care

The second emotional geography emerged when Maya adapted the manuscript into English reading materials. This process required more than translating words. Maya had to decide which parts of the manuscript should be simplified, which cultural terms should remain in local form, where glossaries were needed, and how comprehension questions could guide students from literal understanding to deeper interpretation. Each decision carried emotional weight because it shaped how students would encounter both English and Bangka heritage. Maya described this tension in the interview:

“I could not translate the manuscript word by word. Some terms have cultural meanings that are difficult to explain in English. If I changed them too much, I was afraid the original meaning would disappear. But if I kept them as they were, the students might not understand.”
(Maya, Interview 2)

Her statement shows that the glossary became more than a vocabulary aid. It functioned as an emotional compromise between cultural fidelity and classroom accessibility. By keeping selected local terms and adding English explanations, Maya tried to protect the manuscript’s meaning while helping students enter the

text. The adaptation process also revealed Maya's pedagogical care. She did not want students to experience the material as a museum lecture. Instead, she organized the reading passages around accessible questions about people's lives, local rules, community values, and Bangka's historical connections.

"I wanted the students to feel curious, not forced. So I made questions that connected the manuscript with their lives. I asked myself, how can this old text speak to students today?" (Maya, Interview 3)

However, this care also exposed professional vulnerability. Maya had to act as a teacher, translator, writer, designer, and cultural mediator at the same time.

"Sometimes I doubted myself. I am an English teacher, not a historian. But I felt responsible to make the manuscript meaningful for students." (Maya, Interview 3)

Maya's narrative shows that material development was not only cognitive work, but also emotional labour shaped by patience, doubt, responsibility, and imperfect translation.

BookCreator as a Space of Creative Hope and Technical Anxiety

The third emotional geography developed around the BookCreator platform. Maya initially experienced it as a space of creative possibility because it allowed her to present reading beyond printed paragraphs and comprehension questions. Through images, audio narration, pronunciation support, short videos, and interactive tasks, she imagined that students who were usually passive might become more curious. BookCreator seemed to bridge old manuscripts and students' digital habits. Below is one of the pages in the Bookcreator.



Figure 1. One of the pages in the Bookcreator

Maya explained:

"When I used BookCreator, I felt the manuscript could become more alive. I could add pictures, my voice, and small tasks. I hoped students would not feel that they were only reading an old text, but exploring something." (Maya, Interview 3)

However, this creative hope was accompanied by technical anxiety. Maya had to organize pages, balance text and images, record clear audio, check links, and ensure that students could access the material in class. She realized that a digital book that worked well on her device might not work smoothly on students' phones.

"Sometimes it looked good on my laptop, but when students opened it, the connection was slow or the display was different. I felt nervous because technology can help, but it can also disturb the lesson." (Maya, Interview 4)

The platform also shaped Maya's emotional rhythm. She felt satisfied when pages appeared visually coherent, but frustrated when audio failed, images shifted, or students struggled to open the book. Recording audio created another layer of vulnerability because her English voice became part of the material.

"Recording my voice was difficult. I listened to it many times and kept correcting my pronunciation. I felt shy, but I knew the audio could help students who were afraid to read silently." (Maya, Interview 4)

Thus, BookCreator functioned as a mediating emotional space. It connected manuscript, teacher voice, digital text, and student engagement, while

also exposing Maya's dependence on devices, connectivity, time, and technical resilience.

Teaching Reluctant Learners: Moral Closeness and Sociocultural Distance

The most emotionally demanding part of Maya's story emerged when the BookCreator material was brought into the classroom. Maya entered the lesson with hope that students would respond positively because the content came from Bangka. Some students showed curiosity when they saw images of old writing, heard the audio narration, or recognized local place names. These moments gave Maya emotional confirmation that the material could create closeness between English reading and local history.

Maya recalled:

"When some students saw the manuscript image, they asked what it meant and where it came from. I felt happy because they were not only looking at English words, but also asking about Bangka's past." (Maya, Interview 4)

However, the classroom also showed that local content did not automatically create motivation. Some students remained passive, some focused more on the device than the text, and others completed tasks only to finish the assignment. Maya realized that students' distance from English was shaped by low confidence, limited vocabulary, prior learning experiences, family expectations, economic realities, and weak aspirations for higher education.

"I thought local stories would make them more interested. Some were interested, but not all. For some students, English was still difficult, even when the topic was about their own place." (Maya, Interview 4)

This realization created a painful moral geography. Maya cared about students' futures, but her hope was not always shared by them. She wanted English to become a resource for aspiration, yet some students still saw it as a school burden. One meaningful moment occurred when students discussed a passage first in Indonesian and local language before expressing key ideas in English.

"At first, I worried they were using too much Indonesian. But then I saw that local language helped them understand the story before trying English." (Maya, Interview 5)

Maya's narrative shows that engagement appeared in small signs: asking about old words, recognizing local places, replaying audio, or completing one paragraph with support.

Reimagining Agency: The Teacher as Cultural Mediator

Over time, Maya began to reinterpret her role. She no longer saw herself only as an English teacher or a user of educational technology. Instead, she began to understand her work as mediation among languages, histories, technologies, and students' futures. This reimagining did not remove frustration, but it gave the

frustration a broader meaning. If students were distant from English, her task was to create bridges. If manuscripts felt distant from school life, her task was to make them pedagogically visible. Maya explained:

“At first, I thought my job was to make English reading material. But later, I realized I was also connecting students with Bangka’s history. I became a bridge between the manuscript, English, and the students.”
(Maya, Interview 5)

This sense of agency was emotional, but not naive. Maya learned that cultural relevance, digital interactivity, and teacher enthusiasm could not instantly solve low motivation. Students might still resist, technology might fail, and English reading might remain difficult. Yet she also saw that persistence could slowly change the classroom atmosphere.

“Not all students became interested immediately. But when one student asked about an old word or replayed the audio, I felt there was a small change. That made me want to continue.” (Maya, Interview 5)

The political geography of the project appeared in Maya’s decision to place Bangka manuscripts at the centre of English reading. This challenged the assumption that English classrooms should rely only on standardized or global materials.

“I wanted students to know that local stories are also worthy of being learned in English. English should not make them forget where they come from.” (Maya, Interview 6)

Maya’s agency was therefore relational and affective. It emerged through patience, revision, listening, and the willingness to hold together local heritage, English literacy, and students’ uncertain aspirations.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that Maya’s development and classroom enactment of BookCreator-based reading materials from Bangka manuscripts was not merely a technical process of producing digital instructional content. It was an emotionally mediated pedagogical experience shaped by pride, anxiety, care, frustration, vulnerability, and hope. Through Hargreaves’ concept of emotional geographies, Maya’s story can be understood as a movement across moral, sociocultural, professional, physical, and political distances. Her emotions did not appear as private feelings detached from teaching. Rather, they emerged from her relationships with the manuscript, English, BookCreator, students, curriculum expectations, and local cultural responsibility. This finding supports recent scholarship showing that language teachers’ emotions are central to agency, resilience, professional identity, classroom interaction, and pedagogical decision-making (Dong et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2022; Lu, 2024; MacIntyre et al., 2020;

Wang et al., 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Xu et al., 2024; Xue, 2021; Zhang, 2021; Zhao, 2021).

The first major finding concerns moral closeness between English teaching and local heritage. Maya felt proud because Bangka manuscripts allowed English reading to move beyond generic textbook themes and become connected to students' own cultural landscape. This finding indicates that local heritage can reshape the emotional meaning of EFL teaching. Instead of positioning English only as a language of global mobility, Maya repositioned it as a medium for re-voicing Bangka's historical memory. This is consistent with culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy, which argues that students' cultural knowledge should be treated as a foundation for learning rather than as decorative classroom content (Ayu, 2020; Heng & Yeh, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Miqawati et al., 2024; Sangaji et al., 2023). Similar studies in EFL contexts also show that locally grounded materials can support cultural awareness, learner engagement, and meaningful literacy when they are connected to students' social worlds (Ayu, 2020; Heng & Yeh, 2022; Miqawati et al., 2024; Sangaji et al., 2023).

However, the study also found that local content did not automatically produce motivation. Some students were curious when they saw manuscript images, heard audio narration, or recognized local place names, but others remained passive. This finding is important because it challenges a simple assumption that cultural relevance alone is sufficient to solve disengagement. Students' distance from English was shaped by limited vocabulary, low confidence, prior learning experiences, economic realities, family expectations, and restricted aspirations for higher education. This supports recent research showing that EFL reading motivation depends on perceived relevance, teacher support, confidence, task design, social interaction, and students' imagined futures (Fitriyah, 2021; Indrayadi, 2021; Sun, 2021; Zhao & Li, 2021). In Hargreaves' terms, Maya experienced moral closeness because she cared about students' futures, but also moral distance because her hope for English and heritage learning was not always shared by students.

The second finding concerns professional distance during the adaptation of manuscript content. Maya experienced anxiety when translating, simplifying, and reorganizing philological-historical material into readable English. She had to decide what could be translated, what cultural terms should remain in local form, how glossaries should be designed, and how comprehension questions could guide students from literal understanding to interpretation. This finding extends research on EFL reading instruction, which emphasizes explicit strategy teaching, vocabulary support, inferential comprehension, multimodal assistance, and scaffolded reading tasks (Li et al., 2022; Murphy & Arciuli, 2024; Rianto, 2021;

Rochanaphapayon, 2023; Xia et al., 2024). In Maya's case, scaffolding was not only cognitive but also cultural and emotional. She had to make the manuscript accessible without trivializing its historical meaning. The glossary, therefore, functioned not merely as a vocabulary list but as an emotional compromise between fidelity and accessibility.

The third finding concerns the physical and technological geography of BookCreator. The platform provided Maya with creative possibilities because she could combine written passages, manuscript images, audio narration, pronunciation support, links, and interactive tasks. This finding resonates with studies showing that digital and multimodal reading can enrich comprehension and motivation when design is coherent, accessible, and pedagogically purposeful (Brown et al., 2022; Kaban & Karadeniz, 2021; Karaarslan & Polat, 2025; Lim et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024; López-Escribano et al., 2021; O'Brien et al., 2022; Vorobel et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Maya's experience also shows that technology is never emotionally neutral. BookCreator created hope, but it also produced anxiety when audio failed, pages appeared differently on students' devices, links were unstable, or internet access was limited. Similar studies on digital language teaching indicate that digital innovation depends on teacher confidence, infrastructure, digital literacy, access, and institutional support (Bi et al., 2024; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Ulla & Perales, 2021; Zhang, 2023).

The fourth finding concerns the political geography of knowledge in the EFL classroom. By placing Bangka manuscripts at the centre of English reading, Maya challenged the dominance of standardized, global, and externally produced texts. This was a small but meaningful political act because it asserted that local manuscripts are academically legitimate and can become part of English literacy. At the same time, Maya remained accountable to curriculum goals, reading competencies, and assessment expectations. Her agency therefore operated within constraints, not outside them. This finding aligns with ecological perspectives on teacher agency, which view agency as relationally achieved through the interaction of personal capacity, resources, institutional structures, and future orientations (Gao et al., 2022; Lu, 2024; Xue, 2021; Zhang, 2021). Maya's agency was not heroic autonomy; it was affective persistence within limitation.

The implications are theoretical, pedagogical, and institutional. Theoretically, the study shows that Hargreaves' emotional geography remains useful for understanding digital and culturally rooted EFL innovation because it explains how teacher emotion is produced through closeness and distance. Pedagogically, the findings suggest that heritage-based digital reading materials should include not only linguistic scaffolding but also emotional scaffolding. Students need visuals, audio, glossaries, and guided questions, but they also need low-risk opportunities to discuss, ask, translate, connect, and respond through

familiar languages before moving into English. Institutionally, schools should not leave such innovation to individual teacher commitment alone. Teachers need time, infrastructure, collaboration with cultural experts, access to manuscripts, and professional support in digital material design. Without such support, culturally rooted digital pedagogy may depend too heavily on invisible teacher labour and may lead to emotional exhaustion. Maya's story suggests that the success of BookCreator-based heritage pedagogy should not be judged only by product validity, digital interactivity, or immediate student enthusiasm. Its significance lies in the emotional and relational work through which a teacher made Bangka manuscripts visible in English reading. The study contributes to international research by showing that equitable digital EFL pedagogy in peripheral contexts depends not only on technology but also on teachers' capacity to negotiate culture, language, aspiration, infrastructure, and emotion.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the emotional geographies of an EFL teacher who developed and taught BookCreator-based reading materials derived from Bangka philological-historical manuscripts. Through narrative inquiry, the study explored how the teacher experienced, interpreted, and negotiated the transformation of local manuscript knowledge into multimodal English reading materials for learners with limited motivation and fragile educational aspirations. The findings show that the teacher's experience was shaped by multiple movements of emotional closeness and distance. She felt close to Bangka heritage, yet distant from students' initial indifference toward manuscripts. She was committed to meaningful English learning, yet constrained by limited resources, uneven technological access, and students' low confidence in reading. BookCreator enabled the integration of text, images, audio, and interactive tasks, but its value depended on the teacher's emotional labour, cultural interpretation, and pedagogical decision-making. The teacher's agency emerged as mediation among English, local history, digital technology, curriculum expectations, and students' uncertain futures. The study implies that culturally rooted digital pedagogy should not be evaluated only through product validity, technological sophistication, or immediate learning outcomes. It should also be understood through the relational and emotional work by which teachers make local knowledge accessible, meaningful, and pedagogically alive. For EFL classrooms, local manuscripts can become powerful resources for connecting language learning with identity, heritage, and aspiration. This study is limited by its focus on one teacher and one instructional context. Future research should involve more participants, longer classroom observations, student interviews, analysis of student work, and longitudinal investigation of reading motivation. Other researchers may

also compare different manuscript-based materials, examine learners' emotional responses, or combine narrative inquiry with product-validation and classroom-effectiveness data. Such studies can deepen understanding of how digital heritage pedagogy supports language learning in peripheral and culturally rich educational contexts.

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