Lessons Learned through the Muslim Youngsters’ Creative Process of Digital Storytelling (DST) on Peace

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Abstract
The heterogeneous, rich and unique social cultural background of Indonesia has routinely become a hidden agenda of hate speech, intolerance, cultural conflicts, and group friction leading to disharmony. Educational intervention is believably needed to address the issue of tolerance. This article aims to investigate ten young students’ experiences with their narration during the creative process of peace-themed Digital Storytelling (DST). By employing a narrative research paradigm, the study reveals the students’ thoughts during the creative DST process. The students’ statements, picture selection, and syntax served as the primary data. Applying Braun and Clark’s thematic analysis, the parameters of peaceful literacy included the commitment to one nation, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of various cultures and traditions. The results of this study on the students’ narratives indicated that these young people were peaceful literary agents who use their voices to speak about the importance of upholding cultural traditions, and respecting and accepting others. The study offers a novelty in terms of methods by using a narrative design to narrate the youngsters’ voice related to peace literacy, and in empirical contribution as the supplement to support the national curriculum as well as the implementation of peace-themed peace literacy in educational context.

Keywords: DST, Pancasila, peace literacy, respect, tolerance, unity in diversity

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Introduction
The heterogeneous social and cultural background of Indonesia has created a colorfully rich landscape that has given the country a unique identity and position in the global community. However, a hidden agenda of hate speech, intolerance, cultural conflicts, and group friction has played a significant role in producing a general sense of disharmony, with these factors working in concert to divide national unity. Thus, educational intervention is needed to address the issue of tolerance, as its absence may actually detract from social justice and peaceful coexistence (Broer, Muyck, Potgieter, Walt and Wolhuter, 2016). Peace literacy has been a topic of great interest and a concept to be nurtured at any level, particularly for children and youth (Blaylock, Burns, Turner and Taylor, 2019). In short, peace literacy is a fundamental and critical issue.

The government has applied a soft approach to programs for children and youth. Young influencers are engaged as agents of peace and are considered to be a crucial element in promoting narratives online to counter the spread of hate speech and propaganda by radical groups (Fitriani et al., 2018). Abdel-Fattah (2020) claimed that the Australian government is perpetuating the idea that Muslim youth are at-risk of becoming terrorists because of community partnership programs that have been put in place based on the rise of extremist groupsthat the Australian government is perpetuating the idea that Muslim youth are at risk of becoming terrorists because of the programs they have put in place for this group. They reported that the central line of reasoning for community partnership programs has been based on the idea of the rise of extremist Muslims, and therefore, Muslim youth are always labeled as “at-risk” with the potential to becoming a terrorist. Studies have been conducted on the importance of education to prevent radicalism.

Sas et al. (2020) stated that in developing countries, schools are attractive environments for recruiting extremists, as radicalized individuals recruit not only youth who are uneducated or have lower levels of education, but also those who have been through formal education. Hence, the research suggests that one way to circumvent the recruitment of youth into lives of violent extremism is to engage schools in the process of preventing radicalization by
improving the quality of education and ensuring equal access by all. The current study offers a suggestion to how schools may achieve this by amplifying student voices through DST. Consequently, the current paper seeks to make the following contributions to the previous existing literature concerning peace literacy and DST.

First, it entailed to Kotob & Antippa (2020) who focused on how teachers in Lebanon emphasized the importance of values such as awareness of self, community, culture, and the environment. Second, Truong-White & McLean (2015) explored the integration of DST into school curriculums for middle and high school students as a learning aid to support transformative global citizenship education (TGCE), and found that both the process and the product of DST can support a transformative approach to global citizenship education. Thus, the current research addressed the question on how the Muslim youngsters voiced their thought during the creative process of peace-themed Digital Storytelling (DST). The current study offers theoretical, and empirical contributions concerning peace literacy, DST, and the NI method. Empirically, it supported the curriculum of peace literacy through the implementation of DST in relevance to peace theme, as well as to serve as a genuine example of Indonesian Muslim youngsters’ voice towards peace and tolerance.

Although Indonesia’s curriculum, Kurtilas (Kurikulum 2013) expressed the need for incorporating diverse values, the exact activities needed to achieve this were not clearly specified. The digital storytelling platform has been selected as an approach to demonstrate how children and youth, agents of change, express their views about others. If they are introduced to and can become familiar with peace literacy, they will be good ambassadors of a peaceful Islam agent of change. With their social background of being active in the school’s organization these 10 youngsters were accustomed to interact and build communication with other school communities and broader communities. In the end, they are expected to narrate their genuine ideas free from the agenda of hated speech or radicalism in relevance to tolerance and peace. By narrating peaceful Islam, the youngsters will support the Indonesian government’s concern of moderate Islam and in term of empirical evidence, the study serves as an answer of previous research
claiming that Muslim youngsters are at risk of becoming terrorists (Abdel-Fattah, 2020).

Integrating peace literacy into school curriculums as an enjoyable learning opportunity is integral to its success. In this respect, digital storytelling is believed to be an appropriate medium to help amplify learners’ voices on specific topics (Robin, 2016). DST is often used as a tool to empower people in finding solutions to social problems. In this context, DST can be used as a tool to guide and encourage young people to find and use their voices. The incorporation of peace literacy into English language instruction has become as a novel approach to integrating English into specific themes. The young people taking part in this learning experience were selected based on the criteria of those who meet the criteria of teenagers (are about 17 years old), and being an active “moslem youngsters”. Therefore, presenting the digital stories of people who practice Islam is a way for them to use their voices and reveal how they truly feel about peace.

Peace literacy: The Parameters
In the Indonesian context, peace literacy has become a focus of attention in some ministries, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs. A source of interest for Indonesia’s President, the introduction and implementation of peace literacy has become a crucial element to the country’s stable growth, leading the Ministry of Religious Affairs to position it as a focal point in Rumah Moderasi Beragama, a program that aims to educate youngsters to nurture and shape them into the agent of change of moderate Islam (Kemenag RI, 2021).

Moderasi Beragama is based on the idea that people of different ethnicities tolerate, accept, respect and appreciate others. This has a strong correlation with peace literacy, within the parameters of tolerance and accepting differences. Some of the basic principles of moderate Islam in Indonesia include the commitment to one nation, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of various traditions and cultures (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). Further explained, the idea of the commitment to one nation is marked by an acceptance of the principles of the nation and state based
on Pancasila, the five principles of Indonesia’s national philosophy originally formulated by Sukarno, and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as the regulations that fall under this. Tolerance is the practice of respecting differences and holding space for others to express their beliefs and opinions, as well as respecting equality and a willingness to cooperate. Non-violence is characterized by rejecting the actions of certain persons or groups who use violent means, both physically and verbally, to bring about a desired change. Meanwhile, the underlying intention behind the idea of accepting traditions and cultures is a sense of familiarity and welcoming spirit towards local traditions and cultures in religious behavior, as long as they are not in conflict with the main teachings of these religions.

**Digital Storytelling: Infusing Peace Literacy into Integrated Subjects**

As a constructivist instructional strategy, DST supports project-based, technology-integrated, and student-centered learning experiences. With roots in storytelling, DST also applies audio and visual components, such as images and narratives, and thus, results are usually output as short films that are between two and three minutes in duration (Wu & Chen, 2020). Categorized in qualitative research, DST’s design process as an art-based research method may elucidate a complex narrative and engage participants and give meaningful result by capturing and sharing participants’ narratives (Rieger, West, Kenny, *et al*, 2018).

The benefit of DST in literacy as explained by Chan (2017) is that it integrates the literacies of reading and writing into other literacies, such as information, technology, and visuals. Teachers should implement or integrate DST into curriculums, as it is crucial for students to be immersed in authentic learning experiences (Banzato, 2014), bringing a new level of substance to their studies.

Previous research on the use of DST in English for specific purposes (ESP) revealed that, through DST, students are able to learn English material in an integrated way and independently engage in the process of multimedia authoring to develop competence beyond normal learning activities (Puspitasari, 2018). DST reduces the anxiety students may experience during the learning process that may block them from maximal learning (Liu, Yueh, Yo, 2018).
DST provides students with real-life perspectives and unconsciously motivates them to perform and speak out in class (Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017), and may contribute to the development of higher critical and creative thinking in students, one of the most requisite skills in this 21st century (Yang & Wu, 2012; Anderson, Chung, & Macleroy, 2018). The purpose of this study was to investigate how youth found and used their voices during the creative process of peace-themed Digital Storytelling (DST).

**Methods**
This study used narrative inquiry method. Narrative inquiry is the process of how we gather information through storytelling and serves as a way to explore the experiences of human beings throughout their lives (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). By narrating the students’ stories, the researchers gained insight into their actions and emotions. The researchers used the insight gained through interviews with the students to create a narrative of their experiences with and reflections on DST.

Ten participants were selected from the 30 total populations of youngsters as they met the criterion of total cooperation to reveal their genuine voice concerning peace literacy. All of them were from the homogenous social background, common age, common school level and activists of school organization. Semi-structured interviews were conducted over the duration of this study to obtain data. Bahasa Indonesia was used to encourage and reassure the participants and provide them with a degree of freedom in answering the questions. Interviews were conducted over the process of DST design process both offline and via WhatsApp messages. The second communication was conducted to get more detailed information during non-offline mode of interview. From the interview, data were then coded and were analyzed based on the parameter of peace Indicators. Braun and Clark’s (2006) thematic analysis was used to conduct more specific themes. The coded data was interpreted based on the parameters of the peace literacy theory.

**Results and Discussions**
Data pertaining to their remarks, choice of pictures, and syntax are discussed below. Due to space limitations and similarities in the data collected, the researchers selected a sample of narratives to provide an overall picture, as follows.
Table 1. Students’ responses on the creation of peace-themed DST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dm</td>
<td>This was a nice learning experience, although at first, I was personally confused about the terms. We were able to become familiar with Pancasila and UUD 45 through this project and learn about how to be a good citizen. If we don’t learn about our civic duties and to love our country, what will happen to Indonesia? We learned about good values and their relation to Islam. This was a great experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>At first, I was confused about DST. But later, I found out that images can help us interpret the background of a situation. When we looked at a picture of a Muslim giving food to a non-Muslim in Bali, we were instructed to use critical thinking when looking at the situation, asking questions like, Why did it happen? What is the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>I actually don’t have a background in peace literacy but Google helped me. We picked up related vocabulary by looking at images and found problems and values inside the images that we should link to Islamic and universal values because they are related to each other. This was interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ang</td>
<td>I enjoyed arranging pictures about tolerance and respect for people from different cultures. We connected the images in a narrative text. When we found a problem, we talked about why it happened. We were motivated to find solutions from our experiences as young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sel</td>
<td>The learning process freed us to be ourselves. I was able to select pictures that I thought represented humanity and described them later. We learned about unity in diversity, Pancasila, and why things happen. We also linked the text to Islamic values, like hadits, or scripture verses that God has created people of various nations and tribes so that they know each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir</td>
<td>We were free to pick any pictures that we liked but it had to be related to the theme. Bhineka Tunggal Ika is the official motto of Indonesia, which means unity in diversity, and Pancasila is the country’s philosophy. We blended this with some scripture verses, or hadits, in Islam. We were trained to realize just how rich and how much potential Indonesia has.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwi</td>
<td>I learned about moderation or peace. Using pictures, we had to analyze the why and how, backgrounds, and relevance to our lives. This experience focused on critical thinking to help us question false information and stop its spread.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* data elaborated by the authors
The Voices of Youth and Commitment to One Nation

The students’ narratives on the importance of a commitment to one nation can be seen in the table 1. The idea of identifying corpus from the text helped the students to compose and compile their thoughts into coherent conclusions that were relevant to the images.

Some friends in my group and I picked up the terms, *Bhineka Tunggal Ika, Pancasila, peace, Islam, empathy, tolerance, respect, good, and cooperation*, in this session. So, from reading, we can find relevant vocabulary for the next project.

(Ang, Interview on September 3, 2021, translation by author)

Mirroring the text sample, the terms, “*Bhineka Tunggal Ika, Pancasila, peace, Islam, empathy, tolerance, respect, good, and cooperation*”, were used to design the text.

Another student’s voice on the commitment to one nation is reflected in the following text:

*We live in Indonesia in a peaceful way. We respect other people of different faiths. This is because we are one nation. The first and second principles of Pancasila focus on respect for others. This also appears in Bhineka Tunggal Ika. We are different, but we are one.*

(Ang, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

Further, an awareness of the existence of various cultures in one nation can be found in the following statement:

*We chose the pictures to show the audience how rich we are as a country. Indonesia has many ethnic groups. These nine images are samples. We want people to see we are different, but peaceful. Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, we are different but we are one.*

(Ang, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

*We want to show that there are various differences in Indonesia. There are many islands, so of course, the country is unique in many ways. We must not force differences to conform to one uniform mold. In Indonesia, there are people who hold Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, or...*
other religious beliefs. From one island to another, you will find people who are Javanese or Sumatran. People live in harmony. People live in one nation, Indonesia. This is in the third principle of Pancasila, Persatuan Indonesia, that we are (we are different, but we are one).
(Mir, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

The remarks about how people in Indonesia live in peace and harmony and are one even with differences reflect the students' recognition of the context of multiculturalism and their awareness of the effects of a homogenous social culture in a religious context. This is in line with Wenar's (2012) argument about the importance of being aware of multiculturalism in the religious sphere with a “reasonable interpretation” applied to Catholicism, Islam, and atheism. Without such reasonable perspectives, all of these doctrines advocate the use of coercive political power to dictate that non-believers conform to religious ideals.

Another finding on the students’ commitment to one nation can be traced from the figure 1. Pancasila, a symbol of the state, and five people representing various religions. The text on the bottom line says Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, or unity in diversity. Pancasila is composed of the “Five Principles” that constitute the national ideology of the Indonesian state, namely, the belief in one supreme God; just and civilized humanity; national unity; democracy led by wisdom and prudence through consultation and representation; and social justice (Ropi, 2017).

Figure 1. Unity in diversity during the COVID-19 pandemic
*Source:* data elaborated by the authors
This picture shows five different religions: Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and Kong Hu Chu. All of the five people are wearing masks. They are from different faiths, but they are protecting Indonesia. They wear masks especially during the pandemic.
(Mir, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

With these statements stressing differences, but a shared aim to protect Indonesia, for example, the students expressed their hope that others would make an effort to maintain harmony. The broader context in Indonesia is that differences are sometimes used as justification for creating chaos, especially in relation to ethnic differences. The student's statement that these five figures are protecting Indonesia even though they hold different beliefs is a message of strength in numbers. Wearing masks is a sign that during the COVID-19 pandemic, everybody works together, irrespective of religion.

The Voices of Youth and Tolerance
The following narratives address the importance of expressing the value of tolerance.

We usually make videos, but combining three lessons into one was a totally different experience. I hope the results can change negative mindsets about differences. We believe this work is crucial in spreading tolerance.
(DM, Interview on September 1, 2021, translation by author)

We can share this video through social media so it will be seen by others. False information is everywhere, so I hope this will help others understand the real facts about Islam. Islam is a peaceful religion that promotes tolerance.
(PP, Interview on September 1, 2021, translation by author)

The language used, namely, how the results from this experience can be used to change negative mindsets about differences and how this is crucial in spreading the idea of tolerance to help people understand actual facts about the peaceful religion of Islam, reveals that these students are aware of misconceptions that have clouded
people’s understanding of Islam. In this way, narrative inquiry helps youth find their voice in daily social interactions. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry can help researchers find the pieces to puzzles on the phenomena being studied.

The students chose pictures of five different places of worship representing religions in Indonesia, sometimes with added text on how the photos show people from different religions living side by side in mutual respect. For example, on Nyepi Day, a day of silence in Bali, Muslims refrain from the call to prayer. As articulated in the Pancasila, respect for others is imperative as it relates to humanity. This is in line with Latif (2011) and Hoon (2017) that Pancasila, the state ideology, plays a pivotal role in uniting religious and ethnic differences. The first principle of Pancasila, the “Belief in One Supreme God”, forms a pillar that allows each citizen to engage in social ethics.

One student’s narrative included the following comments:

*We chose this picture of Bali because we want people to see just how many religions are in Indonesia. With this photo, we want people to understand that tolerance exists in our country.*

(Sit, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

*This image shows how harmonious life is. People sometimes think it’s impossible for places of worship to exist nearby, close to each other. But this is happening, and I think it is a good example that shows how tolerance is a part of life in Indonesia.*

(Mir, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

In the remarks underlined above, it is clear that these students attempted to express their ideas on the role and value placed on tolerance in religion in Indonesia, and that tolerance should be communicated to a broader audience.

*We are showing that Indonesia has different beliefs, but people live together in harmony. This is an important point. We can show people how Islam emphasizes tolerance and how we live here peacefully. We respect other people from different faiths.*
(Ang, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

The assertion on how Islam emphasizes tolerance and how people live together peacefully reflects the students’ views of Islam in terms of its respect of other religions and how Indonesian citizens are united as one community. The way this student articulated this point indicates its relevance to the parameters of peace literacy and of accepting differences. While the existence of a variety of religions and religious beliefs in Indonesia can sometimes trigger an emotional response in tense situations (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), this DST experience has demonstrated how a positive perspective can be communicated to a broader, multicultural audience.

The Voices of Youth and Non-Violence

Another student selected a written text on handling differences and an image of a demonstration over the construction of a mosque. In their narrative, they mentioned differences in thoughts and perceptions between different cultures that, if not addressed, can become problematic. These students explained that discord occurred because people were not aware of the need for tolerance.

I don’t know why chaos happens and people fight. I think this is because people don’t realize they should communicate with one another. Everything can be solved through discussion. We must remember, Indonesia has many ethnic groups and cultures. But, there is no need for people to fight each other. I think the majority must respect the minority. (Ang, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

The assertion that there is no need for people to fight and that discussion offers a way to find solutions to problems reflects the student’s ability to articulate the parameter of non-violence, which is in line with indicators for peace literacy in terms of the ability to resolve conflict and treat others well. The other remark on how the majority should respect the minority indicates that the students understood and were able to articulate the need to seek alternatives to bullying and preventing aggression. This tolerance is in line with the state’s principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as the regulations that fall under this. A person who is tolerant and respects
differences is one who values equality, is willing to cooperate, and prefers a non-violent physical and verbal approach to resolving conflict (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). This image is also supported by the students’ written texts citing Al Quran verses and hadist scripture verses, i.e., that every human being comes from the same descendants. The use of these verses indicates that the students are aware that the notion of tolerance is not only regulated by the state, but that the Al Quran contains statements that tolerance is a prerequisite for co-existing with others. The students chose these verses to strengthen their message of tolerance for others. In short, the idea of dignity for all encompasses the message of “do no harm” because all human beings are equal.

Indonesia has different religions and cultures, that is true. But actually, these differences are a rich advantage. People may only see bullying, but differences can actually become potential. We want others to see that people from Papua can live peacefully with one another. Everything can be solved if we understand each other.
(Mir, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

The image we chose shows how the groups want to show the public that there is harmony in life in Papua, even though people may see chaos everywhere on television. We don’t want people to have that image, so that’s why we chose this picture. People, both Muslim and non-Muslim, live together, respect and cooperate with one another.
(Ang, Interview on September 15, 2021, translation by author)

The comments on how differences pose an advantage and how these differences actually equal potential are indicative of how the students realized the importance of accepting differences. They want to convey the message that respecting differences in Indonesia is absolutely essential to the future of the country through the DST images and written narratives.

The Voices of Youth and Acceptance

The importance of accepting different traditions can be illustrated by the following image and narrative. The figure 2 shows how two different
religious communities, Muslims and Hindus, accept one another as they visit and share food. Different traditions have emerged because Indonesia is composed of many islands with different religions and cultures that have their own sociocultural backgrounds.

2. Second picture

![Figure 2. Different cultures in harmony](image)

In this picture we can see the harmony between religious communities in Bali. That Muslims share with Hindus

Figure 2. Different cultures in harmony

*Source:* data elaborated by the authors

The students explained that they chose this picture as it represents how two different religions live together in harmony.

*The picture represents how people respect and accept differences. They are different, but they behave politely towards one another. They show respect and how much they care when visiting their neighbors and sharing food. This picture tells a story of how everyone can live together in peace. I think Indonesia can become stronger because of our different religions and cultures. If people are aware of and respect one another, there will be no more politics about race and ethnicity.*

(Ang, Interview on October 4, 2021, translation by author)

This narrative by the student suggests that the lives of people in Indonesia are woven into the fabric of society and culture. The underlined statements indicate that, despite differences, people choose to live in peaceful conditions. Further, the student mentioned that “if people are aware of and respect one another, there will be no more politics about race and ethnicity”, a remark that reflects an awareness that sometimes differences in race and ethnicity are manipulated in the world of politics by certain parties. In fact, according to Ropi (2017, 43), “Contemporary Indonesia is one of the most pluralist societies in the world, with its four hundred or so ethnic and linguistic groups and a corresponding variety
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of systems of religions and beliefs”, evidence of the country’s abundantly rich culture on the archipelagoes.

Similar reflections on accepting differences are shown in the figure 3. This is a collage of nine photos of different ethnic groups in Indonesia, followed by a description of the students’ reflections on how the country’s many ethnic groups and cultures have worked to build up Indonesia’s rich existence. The students’ comments show their view of the importance of appreciating differences in multiculturalism. This is in line with the parameters of moderate Islam and peace values, namely, commitment to one nation, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of various traditions and cultures (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

Figure 3. Different religious and ethnic groups

Source: data elaborated by the authors

Conclusions

This study revealed what the students learned over the process of DST creation and how this encouraged independent learning. Through the use of images and written text served to guide students in amplifying their voices on the commitment to one nation, tolerance, non-violence, and accepting different traditions as parameters for moderate Islam. The result revealed how these Muslim youngsters expressed the value of respecting and accepting others in terms of differences in religion and cultural aspects through the use of images and written text to guide students in amplifying their voices on the commitment to one nation, tolerance, non-violence, and accepting different traditions as parameters for moderate Islam. Though the current study has presented contributions for the implementation of DST process in peace theme and
the youngsters’ narration toward the peace literacy, it leaves some flaws regarding the scope of participants to achieve broader youngsters’ voice and the social background underlying the youngsters’ narration. Thus, it urges a future research to give it more thought, especially in regards to the necessity to expand the study’s participants and geographic area in order to enhance the field’s understanding of peace literacy in Indonesia.

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