

**CELORY (Celebrating Local History) Comic Exhibition on *Instagram*:
Conserving Local History Through Project-Based English Learning**

Muzakki Bashori¹, Qonita Fadhila², Inez Kalyana Azmi³,
Mukhamad Shokheh⁴, Nanda Julian Utama⁵

Abstract

Many local histories in Indonesia remain unnoticed by learners. Learning materials that inform the local histories are generally limited, boring, and do not fit and attract today's learners, especially those available in English. We investigated the potential of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom project that promotes and celebrates local histories in Indonesia through (digital) comics. The comics were developed by second-year university students majoring in history ($n=156$) working in groups of three or four. A total of 51 comics with various themes related to Indonesian local histories were successfully created and exhibited virtually on a designated *Instagram* account. A questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale containing 12 statements and two open-ended questions was employed to examine the impact of this project-based learning on students' understanding and awareness of conserving their local histories through comics. We analyzed the results using SPSS (for quantitative data) and thematic analysis (for qualitative data). Findings indicate that students believe a comic is an interesting medium for learning local history and that local histories in Indonesia need to be promoted via various media, including comics. Future research should investigate the effects of English comics on students' comprehension of local history in Indonesia and linguistic competence in history-related vocabulary and pronunciation.

Keywords: *Comic, Local History, Project-Based Learning*

Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in local history (Yefterson et al., 2020; Drakeley, 2005). Local history emerges from real events that occurred in various regions of Indonesia and forms an integral and inseparable part of national history, often holding significant meaning or connection to the respective areas. Mulyana and Gunawan (2007) explain that in general, local history refers to the process of human activity development in a specific locality, whether defined by geographic or administrative boundaries. Due to the narrow and limited scope of local history, Abdullah (2005) adds that it is typically singular and neutral, without convolutions. Additionally, local history also possesses democratic elements (Supardi, 2014)

¹ Assist. Prof., UNNES & INTI International University, muzakkibashori@mail.unnes.ac.id

² Undergraduate Student, Universitas Negeri Semarang, qonitafadhila25@students.unnes.ac.id

³ Undergraduate Student, Universitas Negeri Semarang, inezazmi@students.unnes.ac.id

⁴ Assoc. Prof., Universitas Negeri Semarang, shokheh@mail.unnes.ac.id

⁵ Assist. Prof., Universitas Negeri Semarang, nanda.julian@mail.unnes.ac.id

because it is ‘free’, ‘bold’, and ‘open’ in addressing the historical locality present in a particular region.

Freedom, courage, and openness are also utilized by various groups, both historians and non-historians, such as writers and media experts, to present local history in a more engaging manner. In the field of historical literature, “Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk” by Ahmad Tohari and “Segala Yang Diisap Langit” by Pinto Anugerah are two examples of novels set in local history. In the realm of media development, for instance, in the form of historical comics, there emerged the comic ‘Kala Ulama Perempuan Melawan’ (When Female Scholars Fight) which narrates the local figure Rahmah El Yunusiyah by M.A. Yusuf (Yusuf, 2022), published by *Historia.id* Magazine. Additionally, there are also comic adaptations of historical literature, such as ‘Api di Bukit Menoreh’ (Fire on Mount Menoreh) by S.H. Mintardja, illustrated by Eross Dhony in 2016 through the webtoons platform.

The abundance of local history narratives being actively brought forth in public spaces further emphasizes the richness and diversity of the history possessed by the Indonesian nation. Additionally, this also serves as a positive indication of the thriving interest in local history and the curiosity or fascination of the public in exploring the local history of Indonesia. However, this reality seems to be somewhat contradictory to what is found in practical terms, especially in formal education at the university level. There are still many students in Indonesia who are unaware and unfamiliar with the local history of their respective regions (Kusnoto & Minandar, 2017). This is regrettable considering that local history provides positive values that are beneficial to society, especially for students. Learning local history opens greater opportunities for the transmission of local wisdom values embedded in local culture (Romadi & Kurniawan, 2017). Furthermore, strengthening the understanding of local history can instill a sense of nationalism, brotherhood, and national consciousness in the minds of students.

History, as a discipline that studies the past, occurs beyond the daily experiences of students. This results in students having an abstract understanding of the subject matter itself, making history seem difficult to grasp. Therefore, learning media that can visualize historical materials, including local history, are needed. These could be learning resources aided by audio, visual, or audiovisual elements so that students’ understanding of history becomes more concrete (Suryani, 2016).

In the current era of technological advancement, history-learning media is increasingly evolving in creative and innovative ways. One of these approaches is history learning through comics. Comics are a combination of storytelling and systematically arranged images that depict a series of events experienced by characters. Comics have a unique and captivating

characteristic compared to works in other forms, as they often contain elements of entertainment, which can engage the attention of readers. Bolton-Gary (2012) suggests that the presence of images and a sense of humour in comics can help students understand abstract content. In the context of history learning, comics have also been proven effective in supporting creative history learning (Printina, 2017), enhancing students' understanding of historical material (Mudlaafar dkk., 2019), and serving as a means of character development (Subakti, 2022). Additionally, Putra & Yasa (2019) reveal that in its current use, comics not only serve as a form of entertainment but can also function as a promotional medium. Furthermore, project-based learning – including projects involving comics – also has positive impacts on the success of learning (Friesem, 2019; Chen & Yang 2019). Based on these potentials, it can be concluded that local history material can be promoted through the utilization of comic media. The gap in this research is that most studies on history-oriented comics have not yet reached the stage of promoting, socializing, and inventorying comics on specific platforms as a form of effort to conserve (local) history. This should be a concern for researchers, including but not limited to those who employ project-based English learning, to ensure that the output of the conducted study continues to hold value and continuity even after the research has concluded. Therefore, the utilization of digital platforms as a 'repository' for media (comics) is highly necessary and an integral part of the mission to preserve (local) history.

Local history materials packaged in the form of comics can be distributed through various digital platforms, such as social media. One of the social media platforms with a large user base in Indonesia is *Instagram*. The release from *We Are Social* noted that as of January 2023, *Instagram* users in Indonesia ranked fourth highest in the world. Furthermore, the *Napoleon Cat* website revealed that the total number of *Instagram* users in Indonesia reached 106.72 million as of February 2023. This number holds great potential for use in disseminating learning projects like comics containing local history content. Posting materials on social media is also expected to assist in the process of inventorying and conserving or preserving local history in Indonesia.

The purpose of this research is to investigate students' perceptions of the exhibition of local history comic projects on *Instagram* with the slogan CELORY (Celebrating Local History). Additionally, we also conducted an inquiry into the potential and any weaknesses or challenges faced by students in this study when developing history-based local comics. We formulate two research questions as follows:

1. What are the students' perceptions of the CELORY comic exhibition as a means of promoting and conserving local history?

2. What are the potentials of the CELORY comic exhibition and the challenges faced by students in developing local history comics in Indonesia?

Theoretical Framework

Local History in Indonesia and Efforts to Preserve It

The journey of a nation is recounted through its history as a manifestation of the national identity that has undergone various dynamics in building the nation into a great one (Winarti, 2017). Through history, students in the present acquire knowledge about various stories of struggle carried out by the heroes in building their nation. By knowing the life stories and contributions of these heroes, students can easily find inspiration to emulate them, thus instilling a sense of nationalism and patriotism within them (Kochar, 2008). Therefore, national historical insight becomes very important. However, as time passes, nationally-centric history can erode the identity and historical awareness of students regarding their surroundings, especially those living in various regions of Indonesia. This is not unrelated to the fact that Indonesia is a large nation consisting of many regions and possesses a diversity of ethnicities, cultures, customs, religions, and languages. Based on this, Hafid (2017) highlights the importance of local historical insight for students so that they do not detach from their socio-cultural roots, as local history material is the closest to the psychological conditions of the students.

Local history can be defined as the narrative of the past of a specific group of people in a particular geographic location, encompassing events within a small area, be it a village or an administrative region such as a city or district, or a specific place (Purnamasari & Wasino, 2011). Syahputra et al. (2020) additionally state that 'local' can itself refer to a community, thus local history signifies the past events of a particular community in a specific region. Research and documentation of local history in history education have already been extensively conducted by history practitioners. Purnamasari and Wasino (2011), for instance, utilize local history sites in Temanggung as sources for history education. Furthermore, Wibowo (2016) has developed local history in a high school in Madiun city by compiling local historical sources in Madiun as educational materials. Meanwhile, Sulistyono (2019) has developed a colonial-era history site in Batu City as a resource for history education. Despite some efforts to incorporate local history into education, it still receives insufficient attention, leading to many young people today lacking knowledge of the local history in the areas where they reside.

Comics as a History Learning Medium

History is a discipline that is impervious to the passage of time, continually evolving, and serves as a strategic effort to shape the character and civilization of a prosperous nation by internalizing the values of nationalism, heroism, and love for the homeland among Indonesians through the interpretation of historical events that have occurred in the past (Rosana, 2014). Through history, people can understand the reality of life that has occurred in the present as well as in the future. Therefore, history not only provides knowledge about when an event occurred but also explains the meaning of events that have occurred in the past chronologically. In line with this, a learning medium is needed to support the effectiveness of history education. The rapid advancement of technology has provided various learning media that can be used, and comics have become a distinctive and engaging learning medium (Prasetyono et al., 2015). Comics are a learning medium that has its own attraction by combining concise and clearly illustrated stories. Various forms of comics, such as books, stories in magazines, story sheets with pictures, or in the form of animated films, make comics a form of reading that makes students want to read without needing persuasion. Thus, comics become an ideal resource or medium for learning history (Moreno-Vera et al., 2021). Moreover, comics are designed with a sequential storyline that aligns with historical learning, where events in the past are often explained chronologically to provide an understanding of the material with concise concepts (Saputra & Pasha, 2021).

Bonneff (1998) explains that comics are an effective way to convey ideas to the public in various fields, particularly in education. Comics fall into the category of 'multimedia' learning media, which utilize a combination of elements, including text and visuals or images. Multimedia and visual tools are crucial when learning history because they can serve as a solution to address students' inability to read thick and monotonous history textbooks, which can lead to boredom during history lessons. De Porter and Hernacki (1992) assert that comics are a part of multimedia and take the form of two-dimensional visuals in both digital and print formats. When used as a learning medium, it can provide an understanding of up to 20% (visual) and 10% (reading) to the reader. This statement is further supported by Waluyanto's (2006) view, affirming that comics function as a tool to convey messages effectively and efficiently to readers. Therefore, comics as a history-learning medium are not merely entertaining illustrated stories, but also have a communicative delivery of historical messages or values to the reader.

Social Media and Historical Content

History education should be conducted by applying a loco-centric approach, which is based on local history (Fikri et al., 2021). This statement is reinforced by Romadi & Kurniawan (2017), who assert that local history education serves as a means of shaping national identity through historical and cultural awareness, while also introducing local wisdom in the surrounding area to students. By using local history as historical content, students will gain various examples and new knowledge about events that have occurred around them. Local historical content can be one of the learning resources that can then be creatively and innovatively applied in a history learning medium, such as comics.

In recent years, rapid technological advancements have had a significant impact on the increased use of social media by the public. Social media refers to online platforms that enable users to interact, share, and communicate with others virtually (Puspitarini & Nuraeni, 2019). There are six categories of social media, one of which is *Social Networking*. This category serves as a means for users to interact virtually. An example of this category of social media is *Instagram*. Puspitarini & Nuraeni (2019) explain that there are five main menus consisting of the *Home Page* containing photos or videos, *Comments* provided for other users to comment on uploaded photos or videos, *Explore* which contains a collection of photos or videos with many likes, *Profile* containing user information on *Instagram*, and *News Feed* which is a feature with notifications about activities carried out by *Instagram* users. Considering that comics are visualized or drawn stories, *Instagram* can be used as one of the platforms to promote them. Virtual exhibitions of historical comics can be an alternative way to introduce local history content to the wider community. Additionally, the cost of accessing and publishing local historical comics on *Instagram* is relatively cheaper compared to comics published in the form of books, magazines, or other print media. *Instagram* as a social media platform can also reach a broader audience in the virtual world and encourage them to learn about local history through virtual comic exhibitions.

Method

This research was conducted using a combination/mixed methods research approach, which combines the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, leading to a conclusion (Subagyo, 2020). We also applied a sequential explanatory design, where quantitative data was collected first, followed by the acquisition of qualitative data (Creswell, 2016; Sugiyono, 2015). The use of this combination/mixed methods research approach allows the results of one type of data analysis to complement the other (quantitative complementing

qualitative, and vice versa) (Lestari & Yudhanegara, 2015; Prasetya, 2022) to obtain a stronger and more representative conclusion. In this study, we conducted a more detailed investigation into project-based learning outcomes in the History and Applied English courses. This project revolves around the utilization of history-focused comic exhibitions by the social media platform *Instagram*.

Participants

A total of 156 students from the History Department participated in this research. Participants were recruited from four classes: History Education Class A, consisting of 42 students; History Education Class B, consisting of 45 students; History Science Class A, consisting of 29 students; and History Science Class B, consisting of 40 students. In total, 51 history-focused local comics were exhibited through a dedicated *Instagram* account created specifically for this project.

Procedure

There were five stages of implementation that we applied in organizing the comic exhibition titled CELORY or Celebrating Local History. First, the formation of groups, where each group consisted of 3-4 students. The supervising lecturer selected a total of 51 students to be group leaders, which included 13 group leaders from History Education Class A, 13 from History Education Class B, 12 from History Science Class A, and 13 from History Science Class B. Then, the group leaders themselves chose 3 students to be members of their group. Second, each group first discussed and decided on the theme of the local history story to be translated into English. The local history chosen came from various regions in Indonesia. Third, before creating the local history comics, each group was required to consult and confirm the chosen theme with the supervising lecturer, whether the story aligned with the characteristics of local history or needed revision/change. If there were themes that were not suitable or similar to those of other groups, the group had to revise/change the story chosen for the comic. Fourth, each group created the comic based on the chosen theme using various editing and/or comic maker applications, such as *Canva*, *Pixton*, and so on. The comic creation process took place over a period of two weeks. Fifth, the completed comics were immediately published/promoted on the designated *Instagram* account that was established beforehand.

Questionnaire

Data collection is an important part of the research. In order to investigate the impact of utilizing the CELORY comic exhibition as a means of conserving local history in History/Applied English learning, we conducted both quantitative and qualitative data collection processes. We used a questionnaire on the use of local history comics that we developed. The distribution or administration of this questionnaire took place right after the student-created comic exhibition activities concluded. Data collection through this questionnaire was participated by 156 students involved in the local history comic creation project. The questionnaire was created in the form of a *Google Form*, and each student was required to fill out the questionnaire once personally using their own email accounts. The questionnaire was divided into two sections of data collection: quantitative and qualitative. There were 10 statements used as indicators to understand students' perspectives on the utilization of comic exhibitions as a conservation method for local history through project-based learning in History/Applied English learning. These ten questions used a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 point meaning strongly disagree, while 5 points mean strongly agree. In addition to these 10 questions, two open-ended questions were used to gain a deeper understanding (qualitatively) of (1) what positive aspects students gained during the project-based learning process, and (2) what challenges they encountered during the process.

CELORY Comic Exhibition

A total of 51 comics were published/promoted through a designated *Instagram* account. We conducted the final meeting of the courses virtually via the *Zoom* application to showcase all the local history-themed comic works created by each group. The activity was guided by two students acting as moderators and the supervising lecturer. The focus of the activity was on a discussion session (casual conversation) with representatives from each class regarding their opinions on the exhibition and the creation of local history-themed comics. Then, the activity continued with the presentation of all the published local history comics on *Instagram*. The activity concluded with the announcement of two comics that became the favorites based on the highest number of *likes* on the *Instagram* account and two comics with the most creatively crafted story ideas according to the lecturer's assessment (lecturer's choice). The selected favorite comic and the comic with the most creative story idea received prizes as a form of appreciation for the student's hard work in creating and developing comics. Below are the local history-themed comics developed by two of the groups.



Figure 1. The History of Braga Street, Bandung



Figure 2. Cimahi Square Battle: Almost Forgotten Heroic Story

Results

Students' perceptions of the use of local history comics in Indonesia as a medium for the promotion and conservation of local history

The results showed that the reliability of the questionnaire items on local history comics was high (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.8). This indicates that the questionnaire used can be deemed consistent and reliable.

Table 1. The result of the questionnaire on local history comics

No	Question Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1	My knowledge of local history in Indonesia is increasing.	4.30	.606	156
2	I am increasingly proud of the richness and diversity of local history in Indonesia.	4.50	.596	156
3	I increasingly support efforts to celebrate and preserve local history in Indonesia through various mediums, including comics.	4.54	.583	156
4	I enjoy and benefit from the moral messages of each local historical event in Indonesia.	4.28	.651	156
5	I want to invite my friends to join in celebrating and preserving local history in Indonesia.	4.21	.698	156
6	I want local history in Indonesia to go international and be widely known by people around the world.	4.65	.552	156
7	Celebrating and preserving local history in Indonesia through comics is something that interests me.	4.21	.768	156
8	I enjoy reading local history in Indonesia through comics.	4.12	.712	156
9	Local history comics in Indonesia uploaded on social media platforms like Instagram make it easy for me to access them anytime and anywhere.	4.38	.685	156
10	Local history in Indonesia will be endangered and lost from circulation if it is not preserved.	4.51	.648	156

Based on the data collected from the questionnaire above, the overall average score was 4.37, indicating a high level of agreement. The highest-rated question item, 'I want local history in Indonesia to go international and be widely known by people around the world', received an average score of 4.65. On the other hand, the lowest-rated question item, 'I enjoy reading local history in Indonesia through comics', received an average score of 4.12. Despite having the lowest average score, the evaluation of this item remains positive, as a score above 4 (out of 5) is considered high.

Potential and Challenges in Developing Local History Comics in History Learning

Based on the data that has been obtained, there are three major positive outcomes primarily experienced by students after engaging in the activity of creating local history comics published on the designated *Instagram* account. These include an increase in their understanding of local history and a heightened enthusiasm for its preservation. Student 311-040 expressed: “My knowledge about local history has expanded, encompassing not only the history of my immediate neighborhood but also that of other regions”. Meanwhile, Student 310-032 shared: “The creation of this comic has significantly enriched my knowledge of local history, even within my own area, which I was previously unfamiliar with. Through this comic, I can delve deeper into events that have never been covered in history books. Additionally, crafting this comic has enhanced my creativity in designing engaging visuals”. Student 311-046 added: “We now have a broader understanding and deeper knowledge of various local histories in Indonesia. Moreover, we can actively contribute to the preservation of these significant historical narratives”.

Furthermore, during the execution of the comic-making activities, students reported that this endeavor provided them with a novel experience and instilled new editing skills. As stated by Student 310-039: “I acquired fresh insights and proficiency in using *Canva* as an editing tool. Additionally, I gleaned valuable lessons from the struggles of the heroes of West Kotawaringin depicted in the comic I created”. Student 311-052 added: “The positive aspects I gain are, firstly, the ability to create comics for the first time. Secondly, I can condense a historical event so that others can easily grasp it”. Student 310-010 also disclosed: “There are numerous benefits I derive from creating this local history comic. Primarily, I can refine my skills in digital comic media using various applications like *Canva* and others. I acquire new insights into local history through stories that are less explored in society, which are then brought to life in a comic format. This experience is highly valuable. Additionally, beyond just knowledge transfer, we also receive a transmission of values through the moral messages conveyed in the stories. This is where we can further refine our visual editing skills in comic creation”.

The students reported that they also learned English in this project, especially regarding tenses and history-related vocabulary. Student 311-060 stated: “Through this comic, I can learn about English tenses, as well as discover local history and learn to create comics all at the same time”. Another student (311-042) explained: “By creating local history comics, at least I gained knowledge about several conversions of terms in local history into English, which indirectly added to my vocabulary references”.

From the data obtained, it was found that the students also encountered some difficulties in implementing the local history comic project. After conducting research, we have identified three primary challenges experienced by most students during the process. These difficulties include (a) a lack of skills in creating comics, (b) confusion in composing narratives, sentences, and summarizing stories, as well as packaging them, and (c) obstacles in finding free applications and websites for creating their comics. Relevant data can be found in descriptive comments from students. For instance, Student 310-087 mentioned: “My challenge lies in drawing comic elements, as I lack drawing talent, which presents a minor obstacle for me”. Student 310-063 stated: “I encountered difficulty when merging the storyline of my comics with historical events”. Meanwhile, Student 310-060 pointed out: “The application's editing capabilities are limited, which leaves me somewhat dissatisfied with the available elements”.

Discussion

In this section, we discuss the results of our research related to efforts to promote local history through comics. *Instagram* is identified as the platform for this purpose, allowing various forms of media to be uploaded and shared with the general public. This assertion forms the basis of our local history comic project. In order to present engaging information, it must be transformed into an interesting medium; here, comics provide valuable support for this endeavor. It is well-known that comics, in their current usage, serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a promotional medium (Putra et al., 2019). This led us to invite students to create comics as part of project-based English learning that brings forth local history narratives. Naturally, students have been given the freedom to utilize facilities and infrastructure that aid in the creation of their comics. Additionally, we, as researchers, have furnished recommendations for applications and production methods that can assist students in this project. As previously mentioned, the outcomes of the student’s work will be shared on *Instagram*, establishing it as a source of local history media accessible to the general public.

Based on our research findings, it is revealed that students hold positive perceptions regarding the utilization of local history comics in Indonesia as a medium for promoting and conserving local history. Using comics as a learning medium for local history, students were increasingly engaged in studying the subject. The inclusion of vivid images, character illustrations, and depictions of historical events in comics allows students to visualize the past, making their understanding more tangible. What was once an abstract concept becomes concrete. Additionally, the dissemination of local history comics through *Instagram* social media accounts ensures easy accessibility for students and the general public, enabling them to use

these resources for learning anytime and anywhere. Consequently, students aspire for local history in Indonesia to achieve international recognition and be acknowledged worldwide.

From this research, it can be revealed that the method of learning local history through this comic project still presents obstacles that students encounter during the process. These obstacles often stem from a lack of drawing skills, which not all students possess. Adapting local history narratives to suit comic media and working with limited supporting software also constitute challenges. However, students have thus far managed to face and overcome these obstacles. They have effectively utilized the applications and features recommended by their supervisor to address their shortcomings and produce well-crafted local history comics. The students have also demonstrated their ability to engage in meaningful discussions and skilfully weave creative narratives from the chosen local history material, applying it effectively in their comics. This project has thus succeeded in developing the students' potential for creativity using digital media and refining their ability to translate ideas into comic form.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the creation of comics was exclusively undertaken by second-year students majoring in history ($n=156$). Secondly, the local history comics were only published and exhibited on a designated *Instagram* account. Thirdly, this research is confined to exploring students' interest in learning local history through comic media. In-depth research related to students' knowledge of local history has not been pursued further. Fourthly, there was only one supervisor responsible for correcting the use of English in the local history comics project, which involved a total of 51 comics. Consequently, the supervisor was unable to review every instance of proper English usage in all comics.

This research demonstrates that learning about local history through comic media can enhance students' interest in delving deeper into the history of Indonesia. Additionally, local history comics can serve as an alternative learning resource alongside textbooks. Moreover, publishing local history comics on *Instagram* accounts can reintroduce local history to a wider audience, potentially motivating the entire community to explore their own local history in their respective places of residence.

Conclusion

Learning local history through comics received a positive response from second-year history students ($n=156$). These second-year students majoring in history demonstrated great enthusiasm for creating comics, expressing a desire for Indonesian local history to gain international recognition within the global community. The process involved several stages: group formation guided by the supervisor, selection of local history themes, confirmation with

the supervisor, creation of comics using drawing applications and available tools, and finally, publication on the designated *Instagram* account. Finally, 51 local history comics were successfully virtually published. Through the designated *Instagram* account, students had the opportunity to learn from each other about local history through comics created by fellow students. Moreover, the broader community could also acquire knowledge about local history through this account. Throughout the process of creating and publishing local history comics on *Instagram*, students encountered various challenges and obstacles. For instance, many students still lacked the drawing skills necessary to complete local history comics. Additionally, some faced difficulties in identifying relevant local history themes, had limited resources for creating comics without incurring costs, and lacked training in writing about Indonesian local history from their supervisor. These challenges and obstacles should be taken into consideration for future research endeavors in the same domain.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Win Setiaditama and Muhammad Mujibur Rohman as our research members who cannot be listed as authors. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang, for providing financial support for this research with contract number 6.5.6/UN37/PPK.03/2023 from the *Dana DIPA FISIP UNNES 2023* under the scheme of *Penelitian Dosen Pemula (Fakultas)*.

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