

Developing Children's Literacy Understanding Through the Analysis of Indonesian Folklore: A Qualitative Study in Elementary Schools

Pengembangan Pemahaman Literasi Anak Melalui Analisis Cerita Rakyat Nusantara: Studi Kualitatif Di Sekolah Dasar

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki pemanfaatan cerita rakyat Nusantara dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca anak-anak di sekolah dasar dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen, yang melibatkan guru dan siswa di kelas rendah dari berbagai sekolah dasar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa cerita rakyat Nusantara memberikan pengaruh yang substansial terhadap perkembangan kemampuan membaca anak-anak, meningkatkan keterlibatan, dorongan, dan pemahaman siswa terhadap materi tertulis. Cerita rakyat membantu dalam pengembangan kemampuan berpikir kritis dan asimilasi prinsip-prinsip moral dan budaya. Cerita rakyat Nusantara memiliki potensi untuk menjadi alat pendidikan yang berharga untuk meningkatkan kemampuan literasi anak-anak di sekolah dasar. Studi ini menawarkan wawasan yang berharga bagi para pendidik dalam mengembangkan program pembelajaran literasi yang menggabungkan cerita rakyat, sekaligus menjadi dasar untuk penelitian lebih lanjut mengenai efek jangka panjang dan elemen-elemen kontekstual yang membentuk implementasinya.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the utilisation of Nusantara folktales in improving children's reading skills in primary schools using qualitative methodology. Data were collected through interviews, observations and document analyses, involving teachers and students in lower grades from various primary schools. The results showed that Nusantara

folktales have a substantial impact on the development of children's reading skills, increasing students' engagement, encouragement and comprehension of written material. Folktales assist in the development of critical thinking skills and the assimilation of moral and cultural principles. Nusantara folktales have the potential to be a valuable educational tool for improving children's literacy skills in primary schools. This study offers valuable insights for educators in developing literacy learning programmes that incorporate folktales and provides a basis for further research into the long-term effects and contextual elements that shape their implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing proficiency among elementary school children serves as a crucial foundation for their academic and social growth (Citraningrum & Hima, 2023). Good reading skills enable children to understand and use language effectively in various situations, including both oral and written communication. During this stage of development, children are in a critical period in which they rapidly acquire new information and skills (Anggidesialamia, 2020). Literacy not only encompasses the basic skills of reading and writing but also includes the ability to comprehend, analyze, and communicate information effectively (Febriani & Sugiarto, 2019). Therefore, comprehensive literacy education is essential to ensure academic achievement and future success in children's lives.

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Folklore has a significant impact on culture and education in many parts of the world, including Indonesia (Rachmawati & Fadhilawati, 2023). As a component of cultural heritage, folklore contains moral, ethical, and social principles that can be instilled in children. In Indonesia, folktales such as Malin Kundang, Si Kancil, and Bawang Merah Bawang Putih serve as narratives that are both entertaining and educational, offering valuable lessons about kindness, honesty, and courage. Within educational settings, folklore can be a valuable instrument for fostering children's literacy understanding in enjoyable and meaningful ways (Adnan & Yaacob, 2023). Previous studies have shown that the use of literary works, such as folklore, in the learning process can enhance children's literacy skills (Marwanti & Sumilah, 2022). Research has indicated that engaging with reading and discussing folktales can help children improve their critical thinking skills, understand narrative structures, and expand their vocabulary. Furthermore, folklore can enhance children's understanding of diverse cultures and traditions, thereby fostering tolerance and cultivating greater appreciation for diversity (Kulsum et al., 2021). Incorporating folklore into elementary school curricula represents a promising approach to promoting literacy development.

Nevertheless, despite the considerable potential of folklore in education, there remain practical challenges in its implementation (Rahayu et al., 2023). Some educators may experience reduced confidence in using folklore as teaching material due to a lack of understanding or resources. Additionally, overly dense curricula and the pressure to meet academic objectives often hinder the use of innovative and participatory teaching methods (Nuryanti et al., 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effective use of Indonesian folklore in literacy instruction at the elementary school level. This study will employ a qualitative methodology to explore the perspectives and experiences of teachers and students regarding the use of folklore in literacy education. The primary objective is to examine the extent to which folklore can enhance children's literacy understanding, including their proficiency in reading, writing, and text comprehension. The study will also explore the challenges faced by teachers and students in this learning process and strategies to overcome them.

In addition, this study will investigate the impact of using folklore on students' attitudes and learning motivation. Motivation plays a crucial role in literacy acquisition. Engaging and relevant folktales have the potential to increase students' enthusiasm and involvement in the learning process. The study will also examine the influence of folklore on character development and values, given the abundance of moral lessons embedded in these narratives. Literacy issues in elementary schools remain a significant challenge in Indonesia, as many children have not yet achieved satisfactory literacy levels in accordance with national benchmarks. The central focus of this research revolves around the following question: In what ways can Indonesian folklore be effectively utilized to improve children's literacy understanding in elementary education?

The aim of this study is to investigate the potential of Indonesian folklore in enhancing literacy understanding among elementary school children. The main objective is to determine the influence of folklore on the development of children's reading, writing, and text comprehension skills. This study contributes substantially to both theory and practice in education. It has the potential to enrich existing knowledge of literacy acquisition by incorporating children's literature. The findings of this research may provide valuable insights for educators, learners, and scholars in designing more effective and innovative approaches to literacy education.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-exploratory design to examine the potential of Indonesian folklore in improving literacy comprehension among elementary school students (Jaya, 2020; Novita, 2022). Participants were purposively selected, consisting of teachers with at least five years of teaching experience and students in grades IV–VI from both public and private schools in urban and rural areas. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, conducted over one semester to capture diverse experiences (Laut, 2020). Data were analyzed thematically through transcription, coding, categorization, and theme development to identify key findings (Riadi, 2020). Credibility was ensured through triangulation of data sources and member checking with participants to validate interpretations (Novita, 2022).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Using data obtained from interviews and observations, this study discovered several important findings related to the use of Indonesian folklore in enhancing children's literacy comprehension in

elementary schools. First and foremost, folklore greatly increased students' interest and motivation to acquire knowledge. According to Teacher A, students showed high enthusiasm when listening to folktales and often looked forward to the continuation of the stories. Teachers observed that students demonstrated significant enthusiasm and actively engaged in the learning process when folklore was used as a teaching tool. Classroom observations further validated that students consistently exhibited a strong tendency and eagerness to participate more actively in conversations related to the stories they had read.

In addition, the use of folklore also improved students' vocabulary and comprehension of written material. Teachers noted that students demonstrated the ability to recognize and understand unfamiliar terms found in the stories, and they were able to remember these words more effectively as a result of the contextual information provided within the narratives. According to Teacher E, folklore helped students gain a deeper understanding of story structures, including plot development and character growth. Empirical evidence showed that students had the ability to examine the composition of a narrative, identifying key elements such as exposition, the main conflict, and the resolution. This ability indicated a deeper comprehension of the texts.

Furthermore, the use of folklore also impacted the enhancement of students' analytical reasoning skills. By engaging in discussions about folktales, students were able to develop sharper perspectives on characters' actions and motivations within the narratives. Students also gained the ability to establish connections between the stories and their own personal experiences, facilitating critical introspection regarding the values embedded in the tales. This was evident in the active participation of students during classroom discussions, as they demonstrated the ability to provide coherent viewpoints and arguments related to the ethical aspects of the stories.

Ultimately, the incorporation of folklore also contributed to the assimilation of ethical and social principles. Teachers affirmed that folklore was effective in instilling values such as honesty, courage, and cooperation among children. According to Teacher J, folktales provided opportunities for students to see various perspectives and the outcomes generated from characters' actions. Further observations validated that students demonstrated behaviors aligned with these values in their daily activities. Engaging in discussions about folklore helped students understand and appreciate cultural diversity, as folktales often reflect a wide range of local traditions and beliefs. Therefore, these data indicate that incorporating Indonesian folklore holds significant potential for enhancing children's literacy in elementary schools.

The findings of this study offer valuable perspectives on the utilization of Indonesian folklore as a means to improve children's literacy skills in elementary education. These results can be understood within the framework of previous research on children's literacy acquisition and have important implications for teaching methods at the elementary school level.

The interpretation of these findings aligns with prior studies that have shown substantial benefits of integrating literature into children's learning to enhance their reading abilities. Indonesian folktales, with their complex plots and profound cultural values, have proven to be remarkable assets in fostering students' curiosity and enthusiasm for reading and learning. This discovery provides evidence that folklore not only serves as engaging reading material but also as a highly effective tool for improving children's literacy skills.

The significance of these findings for literary knowledge acquisition in elementary schools is considerable. Teachers can incorporate Indonesian folklore into literacy curricula to attract students' attention and enhance their enthusiasm for reading and writing. By selecting folktales appropriate to students' levels of comprehension, teachers can create enjoyable and meaningful reading experiences for children.

In addition, the findings also demonstrate the importance of enriching children's literacy experiences with materials that embody local cultural principles. Indonesian folklore not only improves students' vocabulary and comprehension of written material but also fosters their understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity present in Indonesia. This supports the idea of inclusive education, which acknowledges and values cultural diversity as an essential element of the learning process.

In the field of literary education, the results of this study also highlight the need to develop critical and analytical thinking skills at an early age. Engaging in discussions about folktales allows students to question, examine, and reflect on the ethical lessons and consequences conveyed by these stories, which

are fundamental components of critical reading. Therefore, educators can effectively use Indonesian folklore as a means to develop students' critical thinking abilities.

Moreover, this study emphasizes the necessity of integrating local culture into elementary school curricula. By incorporating Indonesian folklore into the curriculum, educational institutions can foster inclusive learning environments and increase students' enthusiasm for literacy. Furthermore, this plays an important role in preserving the nation's cultural heritage and fostering a strong sense of national identity through education. Thus, the findings of this study have a significant impact on advancing effective and meaningful literary teaching techniques for children in Indonesia.

The results of this study provide an important contribution to the advancement of children's literacy theory and practice. Theoretically, this study enhances our understanding of how the use of Indonesian folklore can influence the acquisition of literacy skills among elementary school children (Anggidesialamia, 2020). These findings validate that folklore serves as engaging reading material and a powerful method for fostering students' curiosity, motivation, and literacy comprehension (Jamaludin et al., 2023). The theoretical implications support the idea that children's literacy is not only dependent on their ability to read and write but also on their exposure to meaningful and culturally relevant reading experiences. Essentially, the results of this study provide valuable guidance for educators in designing literacy instruction centered on folklore (Esa et al., 2022). Teachers can use Indonesian folklore as a means to increase students' enthusiasm and motivation for reading while simultaneously enriching their literacy experiences with indigenous cultural principles (Kusumajanti, 2023).

Although this study offers interesting insights, it is important to acknowledge several limitations. Methodological limitations primarily relate to the chosen research design. The qualitative approach provided researchers with a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, but its conclusions may not be easily generalized to larger populations (Khasanah et al., 2022). This limitation restricts the ability to make broad claims that the conclusions of this research can be applied to all situations involving children's literacy acquisition in elementary schools. In addition, it is important to recognize practical constraints and limitations in implementation. Although this study was conducted carefully and methodically, practical aspects such as time availability, resources, and institutional support may have influenced the actual implementation of folklore-based literacy instruction in classrooms.

To strengthen future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of the study by including more schools and participants. Additional studies incorporating multiple contexts and diverse experiences could produce a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of folklore use in children's literacy education. Furthermore, future investigations could explore the long-term consequences of using folklore in literacy education, including its impact on students' reading and writing abilities over an extended period. Additional research should also examine contextual variables affecting the application and effectiveness of folklore in literacy education, such as school support, resource accessibility, and parental involvement. Therefore, further research is expected to make a more significant contribution to advancing both theoretical understanding and practical implementation of children's reading in elementary schools.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that incorporating Indonesian folklore into the elementary school curriculum has significant and beneficial effects on improving children's reading comprehension. The main results show that Indonesian folklore not only enhances students' curiosity and motivation to acquire knowledge but also improves their lexicon and understanding of written material. In addition, the use of folklore facilitates the development of students' analytical reasoning abilities while also encouraging the assimilation of ethical and cultural principles. These findings suggest that Indonesian folklore may be highly valuable as effective educational material for enhancing children's literacy in elementary schools.

To ensure practical implementation, we recommend that teachers integrate Indonesian folklore into literacy instruction in a systematic and contextual manner within the classroom. Teachers are able to select folktales that match students' levels of comprehension and curiosity, as well as design engaging and meaningful educational tasks centered around these narratives. Moreover, we suggest that educators foster collaboration between parents and local communities to strengthen the integration of folklore into children's literacy education.

For further investigation, we propose employing a longitudinal methodology to assess the long-term effects of incorporating folklore in improving children's literacy skills. Future research should also

explore contextual variables that influence the effectiveness of folklore use and involve a wider range of individuals from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. In this way, upcoming studies are expected to generate a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with the use of folklore in children's literacy acquisition.

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