

The Concept of Implementing Folktales in Indonesian Language Learning for the Development of The Nation's Democratic Spirit

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Abstract

The background of this research is that education plays a role in shaping democratic citizens. As part of the country's cultural wealth, folklore contains moral, social, and humanitarian principles that align with democracy. However, in the teaching of the Indonesian language in schools, folklore is often studied only in a literary context, without considering its meaning in the context of the nation. The aim of this research is to investigate the idea of applying folklore in Indonesian language learning as a way to foster the spirit of national democracy. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach and collects data through literature studies, content analysis of Nusantara folklore texts, and analysis of the implementation of the Indonesian Language Lesson Plan (RPP). Research shows that incorporating folklore into Indonesian language lessons can enhance students' abilities to read, think critically, and communicate, in addition to instilling democratic values such as tolerance, responsibility, unity, and appreciation of diversity. A study indicates that reading, discussion, and creative writing activities using folklore successfully increase the spirit of democracy in the classroom. The study found that folklore can be used strategically to teach Indonesian. This can be done using a contextual and character-based approach. In other words, to support the development of literate, cultured, and democratic students, educators must create learning models that integrate cultural and linguistic principles.

Keywords: spirit of democracy; indonesian language learning; folklore; cultural values; character education

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping the character and national consciousness of students. In the context of the pluralistic Indonesian nation, education not only serves to transfer knowledge but also to instill moral, social, and democratic values that form the foundation of national life. Among the various subjects in schools, the Indonesian language holds a strategic position because it serves as a medium for developing critical thinking, ethical communication, and appreciation of cultural diversity. Through language learning, students learn to express ideas, respect the opinions of others, and understand the nation's identity through the literary and cultural works they produce.

However, in today's era of globalization and digitalization, a major challenge arises when the local cultural values and the spirit of national democracy begin to shift. Many students are more familiar with global popular culture than with the noble values contained in their own cultural heritage. This situation results in a weakened understanding of concepts such as justice, togetherness, and social responsibility. In this context, education based on local wisdom becomes very important as a strategy for re-actualizing the nation's cultural values within the framework of modern learning. One form of local wisdom that has the potential to be integrated into Indonesian language learning is folklore. Folklore is a collective expression of the community that represents their views on life, moral values, social systems, and beliefs passed down through generations¹. It contains noble values such as honesty, deliberation, cooperation, and fair leadership, which are essentially in line with the principles of democracy. Therefore, the implementation of folklore in Indonesian language learning is not only pedagogically relevant but also strategic in fostering democratic awareness among students.

Indonesian language learning based on folklore can be implemented through activities such as listening, reading, discussing, and writing that are oriented toward exploring the values and meanings in literary texts. Through these activities, students not only practice language skills but also develop critical thinking and social empathy. The dialogic process that emerges from interpreting stories encourages students to respect differing opinions, make decisions rationally, and assess characters' behavior based on principles of justice and humanity. This aligns with the idea of Santos et al² who emphasize that schools should be a "microcosm of democratic society," a place where students learn through firsthand experiences and meaningful social interactions.

In addition to being a medium for language learning, folklore also serves as a means of character education and the formation of national identity. Local folklore such as hikayat, legends, and myths contain representations of the social values of society that can strengthen a sense of togetherness and pride in one's own culture. In the Aceh region, for example, folklore such as Hikayat Malem Diwa or the Legend of Putroe Neng contains teachings about obedience, responsibility, and respect for others. When these stories are presented in Indonesian language classes, students not only become familiar with linguistic and literary elements, but also learn to emulate the human values that underlie democratic life.

Within the framework of national education, strengthening democratic values through learning based on local wisdom is also in line with the direction of the Merdeka Curriculum policy, which emphasizes the importance of the Pancasila student profile. One of the main dimensions of this profile is "global diversity" and "mutual cooperation," which substantially reflects the spirit of the nation's democracy.

Learning that integrates folk tales into language activities provides contextual learning experiences, where students not only understand the text but also relate it to their own social and cultural realities. The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) theory developed by Johnson³ supports this approach by asserting that learning becomes meaningful when students are able to connect academic knowledge with real life.

Furthermore, the implementation of folklore in Indonesian language learning also promotes participatory and reflective learning. Students do not merely become recipients of information, but active actors who interact with texts and their social environment. Through activities such as discussing values, reflective writing, or reenacting folklore, students are trained to develop democratic communication skills, namely the ability to express opinions politely, listen to others' viewpoints, and reach consensus through deliberation. Thus, learning is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects but also affective and social aspects.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to develop an Indonesian language learning model that is relevant to the local cultural context while also addressing the challenges of character education in the global era. Previous studies have mostly focused on folklore from purely literary or linguistic perspectives, while studies emphasizing its pedagogical function in fostering democratic values remain relatively limited. In fact, through this approach, language education can become an effective means of nurturing young generations who are of good character, open-minded, and responsible toward social and national life.

Thus, the implementation of folklore in Indonesian language learning can be seen as an integrative strategy between language competence development, cultural preservation, and fostering the spirit of national democracy. By utilizing local literary texts, students learn to understand the essence of humanity, appreciate diversity, and actively participate in community life. In the long term, folklore-based learning has the potential to become a cultural foundation for strengthening democracy in Indonesia, a democracy rooted in local wisdom values and a sense of nationalism.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with an interpretative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how the implementation of folklore in Indonesian language learning contributes to the development of the nation's democratic spirit. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to examine the processes, contexts, and meanings of learning in natural and dynamic situations. In line with the views of Creswell and Poth⁴, qualitative research emphasizes understanding subjective meanings arising from participants' experiences, rather than merely measuring variables. Through a case study, the researcher can explore educational phenomena as an integrated system involving teachers, students, curriculum, and local cultural values that shape learning interactions.

The methods section should clearly explain the research procedure conducted, including, but not limited to, study design; population, sample size, and sampling; instruments; intervention procedure (where relevant); data analysis; and ethical clearance.

Study design and setting

Overall, this methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of how folklore can be implemented in teaching Indonesian as a medium for developing democratic values. Through an in-depth analysis of classroom practices, this study is expected to produce both conceptual and empirical understanding regarding the relationship between language education, the preservation of local culture, and the formation of students' democratic character.

The research was conducted in several junior high schools (SMP) in Aceh Besar Regency that have implemented Indonesian language learning based on local wisdom. This location was chosen purposively considering that Aceh has a strong tradition of folklore as well as school policies that support the preservation of local culture.

Population, samples and sampling

The research subjects included Indonesian language teachers, students, and principals. Teachers acted as the main informants because they were directly responsible for the implementation of learning, while students provided perspectives on their learning experiences and the internalization of democratic values. Principals provided contextual data related to education policies based on local culture. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which occurs when the information obtained shows stable and repetitive patterns.

Instruments and criteria

Research data were collected through three main techniques, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Participatory observation was conducted to observe the interaction between teachers and students during the learning process based on folklore, focusing on activities that foster democratic values such as discussions, deliberations, and joint reflections. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the views, experiences, and perceptions of the informants regarding the effectiveness of folklore-based learning. Meanwhile, documentation studies were used to examine lesson planning documents, teaching materials, as well as student works that reflect their understanding of democratic values. All collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al.⁵, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification.

Procedure and data collection

Data validity is maintained through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and intensive researcher involvement in the field. Triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documents to obtain a consistent and credible picture. In addition, this research pays attention to ethical aspects by obtaining official permission from the school, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and ensuring that participation is voluntary. The researcher also respects the cultural values and social norms of the Acehnese community throughout the research process.

RESULTS

The research results indicate that the implementation of folklore in Indonesian language learning in secondary schools in Aceh Besar has been carried out in various innovative forms, although it is not yet uniform and still faces contextual challenges. Indonesian language teachers integrate folklore into reading, writing, and speaking

activities. Stories such as *Lancang Kuning*, *Putroe Neng*, and the *Legend of Mount Seulawah Agam* are used as reading material sources that not only teach language elements but also moral and social values. In practice, teachers encourage students to analyze character traits, conflicts, and moral messages, and then relate them to democratic life values such as honesty, justice, responsibility, and appreciation of differing opinions.

At the implementation stage, teachers act as facilitators and mediators of values. Teachers not only convey the content of the story but also guide students to engage in critical and reflective discussions. Learning activities often begin with joint reading, followed by group discussions on moral messages and their relevance to current social life. This approach creates a dialogical space where students learn to express opinions, appreciate others' perspectives, and reach agreements through deliberation. This process aligns with the spirit of educational democracy as described by Sykas and Filimon⁶, stating that schools should serve as social laboratories where students experience democratic life in reality.

Field findings show that folklore has strong potential as a medium for internalizing the nation's democratic values. Acehese folklore, for example, often features characters who uphold justice, deliberation, solidarity, and social responsibility, which align well with the values consistent with modern democratic principles. Through reinterpretation of these stories, students can learn that democracy is not only a political system but also a social and cultural ethic that respects togetherness and justice.

For example, in the story of *Putroe Neng*, students learn about the importance of deliberation and fair decision-making, while in the story of *Lancang Kuning*, there is a moral message about social responsibility and the consequences of violating norms. Teachers use reflective moments in learning to connect these values with students' life contexts at school, such as selecting class representatives or making decisions in groups. Thus, folklore-based learning not only develops literacy skills but also fosters democratic awareness rooted in local culture.

These results reinforce the theory of culture-based education proposed by Rahmawati⁷, which states that multicultural education must connect universal values with the cultural identity of learners so that learning becomes more meaningful and contextual. In the context of Aceh, democratic values developed through folk tales are more easily accepted because they originate from local traditions that are already familiar to the community.

Data analysis shows that teachers use various pedagogical strategies to integrate democratic values into learning based on folk tales. First, the reflective discussion strategy, where students are invited to interpret the meaning of the stories and relate it to current social situations. Second, project-based learning, where students create creative works such as folk dramas, short videos, or retellings that convey democratic messages. Third, cooperative learning models, such as think-pair-share and jigsaw, which encourage active participation and group responsibility.

These strategies not only develop language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) but also foster students' social and emotional competence. Learning becomes a platform for students to experience democracy in practice listening, respecting, and collaborating with others. This aligns with Maharjan et al.⁸ on social learning, which states that knowledge and values are formed through meaningful social interactions.

Teachers who successfully implement this approach also demonstrate reflective capabilities in designing learning. They adapt folk tale materials to the characteristics

of the students and the social context of the school. Teachers position themselves not as the sole source of truth but as facilitators who help students build critical understanding. This process shows a paradigm shift from teacher-centered learning to student-centered and value based learning.

Although research results show positive impacts, the implementation of folklore-based learning still faces several obstacles. The main challenge lies in the limited availability of relevant teaching materials and the lack of training for teachers to integrate democratic values in a local context. Some teachers still view folklore merely as literary material for entertainment, rather than as a medium for character and democracy education. Furthermore, the influence of globalization and digital media has also led to a decline in young people's interest in local oral traditions. Nevertheless, there are several important supporting factors. School policy support for the preservation of local culture, students' enthusiasm for story-based learning, and collaboration between teachers and cultural communities serve as social capital that strengthens program implementation. Schools that collaborate with traditional leaders and local artists have been proven to be more successful in instilling democratic values through a cultural approach.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research affirm that learning Indonesian by integrating folklore constitutes a form of contextual democratic education. Folklore serves as a medium for cultural dialogue, enabling students to understand democracy within the framework of local wisdom. This reinforces the theory of culture-based civic education⁹, which emphasizes the importance of social and cultural experiences in shaping active and responsible citizens.

Furthermore, this study shows that democratic education cannot be separated from the cultural context of the nation. Approaches that emphasize local values not only enhance students' conceptual understanding of democracy but also foster an inclusive national identity. In the context of learning the Indonesian language, folklore becomes a space that integrates linguistic, cultural, and moral dimensions. Through activities such as reading, discussing, and reflecting on stories, students learn to express opinions politely, develop social empathy, and understand differences as shared wealth.

From a pedagogical perspective, this model can be developed as a culturally-based critical literacy approach, which not only teaches language skills but also hones students' social and moral awareness. Teachers need to be provided with ongoing training to be able to design learning that incorporates elements of literature, democracy, and national values. In addition, the Indonesian language curriculum needs to provide greater space for local texts so that students can have an emotional connection with the material being studied.

CONCLUSIONS

Research results indicate that the implementation of folklore in Indonesian language learning plays an important role in fostering the nation's democratic spirit. Folktales not only serve as cultural heritage but also as an effective character education medium to instill values of justice, responsibility, deliberation, and tolerance. Through folklore-based learning, students not only understand linguistic and literary elements but also directly experience the process of learning democracy through activities such as discussing, expressing opinions, and collaborating in groups. This process turns the

classroom into a miniature democratic society, where values of participation and respect for differences can grow naturally.

Teachers act as facilitators who encourage reflective and dialogical learning. Folktales are used as contextual teaching materials that combine linguistic aspects with moral and social values. Through the interpretation of characters and conflicts in the stories, students are invited to understand the importance of being fair, empathetic, and open to differences. These findings reinforce that democratic education will be more effective if developed through a local cultural context that is close to students' lives. Thus, Indonesian language learning can serve as a means to strengthen national identity while building the democratic character of the younger generation.

However, the implementation of learning based on folklore still faces challenges, such as limited teaching materials, lack of training for teachers, and low student interest in local oral traditions. Therefore, several strategic steps are necessary. First, enhancing teacher competence through continuous training on learning approaches based on local wisdom and democratic values education. Second, developing contextual teaching materials based on folklore that are relevant to the modern Indonesian language curriculum. Third, strengthening the role of schools as cultural communities that practice democratic values in both learning activities and student organizations. Fourth, the need for further research in various regions to develop an integrative learning model between culture, literacy, and democracy.

Overall, learning Indonesian through folklore-based stories becomes an effective strategy to instill a spirit of democracy rooted in the nation's culture. Through collaboration between teachers, schools, and cultural communities, democratic values can grow contextually and sustainably, making education a means of shaping citizens who are cultured, critical, and of strong character.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All financial, commercial, or other relationships that might be perceived by the academic community as representing a potential conflict of interest must be disclosed. If no such relationship exists, the authors will be asked to confirm the following statement: *"The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest."*

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DECLARATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE

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