



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Language and Linguistics*

Folktales as an educational tool: Building character and enhancing communication skills in children

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature, particularly folktales, serves as an effective tool for fostering character development and enhancing communication skills in children. This study explored the use of folktales as a means of improving the character and communication skills of students in Kedurang. The researchers employed observation, interviews, and document analyses to gather the necessary data. The findings indicate that folktales were commonly used by the community in Kedurang to promote values such as helping others, compassion, friendship, and courage in facing challenges. Furthermore, through storytelling activities, folktales were utilized to train children in communication skills. The stories shared were diverse, including tales like "Beteri and the Deer" ("Beteri dan Rusa"), "Sinamnam," "The Buffalo and the Mousedeer" ("Si Kerbau dan Si Kancil"), and "The Tortoise and the Eagle" ("Si Kura-Kura dan Si Elang"). These stories reflect the local wisdom of the Kedurang community. The people of Kedurang also believe that folktales are an effective way to train children to be good listeners and speakers. This study has implications for the preservation of children's literature, the enhancement of communication skills through storytelling, and the implementation of character education through children's literature.

KEYWORDS: character education values, children's literature, communication skills

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Introduction

Kedurang is a region located in the Bengkulu Province of Indonesia, known for its rich and well-preserved local wisdom. This area boasts unique cultural practices, including *bejeghum*, folktales, and *pantauan*. *Bejeghum* is one of the cultural traditions found in South Bengkulu (Junaidi et al., 2020). Folktales are also a significant part of Kedurang's cultural heritage, frequently shared with children as an educational tool. These stories are passed down orally, without the aid of any media, by parents, grandparents, or elders to young listeners. The stories cover a range of topics, such as the kindness of *Beteri* towards her siblings, the perseverance of *Sang Piatu* in his studies, the cleverness of the Mousedeer, the friendship between the Eagle and the Turtle, and other fascinating tales. These folktales serve as entertainment during leisure time and as a means of teaching children proper behavior, reflecting the characters' virtues, and fostering communication skills. Children who listen to these stories through storytelling are likely to comprehend the narrative flow and absorb the moral lessons, which can strengthen their positive traits. Consequently, they grow to be well-rounded individuals with knowledge and strong character. Moreover, they are expected to develop into good listeners and confident speakers due to the habit of listening to stories from their parents.

Strengthening character education through listening to folktales in Kedurang is an essential aspect that should be preserved and nurtured. In this context, storytelling serves as an excellent educational tool to impart valuable life lessons to children. Each story encapsulates important virtues to emulate, such as caring for others, helping one another in society, perseverance in learning, responsibility, and honesty. These values are embodied in the behavior and characteristics of the characters within the stories. Ultimately, these values become role models for children, shaping their behavior and guiding them in their daily lives, whether at home, school, or in the community. Character education, especially from a young age, is fundamental in shaping children's moral compass. Ideally, children should not only excel academically but also understand the difference between right and wrong, behave in accordance with good values, and show respect for others. Folktales contain various life lessons that can be emulated by society, enhancing both cognitive development and character (Nafisendy et al., 2025).

In addition to character education, communication skills are vital and should be developed from an early age. It is important to teach children how to confidently express their opinions and ideas. Through storytelling activities within the family, children are trained to be good listeners, to appreciate those speaking, and to effectively communicate their thoughts. This means that storytelling is invaluable for helping children become attentive listeners and effective communicators. As they listen to the stories, children grasp the plot and the moral messages, and they practice communicating their understanding by asking questions or responding to parts of the story they may not fully understand. Ultimately, they can recount the stories to others. Therefore, children's literature holds significant potential as an educational tool that fosters good character development and enhanced communication skills. Correspondingly, this study aimed to further explore the role of Kedurang's children's literature in improving character and communication skills in local children.

Literature Review

Folktales

Literature plays an important role in the character development of children (Halimatussakdiah, et al., 2019). Children's stories, specifically folktales, represent a genre of literature particularly created for young readers, playing a crucial role in their cognitive, emotional, and social development (Nikolajeva, 2013). These narratives are characterized by relatively simple and easy-to-understand language, a focus on themes relevant to children's experiences, and often contain elements of fantasy that stimulate the imagination (Bettelheim, 2020). The storytelling structure in folktales typically follows a clear pattern in folktale morphology analysis, involving stages such as introduction, complication, character actions, and resolution (Propp, 1968). This pattern helps children understand the plot and develop their narrative abilities (Bruner, 1990). Folktales often serve to convey cultural, moral, and ethical values to younger generations (Tatar, 2019). Through the identification of characters and an understanding of the consequences of their actions, children learn about social norms and develop empathy (Oatley, 2016). Adult-child interactions during storytelling, such as asking questions and discussing the story, significantly enhance language comprehension, critical thinking skills, and reading interest. In the Indonesian context, the richness of traditional folktales not only forms part of cultural heritage but also holds

significant potential for character education and the preservation of local wisdom (Rogahang et al., 2022). The diversity of Indonesian children's literature, including fables, legends, and local myths, plays an essential role in supporting cognitive, social, and emotional development from a young age (Nurgiantoro, 2024).

Folktales hold great potential as an effective pedagogical tool in building character and supporting children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. By conveying moral, ethical, and cultural values through engaging and accessible narratives, folktales facilitate the internalization of positive values in children from an early age (Nhu Mai, 2024; Şen, 2021). This approach has been shown to strengthen children's understanding of literary elements, enhance problem-solving abilities, and develop empathy as part of character education (Fitriani et al., 2024; Odumegwu et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2024). In intercultural education, folktales also significantly introduce cultural diversity and foster tolerance through active student participation in the learning process (de Bruijn, 2019). Even in distance learning situations, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, integrating folktales into education has proven effective in maintaining learning motivation and supporting children's psychological well-being (Alomyan, 2021; Junaidi et al., 2022). Furthermore, folktales, with their symbolic and imaginative elements, can stimulate the development of critical thinking and creativity in children, as evidenced in research on Karakalpak folktales (Seitmuratova, 2024). Therefore, folktales not only serve as tools for cultural transmission but also as holistic and relevant educational strategies for children's education.

Character Education

Education is one of the important aspects that must be optimized in human life. Through education, humans can think broadly and rationally (Junaidi, et al, 2017). Family is the first educational institution for the process of transfer of knowledge. The learning received at home is the formation of attitudes and strengthening of character (Putra, et al., 2020). Children can be aware to the values in the society and the folktale could be a useful media to enhance and promote children characters (Cahyani & Junaidi, 2019). Furthermore, character education is a deliberate effort to cultivate noble virtues, which are qualities of individuals that are good for themselves and society as a whole (El-yunusi et al., 2022). Lickona argues that character is related to moral knowledge, feelings, and behavior. From these three components, it can be concluded that good character is supported by knowledge of goodness, the desire to do good, and the act of performing good deeds (El-yunusi et al., 2022; Lickona, 2012, 2013). Meanwhile, Aristotle's theory suggests that character is a virtue for understanding moral life, which can largely be seen as a matter of character formation under the guidance and direction of practical reason (Carr, 2024; Lu, 2024). Some believe that character must be built and instilled rather than simply taught. It can be developed through education, work, mentoring, training, direction, guidance, and sincere efforts (Islamic et al., 2024; Nakissa, 2022). Character education plays a crucial role in shaping the morality of students; without the proper approach, students risk experiencing the degradation of ethical values, which may lead to deviant behaviors such as violence, promiscuity, drug abuse, and more. This phenomenon reflects a profound moral crisis among the younger generation. Additionally, the role of parents in educating their children is increasingly limited due to economic and social pressures (Hardiansyah, 2022; Husen et al., 2022; Muhajir, 2022). Therefore, the involvement of schools is essential to address these issues, particularly the role of teachers as the primary agents in the character formation process to overcome this moral crisis (Shiddiq et al., 2024). One way that teachers can contribute to character education is through children's literature.

Character education is not only an educational goal but also a process of moral formation intertwined with children's narrative experiences. Children's literature, particularly folktales, becomes a strategic medium for internalizing ethical and social values through storylines, characters, and conflicts close to the child's world. Character education must be rooted in real-life values and function as a lifelong learning process (Aspin et al., 2007). The stories that children read or hear open up space for ethical reflection, moral decision-making, and the formation of a value-based identity. Furthermore, all young children must receive equitable attention and guidance, fostering a fair, comfortable, and joyful learning atmosphere (Srihati, et al., 2024). Bertens (2002) states that true moral values only have meaning when embodied in actions, not just known. Cairns et al. (2000) view children's literature as an effective means to teach morality, ethics, and citizenship contextually. Copp (2001) explains that the values conveyed in literature reflect the social norms that shape children's behavior within society. Elmubarok (2008) argues that value education through traditional narratives, such as folktales, functions to reunite fragmented ethical and cultural dimensions due to the forces of modernity. Hence,

using children's literature as a medium for character education is not only a pedagogical approach but also a meaningful cultural strategy for naturally, deeply, and contextually instilling values.

Communication Skills in Children

Fisher's narrative paradigm offers a foundational perspective on human communication by asserting that human beings are fundamentally storytellers. This theory challenges the long-standing dominance of the rational world paradigm, which views individuals as logical agents making decisions based on arguments, evidence, and formal reasoning. In contrast, the narrative paradigm suggests that people make sense of the world and make decisions based on "good reasons" derived from personal history, culture, character, and shared values (Fisher, 1985). According to Fisher, all meaningful communication, including persuasive discourse, is best understood as narrative in form. This view is echoed by Monteagudo (2011), who emphasizes that children cognitively process their world through narrative structures. He introduces two key criteria for evaluating stories: narrative coherence and narrative fidelity. Coherence refers to a story's internal consistency, including its characters' reliability and the logical sequence of events. Fidelity, on the other hand, is the degree to which a story resonates with the listener's values and lived experiences, striking a "ring of truth." Fisher argues that stories with coherence and fidelity are more likely to influence belief and behavior, not because of technical argumentation but because they reflect the audience's sense of what is true and humane. Supporting this, Eemeren (2014) argues that narrative argumentation can serve as a legitimate and powerful form of reasoning, while Haven (2007) provides empirical evidence that narrative-based messages enhance understanding, retention, and emotional engagement. In educational contexts, particularly in communication with children, storytelling becomes an effective medium for engagement and the internalization of values and moral understanding. Thus, Fisher's narrative paradigm serves as a compelling theoretical lens for analyzing the role of storytelling in fostering meaningful and value-laden communication with children.

Fisher (1989) emphasizes that the narrative paradigm is a philosophical approach designed to interpret and evaluate human communication, assuming that all forms of human communication can essentially be seen as stories, interpretations of aspects of the world that occur in time and are shaped by history, culture, and character. Roberts (2004) extends the reach of this paradigm by linking it with folkloristic and performative approaches. He asserts that the narrative paradigm can be enriched by insights from the discipline of folklore, particularly in terms of how narratives are conveyed through cultural performances that are situational and contextual.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with content analysis methodology to explore the use of folktales as a medium for internalizing character values and enhancing children's communication skills in Kedurang District, South Bengkulu Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen as it can uncover subjective meanings, social processes, and cultural dynamics that cannot be reduced to numbers or statistical generalizations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study was grounded in the assumption that social meaning is shaped through interaction and the narratives that are alive within the local community.

Qualitative content analysis was selected as the methodology to identify and interpret the main themes emerging from the folktales and the transcripts of interviews. This analysis does not simply count the frequency of words or symbols; it focuses more on contextual meaning and thematic depth (Krippendorff, 2022). This approach is particularly well-suited for examining the moral messages and communication embedded in folktale narratives, as well as the community's perception of these messages. According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), qualitative content analysis consists of three main phases: preparation, organization, and reporting. These phases formed the framework for structuring the steps of this research.

The researchers identified relevant issues, specifically how folktales were used to build character and improve children's communication skills. Research questions were then formulated to explore the narrative content and the community's perceptions of the values embedded within these stories. Data from documentation and interviews were thoroughly reviewed and reduced to focus on relevant meaning units. The data was then coded using thematic categories such as empathy, bravery, cooperation, courtesy, and listening and speaking skills.

Once coding was completed, the data was categorized based on the recurring themes and meanings arising from the narratives. These categories were then analyzed to explore the relationships between character values and children's communication practices within the local context. The findings were interpreted through the lens of character education theory (Lickona, 2012) and narrative communication theory (Fisher, 1985) while also considering the cultural values of the Bengkulu community. The interpretation was based not only on the explicit content of the stories but also on the social and cultural context in which these stories are lived.

Research Location and Informants

This research was conducted in Kedurang Ilir District, South Bengkulu Regency, Indonesia. The researchers engaged with the local community to gather the necessary information. Informants were selected based on specific criteria, which included:

1. Native residents of Kedurang
2. Proficient in the language and culture of Kedurang
3. Have not lived away from the region for extended periods
4. In good physical and mental health
5. Possess a good memory
6. Capable of effective communication to express their views during interviews
7. Willing to participate as informants
8. Knowledgeable about the children's literature of Kedurang

Data Collection Techniques

The researchers interviewed several informants who met the established criteria to obtain research data. Observations were also made to examine the presence and relevance of children's literature in Kedurang. The researchers visited the region directly to gather insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Interviews were conducted with community members to explore their views on the use of children's literature as a means to enhance character development and communication skills.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was then reduced according to the material, classified based on emerging patterns, and analyzed within the context of relevant theories (Miles & Huberman, 2017). The analysis was expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the character education values embedded in children's literature or folktales in Kedurang, as well as the community's perceptions of using these stories to improve children's character and communication skills. This information can serve as a basis for formulating more targeted teaching strategies to strengthen good character and enhance communication skills among students in the school environment. It will also provide a reference for teachers to implement learning strategies based on the local wisdom of the Kedurang community.

Results and Discussion

Character Education Values in the Children's Literature of Kedurang

The children's literature in Kedurang, specifically folktales, conveys valuable character education lessons that are exemplary for the younger generation. Junaidi et al. (2024) state that the *andai-andai* folktale within the Kedurang community epitomize a repository of eco-social values that are highly revered within the community. *Andai-andai* folklores contain some values of character education that encompass social empathy value, religious value, compliance value, hardwork value, creativity value, patience value, and promise-keeping value. In the other hand, most of the folklores in Indonesia especially in Kedurang of south Bengkulu generally contain social empathy values (Junaidi, 2017). This study analyzed four folktales, each reflecting key values. In the story titled "The Deer and Beteri" ("*Sang Rusa and Beteri*"), the value of mutual help is vividly portrayed, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

"I am looking for my scarf, Grandma. It was swept away by Sinamnam in this river. Have you seen it?" Beteri asked. The Deer smiled and replied, "If that is what you seek, close your eyes and hold my tail,

child. I will help you.” Beteri followed the Deer’s instruction. Soon, the Deer asked Beteri to open her eyes and release her hold on its tail.”

The narrative of “The Deer and Beteri” emphasizes the lasting importance of mutual assistance in social relationships. The Deer’s immediate, unselfish offer to help Beteri, without expectation of recognition or reward, highlights a deep-rooted ethic of care that values community well-being over individual interests. Through this act, the Deer embodies an ideal of selflessness that is increasingly acknowledged as vital for cultivating harmonious, resilient communities.

Moreover, the story underscores the fundamental role of trust in overcoming challenges. Despite her initial hesitance, Beteri’s willingness to follow the Deer’s instructions demonstrates the innate human inclination to place trust in others, especially in vulnerable moments. This element of the story suggests that trust is not a passive disposition but an active choice that can lead to solutions and mutual growth. In sum, “The Deer and Beteri” presents a nuanced exploration of how mutual assistance and trust serve as the foundation for cooperative problem-solving, encouraging readers to internalize these values as essential components of meaningful social interactions and as pillars for resilient communities.

Additionally, in the story “The Poor One” (“*Si Miskin*”), the values of love and perseverance are evident, as seen in the following excerpt:

“In a village, there lived an elderly mother with her young child. They lived in extreme poverty. One day, the child asked his mother for food. However, the mother had nothing to cook. The child kept begging for food, unable to bear his hunger any longer. Seeing her child’s suffering, the mother felt guilty and compassionate. She quickly set out to find food for her child. ‘Stay at home, my child. I will go find food for you,’ she said. The child did not protest, for he was an obedient child who followed his mother’s words. The mother went to the forest to clear land.”

This poignant story encapsulates the timeless virtue of maternal sacrifice. The mother’s determination to meet her child’s basic needs despite their dire circumstances reflects a deeply ingrained ethic of care that goes beyond mere survival. Her willingness to endure hardship for the well-being of her child resonates with universal cultural notions of parental responsibility, where love is most profoundly expressed through acts of self-denial and service.

In addition to highlighting sacrificial love, the story also emphasizes the importance of resilience as a defining trait of human perseverance. The mother’s decision to venture into the forest for food symbolizes a conscious, courageous choice to face adversity, transforming passive endurance into active agency. In doing so, the story conveys that resilience is not just an individual trait but a collective imperative that ensures the survival and thriving of vulnerable members of society. Through its vivid portrayal of love and resilience, this narrative invites readers to recognize the profound strength that arises from compassion-driven action. It offers a powerful, albeit subtle, lesson on how enduring familial bonds are often forged through the quiet heroism of ordinary individuals.

Next, the story of “The Buffalo and the Mousedeer” (“*Si Kerbau dan Si Kancil*”) also conveys valuable lessons worth emulating, particularly the value of empathy, as reflected in the following excerpt:

“When the Buffalo was feeling down and sad, a Deer passed by and noticed him. The Deer approached the Buffalo and asked, ‘Why do you look so down and sad? What happened?’ asked the Deer, full of concern. ‘I am indeed sad, Deer. My life is about to end. A month ago, the Hunter wanted to kill me, but I begged him to wait until my body was fatter by next month. The day of the agreement is coming next week, Deer. The Hunter will come here to kill me.’ The Buffalo then told the Deer all his troubles. The Deer, feeling pity for the Buffalo, comforted him and promised to help.”

The story of “The Buffalo and the Mousedeer” uniquely portrays empathy as a cornerstone of healthy social interactions. The Deer’s decision to stop, observe, and respond to the Buffalo’s distress exemplifies moral attentiveness beyond superficial acknowledgment. This act of genuine care reflects a broader ethical stance

that prioritizes the emotional and psychological well-being of others, reinforcing the idea that empathy is an indispensable element of social cohesion.

Complementing this theme, the narrative underscores the value of integrity, as seen in the Deer's promise to assist the Buffalo. The commitment to fulfilling a promise, especially made during a moment of shared vulnerability, speaks to the enduring significance of trustworthiness in maintaining interpersonal relationships. This aspect of the story demonstrates that integrity is not merely a matter of personal ethics but a vital social resource that sustains mutual confidence and long-term cooperation. The themes of empathy and integrity emphasize the profound interdependence between emotional responsiveness and moral accountability. The story invites readers to reflect on how these values contribute to the resilience and stability of social networks. Finally, in the story of "The Tortoise and the Eagle" ("Si Kura-Kura dan Si Elang"), the warm friendship between the two teaches lessons about courage and wisdom, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

"In a forest, there lived a Tortoise with a son-in-law, a Bird of Prey. One day, the Bird of Prey invited the Tortoise for a walk. 'Tortoise, would you like to fly with me high in the sky to see this bustling world?' asked the Bird of Prey. 'Of course, I would, dear Eagle,' replied the Tortoise."

In "The Tortoise and the Eagle," the narrative explores the value of courage in embracing new experiences as a crucial part of personal growth. Despite being a land-dwelling creature, the Tortoise's decision to accept the Eagle's invitation to soar through the skies demonstrates a willingness to face unfamiliar challenges and expand its view of the world. This depiction aligns with the educational principle that intellectual and emotional development often requires stepping outside one's comfort zone and confronting the unknown.

However, the story also imparts an important lesson on prudence and self-awareness, as seen in the eventual consequences of the Tortoise's adventurous decision. While courage is undeniably valuable, the Tortoise's predicament highlights the need to balance ambition with a clear-eyed understanding of one's capabilities and limitations. This cautionary element reinforces the idea that risk-taking while fostering growth must be tempered by thoughtful deliberation and self-reflection to avoid unintended consequences. Thus, the story provides a nuanced perspective on the interplay between boldness and wisdom. It invites readers to recognize that responsible decision-making is about the bravery to face challenges and the wisdom to assess risks and proceed with careful confidence.

Public Perception on the Use of Folktales in Building Children's Character

The researchers interviewed five community members to explore and analyze their perceptions of the use of folktales in building children's character. The interviews were conducted in a structured and direct manner with the research participants. The results of the interviews were then processed and analyzed. Based on the analysis, it was found that the community perceived the use of folktales as an important tool in building children's character. These folktales helped children develop emotional intelligence, leadership qualities, honesty, respect for elders, politeness, empathy, and a sense of mutual help. Below are the results from the interviews with the informants.

"Folktales can enhance children's leadership qualities, as there are stories about fair leaders with good virtues. By listening to these stories, children also learn about self-protection, emotional intelligence, and developing patience." (Informant 1)

The above excerpt highlights that children can indirectly absorb character values by identifying folktale characters. The figure of a leader, portrayed as fair and virtuous in the story, serves as a symbolic model for children to emulate. The values of fairness and virtue play a key role in shaping positive leadership traits such as responsibility, wisdom, and concern for others. Folktales also convey emotional and social messages, such as the importance of patience, self-protection, and handling difficult situations with wisdom. By listening to the stories, children learn to manage their emotions, develop empathy for characters encountering challenges, and cultivate patience. This demonstrates that folktales serve as a medium for developing emotional intelligence, which is essential for children's personal development.

Another perspective on the use of folktales in building children's character is as follows:

"Children can learn critical thinking, honesty, good manners, respect for elders, and care for their social environment." (Informant 2)

Informant 2's statement shows that folktales are not merely a form of entertainment but also serve as an instrument for character education with meaningful lessons. Folktales present narratives that position characters as representations of moral values. Characters who are honest, kind-hearted, or respectful to elders are often rewarded with happy endings, while those who are deceitful or arrogant tend to encounter negative consequences. This narrative pattern helps shape children's moral and cognitive frameworks. Informant 2 also pointed out that critical thinking is a consequence of listening to folktales, which indicates that children are not just passively absorbing messages but are encouraged to understand the meaning, analyze events in the stories, and reflect on them in real-life contexts. Thus, folktales can serve as a medium for moral and cognitive literacy, integrating values with reasoning simultaneously.

"When children hear these folktales, they will learn to listen attentively to others, practice politeness, and develop their thinking skills." (Informant 3)

Informant 3's statement illustrates that folktales serve not only as a medium for instilling moral values but also as a tool for developing children's cognitive and social skills. While listening to stories, children are trained to focus, follow the storyline, and capture the implicit messages conveyed by the characters. The ability to actively listen and pay attention is an essential communication skill, and folktales can be an early platform for cultivating these habits in young children. The aspect of politeness mentioned by the informant is closely related to social norms often embedded within folktales. Many folktales contain lessons on how to behave respectfully toward elders, others, or even nature. Thus, children absorb the value of politeness through the characters and internalize forms of polite expression in their daily lives.

Folktales are believed to teach children to help each other and care for others, as depicted in the following excerpts.

"Folktales can teach children not to lie, to help one another, to learn to become leaders and to learn about religion. Some folktales tell stories about learning to read the Quran and praying, which motivate children to learn how to pray and read the Quran when they hear them." (Informant 4)

Informant 4's statement highlights folktales' significant role in instilling various character values in children. Through these stories, children are taught not to lie, to help one another, and to learn to become responsible leaders. These values are conveyed narratively through characters that often represent ideal behaviors worthy of emulation. In the stories, characters who are honest, helpful, and possess leadership qualities are often depicted as receiving happiness or rewards, helping children understand the positive consequences of good behavior. In addition to moral and social aspects, folktales contain religious dimensions that enrich their educational function. As mentioned by the informant, some folktales focus on religious themes, such as the activities of learning to read the Quran and praying. These narratives encourage children to imitate the characters and motivate them to practice religious values in their daily lives.

"By listening to folktales, children develop a sense of helping each other, caring for others, camaraderie, and cooperation, and they also learn discipline. Many folktales provide valuable lessons for children, and they often have humorous characteristics that attract children's attention." (Informant 5)

Folktales contain many character values, such as learning to help one another, caring for their surroundings, cooperating, and learning about religion, such as reading the Quran and praying. Informant 5's statement shows that folktales strongly influence children's social character, including a sense of helping each other, caring for others, camaraderie, cooperation, and discipline. Through narratives rich in noble values, children can emulate

positive behaviors from the characters, especially when they see how teamwork and solidarity lead to success in overcoming challenges. These prosocial characteristics are fundamental in shaping a child's personality, one that is caring toward the social environment and capable of living harmoniously with others. Furthermore, as mentioned in the excerpt, discipline is another important value often conveyed implicitly in folktales, especially through the characters' portrayal of the consequences of disobedience or negligence.

Informant 5 also emphasized folktales' emotional appeal and entertainment value, particularly from their humorous and unique qualities that make children eager to listen. This aspect reinforces the educational function of folktales because when children feel happy and entertained, they are more open to receiving the moral messages embedded within the stories. The humorous features in folktales create a fun learning atmosphere that is far from boring, making internalizing values more effective. Thus, folktales not only deliver moral and social teachings but also serve as an educational medium that appeals to children's emotions, an important element in the holistic development of their character.

Public Perception on the Use of Folktales in Enhancing Children's Communication Skills

The researchers conducted structured interviews with five community members to explore and analyze their perceptions of the use of folktales in enhancing children's communication skills. The interviews were conducted directly and in a structured manner with the research subjects. The results were then processed and analyzed. Based on the analysis, it was found that the community perceived the use of folktales as playing an important role in improving children's communication skills. By using folktales, children could communicate more effectively, such as by retelling the stories they heard to their peers or others.

"By listening to folktales, children can improve their speaking skills, as they usually recount the stories they've heard to their friends afterward." (Informant 1)

"Folktales can enhance children's communication abilities. When children listen to folktales, they remember the story and are eager to tell it to friends who haven't heard it." (Informant 2)

Based on the responses from Informant 1 and Informant 2, it can be concluded that the use of folktales also contributes to the development of communication skills in children. Children will retell the stories they've heard to their friends. Folktales provide an important contribution to improving children's communication skills, particularly through the activity of retelling the stories they listen to. Informant 1 explained that after listening to a folktale, children tend to spontaneously retell the story's content to their peers. This activity not only serves as entertainment but also trains children to organize the story's plot, choose the right words, and build the courage to speak in front of others. Indirectly, children learn to communicate messages in a coherent and clear manner, which is a core component of verbal communication skills.

Meanwhile, Informant 2 emphasized how folktales help children remember the story and motivate them to share it with their peers who haven't heard it. This process involves the child's ability to filter information they've heard, remember the story's structure, and retell it in their style. This shows that folktales enrich children's vocabulary and encourage them to think communicatively, such as figuring out how to convey something in a way that is understandable and engaging for the listener. In other words, folktales become an effective medium for sharpening children's speaking abilities through enjoyable and contextual experiences.

Here is another perspective from the community regarding the use of folktales in enhancing children's communication skills:

"Children love listening to folktales, especially when the stories are funny. They will quickly retell the stories, which will undoubtedly affect their communication skills." (Informant 3)

This statement from Informant 3 highlights that folktales have a strong emotional appeal, especially when the stories include elements of humor. Children's interest in funny stories motivates them to listen attentively and retell the story. The process of retelling inherently involves verbal communication skills, such as children's ability to structure narratives, choose the right words, and engagingly present the story. Moreover, this activity also trains children to think critically about the storyline and convey it in a logical order. Therefore, folktales

can serve as entertainment and an effective educational tool for improving children's speaking skills.

"This folktale also helps children communicate because they are very enthusiastic and remember the stories they've heard to retell them." (Informant 4)

This statement highlights the role of folktales in developing children's cognitive abilities, especially in terms of memory and communication. When children listen to a folktale, they typically enjoy the plot and try to remember key details they will retell later. This process involves good listening skills, information management, and the ability to relay the story in their own words. This activity strengthens children's ability to express ideas clearly, which is an essential element of communication skills. Moreover, the enthusiasm children show in retelling the story indicates that folktales can ignite a high level of interest in learning, creating a fun and meaningful learning experience.

"When listening to folktales, children are enthusiastic and try their best to remember the story, especially when it captures their attention. They will also retell the story to their friends later." (Informant 5)

According to Informant 5, the use of folktales emphasizes the social aspect of learning. Children not only listen to and remember the story, but they also share it with their friends. This story-sharing activity involves intense social interaction. Children learn to adjust how they tell the story to capture the attention of their listeners. This helps them engage in the story, understand their audience, and use appropriate intonation. Additionally, sharing stories with friends enhances children's interpersonal skills, such as cooperation, empathy, and confidence in speaking. Thus, it can be concluded that folktales can positively impact children's communication skills development. With the help of folktales, children become excited to listen to the stories, especially when they are funny or interesting, and they eagerly recall the story to share with their peers.

Based on the interviews and observations, it was found that children's literature in Kedurang significantly contributed to the development of children's character in the region. Children were very eager to listen to the stories shared with them, which allowed them to practice being good listeners. This also enhanced their communication skills, as they could retell the stories they had heard to others, such as their friends.

Kedurang has a variety of educational stories that are often shared with children. These stories represent the local wisdom of the Kedurang community. The delivery of these children's literature can train children's listening abilities and the ability to express ideas, as well as serve as models for behavior in daily life. This is because the stories carry character education values that are excellent examples. These values can be seen in the characters and their actions. Values can also be identified through the dialogue of the characters. In the story of "Beteri and the Deer," children can learn about Beteri's patience and the kindness of the Deer, who helps Beteri. "The Poor One" teaches about a mother's love for her child and the child's obedience to the mother. These are crucial values to instill from an early age. Additionally, "The Buffalo and the Mousedeer" conveys the goodness of the Deer towards the Buffalo. The empathy the Deer shows is an essential value to teach children, as empathy should be nurtured from an early age. Furthermore, the importance of friendship can be seen in the tale of "The Tortoise and the Eagle." The Eagle is kind to its friend, the Tortoise, and the Tortoise shows courage by bravely joining the Eagle in flight. The value of bravery is crucial for children to internalize early on, but it should also be accompanied by wisdom and a readiness to take risks.

In summary, the folktales of Kedurang not only provide entertainment but also serve as valuable tools for teaching life lessons and fostering important character traits in children. These stories contribute to shaping well-rounded individuals who are equipped with empathy, patience, courage, and a sense of responsibility. Research on children's literature in Kedurang has previously been conducted by Junaidi et al. (2024), who state that representations of social intelligence in these stories, such as caring, alignment, empathic accuracy, influence, and social cognition, are critical aspects of child development. Their study found that the children's folktales in Kedurang are highly relevant for children, as they embody the values of caring for others. Through these stories, children are exposed to attitudes of mutual assistance and compassion, effectively conveyed through narrative structures. Furthermore, Islamic values are often present in the children's literature of Kedurang, particularly in stories like "*Sang Piatu*." The folktale of "*Sang Piatu*" among the Pasemah ethnic group in Kedurang contains

numerous Islamic values, making it an ideal educational tool for instilling religious teachings in children. These Islamic values are reflected in character behaviors, dialogues, and descriptions in the folktale. In “*Sang Piatu*,” a child is depicted as diligently praying and reciting the Quran, representing Islamic values that young people should emulate (Nafisendy et al., 2025). This suggests that children’s literature in Kedurang can serve as an educational medium, promoting positive behaviors in children.

The interviews with the informants also indicate that folktales can be used not only as educational tools but also as a means to enhance communication skills. These skills are essential for every individual, particularly as social beings. Through children’s literature, especially folktales, a child practices listening to stories, conveying the story’s content, and retelling the stories they have heard to others. Moreover, the interviews revealed that children were very happy when listening to stories. They were eager to listen attentively, making the stories’ content easily understood. This shows that folktales are not only a source of moral and character education but also an engaging tool for developing communication skills, providing children with opportunities to refine their verbal and listening skills in an enjoyable and meaningful way.

Conclusion

The children’s literature from Kedurang, Bengkulu, play a crucial role in instilling character values and enhancing children’s communication skills. Through these stories, children learn important values such as helping others, empathy, love, and courage, which are reflected in the characters’ actions and moral deeds. The practice of storytelling within the community not only serves as a process of character development but also contributes to the cultivation of children’s communication skills. Through these stories, children practice listening and speaking, becoming more confident in expressing their ideas. This highlights the significance of using children’s literature as a tool for developing their ability to articulate their thoughts effectively.

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