



Representation of Educational and Character Values in the Bilingual Children's Story Book *Tumbuk Jagung* (Riung Traditional Language-Indonesian)

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Abstract

This study explores the representation of educational and character values in the bilingual children's storybook *Tumbuk Jagung* (Rosak Sela) by Benediktus Molo, which uses both Indonesian and the endangered Riung regional language. The research employs a qualitative content analysis method to examine how narrative elements, such as plot, characters, dialogue, and illustrations, convey values including responsibility, hard work, cooperation, empathy, and respect for elders. The study also highlights the integration of local wisdom from the Riung community in East Nusa Tenggara, emphasizing traditional practices like Rosak Sela (collective corn pounding), sustainable use of natural resources, and the preservation of local culinary and architectural elements. In addition to fostering character development, the storybook serves as a strategic tool for revitalizing the Riung language through engaging and emotionally resonant storytelling. The bilingual format promotes language acquisition and cultural identity in young readers, aligning with educational and sociolinguistic principles for minority language preservation. This research underlines the importance of incorporating local language and cultural content into children's literature to support multilingual education, identity formation, and intergenerational transmission of heritage values.

Keywords: *Character Education; Local Wisdom; Cultural Identity; Tumbuk Jagung*

Introduction

Character education has become one of the central issues in the world of education, especially in Indonesia, which is rich in cultural and linguistic diversity. In the context of local culture, efforts to instill character values in children can not only be done through formal channels such as schools, but also through informal media such as children's storybooks. Children's storybooks function not only as a means of entertainment, but also as an effective learning medium in shaping children's personalities and characters from an early age. It contains moral, social, and cultural messages that reflect the values of life, both explicitly and implicitly.

Along with increasing awareness of the importance of preserving local language and culture, various initiatives have emerged to develop children's storybooks in a bilingual format—that is, combining Indonesian with regional languages. One example is the book *Tumbuk Jagung* by Benediktus

Molo, which uses the *Riung* Regional Language as a second language of instruction besides Indonesian. This book not only carries the local cultural values of *Riung* in East Nusa Tenggara, but also contains a representation of character education values, which are important to introduce to children. Through simple but meaningful stories, children are introduced to life practices that reflect the values of cooperation, perseverance, and respect for culture and the natural environment.

More than just conveying a moral message, *Tumbuk Jagung* also highlights the local wisdom of the *Riung* community, which is reflected through traditional activities such as pounding corn together in a lopo (a typical stilt house from East Nusa Tenggara), the manner of speaking and behaving between family members, and respect for natural resources as blessings that must be appreciated. The local wisdom not only describes the community's way of life in practice, but also shows the value system that lives in the community, such as solidarity, respect for parents, and the principle of justice in collective work².

In addition to being a medium for character education and the inheritance of cultural values, this book also has a strategic role in preserving regional languages, especially the *Riung* language, which is classified as one of the regional languages that is starting to be marginalized in intergenerational communication. In the last few decades, many regional languages in Indonesia have experienced a decline in speakers due to the strong dominance of national and global languages³. In this context, *Tumbuk Jagung* is present as a concrete form of regional language revitalization through children's literacy. By combining *Riung* and Indonesian in one book, children are not only introduced to the vocabulary and structure of the *Riung* language functionally, but are also invited to build an emotional closeness to their ancestral language through stories that are relevant to everyday experiences.

The use of regional languages in children's storybooks has a very important meaning in the context of multicultural education and strengthening local identity. Language is a reflection of culture; through regional languages, children are introduced to unique cultural values, while also being invited to appreciate their ancestral heritage. Therefore, the analysis of bilingual children's storybooks is relevant not only in the realm of children's literature studies, but also in the fields of character education, cultural preservation, and the transmission of local wisdom between generations.

This study starts from the assumption that every literary text, including children's stories, is a cultural product that is full of values and ideologies. In the structural-semiotic and sociocultural approaches, the text does not stand alone, but is a representation of the value system of the society in which the text was born. In the context of *Tumbuk Jagung*, the story presented represents the values that live in the *Riung* community, which are then internalized by children readers through interesting narratives and illustrations and easy-to-understand language.

However, there has not been much research that specifically examines how educational and character values are represented in children's storybooks written in bilingual format, especially those using local languages such as *Riung*. The majority of studies focus more on linguistic aspects, translation, or general educational functions, without examining in depth how these values are constructed and conveyed to children through story structure, characters, dialogue, and cultural context in the narrative. Understanding this is very important to develop a character education strategy based on local wisdom that is relevant to the needs and identities of children in the region.

In the context of character education based on local culture and revitalization of regional languages, it is important to examine how the representation of these values is present in children's story media. Therefore, this study will answer the main question: How is the representation of educational values, character, local wisdom, and efforts to preserve regional languages presented in the bilingual children's story book (*Riung* Regional Language) *Tumbuk Jagung* by Benediktus Molo? This question will be broken down into several sub-problems, such as: (1) what character values are raised in the story, (2) how do the narrative and illustrations support the delivery of these values, (3) what forms of local wisdom are presented in the story, and (4) to what extent the use of the *Riung* language in this book is an educational medium as well as a tool for revitalizing regional languages for children readers.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis method to reveal the representation of educational values, character, and local wisdom in the children's story book *Tumbuk Jagung* by Benediktus Molo. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for understanding the meaning contained in the text in depth and contextually. Analysis was carried out on narrative elements in the story, such as characters, plot, setting, dialogue, and accompanying illustrations, to identify the character values displayed. Character education values were analyzed based on indicators that refer to the formulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2010), such as religious values, honesty, discipline, hard work, responsibility, social care, and love of the homeland, as well as local cultural values typical of the *Riung* community which are represented through activities and interactions in the story.

In addition, this study also explores the use of the *Riung* regional language in the book as a form of effort to preserve and revitalize the local language. The analysis was conducted by examining the language structure, vocabulary selection, and context of the use of *Riung* in narratives and dialogues, as well as how its integration with Indonesian functions as a learning tool for children. The main data in this study is the text of the *Tumbuk Jagung* book, while supporting data were obtained from literature studies related to character education, children's literacy, revitalization of regional languages, and cultural representation theory. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively and interpretively to show the relationship between the content of the story and the character values and preservation of local culture that the author wants to convey.

Discussion and Results

1.Character Values Promoted in the Story

The story *Tumbuk Jagung* by Benediktus Molo narratively raises and represents various character values that are important in the formation of a child's personality. This story not only presents the local traditions of the *Riung* community in East Nusa Tenggara, but also functions as an educational tool that inserts moral and social values that can be emulated by children readers.



Fig. 1. Cover of the book *Tumbuk Jagung*.

(Source: doc. Benediktus Molo, 2024)

Here are some educational values and characters contained in this children's story book.

a. Responsibility

The main character, Welo, shows a responsible attitude when he chooses to help his mother pound corn rather than play with his friends. Although he is still a child and has the option to play, he chooses to carry out the housework that has been mandated by his mother. This reflects the child's understanding of obligations and sensitivity to the needs of the family. In the context of character education, responsibility is one of the basic values that must be instilled from an early age because it is the foundation for forming an honest and trustworthy attitude (Kemendikbud, 2010).

b. Hard Work

The value of hard work is also strongly depicted in this story. Although not yet proficient, Welo continues to practice pounding corn with enthusiasm and perseverance. He does not give up easily, even though he has difficulty following the rhythm of pounding together with Rato. Welo's perseverance is an example for children not to give up easily in learning something new. Even when sifting corn, Welo continues to try and learn until he finally succeeds. According to Lickona (1991), the character of hard work is a form of internal discipline that is very important in supporting future success.

c. Cooperation and Mutual Assistance

The story also emphasizes the importance of cooperation and cooperation, which is the essence of the '*Rosak Sela*' tradition. In this tradition, people pound corn together to make the work easier. This representation is seen when Rato helps Welo pound corn together. In addition to helping physically, Rato also patiently teaches Welo how to pound corn in turns until Welo can follow his rhythm. In this context, children are introduced to the importance of collaboration as part of community life.



Fig. 2. Rato helps Welo pound corn together

(Source: doc. Benediktus Molo, 2024)

d. Loyalty and Empathy

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e. Parental Love and Care

This value is reflected in the character of Mama Vero. She accompanies Welo and Rato during the process of learning to pound and sift corn, guides without anger, and even welcomes their success with a smile and help. In character education, parental figures who are present and active in a child's life are very important in forming positive behavior and emotional attachment.

2. The Role of Narrative and Illustration in Conveying Character Values

In the children's storybook *Tumbuk Jagung* by Benediktus Molo, the power of narrative and illustration plays an important role in conveying educational and character values to children. The narrative used is simple and communicative, making it easy for children to understand the moral messages contained therein. The language style used flows naturally, with dialogues that are close to children's daily lives. This makes it easy for children to identify with characters such as Welo and Rato. The narrative in this book is not patronizing, but invites readers to experience and reflect on values such as responsibility, cooperation, tenacity, and respect contextually and emotionally.

A concrete example of a narrative that conveys character values is when Welo prefers to help his mother pound corn rather than play ball with Rato. This choice shows responsibility and discipline, which are instilled through real actions. Likewise, when Rato helps and patiently teaches Welo the technique of pounding corn together (*Rosak Sela*), the narrative brings to life the values of cooperation and mutual assistance, which are the essence of the local culture of the *Riung* community. According to Nurgiyantoro (2005), narratives in children's literature must be able to convey messages implicitly through the actions of characters so that moral values are more effectively absorbed by readers.

In addition to the narrative, the illustrations drawn by I Ketut Udayana make a major contribution in strengthening the reader's understanding of the values conveyed. The illustrations act as a means of visualizing the cultural context and emotions of the characters, and help build the atmosphere of the story. For example, the image of Welo and Rato standing face to face while holding a small pestle against the backdrop of dusk creates a warm and compact atmosphere. This visual reinforces the impression of the values of cooperation and the spirit of learning together. The colors used are dominated by warm hues such as yellow, orange, and brown, which support the impression of intimacy and family in the story.

The illustrations also depict the facial expressions of the characters in detail, such as Welo's confused face when sifting corn and Rato's laughing expression when helping. These images are not just compliments, but visual learning media that indirectly teach children to recognize and respond to other people's emotions. In a study of children's visual literacy, according to Arizpe and Styles (2003), illustrations have the power to convey meanings that are not verbally expressed in the text, and this increases the emotional involvement of child readers.

Furthermore, the illustrations in this book also serve as an introduction to local culture. Stilt houses, mortars, pestles, and traditional clothing are depicted in detail, becoming a form of strengthening cultural identity as well as a multicultural learning medium. Thus, child readers not only absorb universal character values, but also get to know the traditions and symbols of *Riung* culture, such as the *Rosak Sela* as a symbol of collaboration and social harmony.

Overall, the collaboration between strong narrative and expressive illustrations makes the book *Tumbuk Jagung* an effective literacy medium in delivering character education. Values such as hard work, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation are conveyed narratively and visually, creating a complete, meaningful, and enjoyable learning experience for children.

3. Forms of Local Wisdom Shown in Stories

The story of *Tumbuk Jagung* by Benediktus Molo is a rich representation of the local wisdom of the *Riung* community, Flores, which is conveyed with warmth and sincerity through a simple story of children in a rural environment. The local wisdom in this story is not only a cultural background, but also integrated into the narrative, characters, dialogue, and visualization, so that it truly reflects the values of tradition and the collective life of the *Riung* community that have been passed down across generations.

The most prominent form of local wisdom presented in this story is the “*Rosak Sela*” tradition, which is a way of pounding corn together in a mortar using a pestle. This tradition is not only about food processing techniques, but also implies important social values such as cooperation, mutual assistance, patience, and solidarity. In *Riung* culture, *Rosak Sela* is done not only so that the corn is crushed more quickly, but also as a symbol of togetherness between individuals, as well as a symbol of brotherhood in the community. This tradition is introduced to children through direct practice, as depicted in the story when the characters Welo and Rato learn to pound corn together. This shows that the process of cultural inheritance is carried out informally through daily activities involving various generations.



Fig. 3. Corn is one of local wisdom in Riung
(Source: doc. Benediktus Molo, 2024)

In addition to the activity aspect, local wisdom also appears in the form of the utilization of local natural resources. The mortar used to pound corn is depicted as being made of mango tree wood, while the pestle is made from the trunk of a kesambi tree. This represents the wisdom of the community in utilizing natural materials around them wisely and sustainably, and shows local knowledge in choosing durable and suitable materials for household equipment. This practice is a reflection of traditional ecological thinking that is often missed in modern narratives about sustainability (Wiersum, 2004).

Other local wisdom is reflected in the consumption of local foods such as corn rice, cassava, grated coconut, and moringa vegetables. In the story, the teacher encourages students to bring local food-based provisions to school, and this becomes an important moment in reintroducing the values of

independence and food security based on culture. These foods are not only healthy and easily accessible, but also rich in historical and symbolic value in the culture of the people of East Nusa Tenggara. Thus, *Tumbuk Jagung* implicitly supports the practice of preserving local culinary culture and strengthening children's identity towards their ancestral heritage.

In addition, aspects of architecture and traditional equipment are also shown in the story, such as stilt houses made of bamboo, bale-bale (traditional seating), nyiru (a bamboo woven tray), and a wood stove as a place to cook. All of these elements not only enrich the visual background of the story, but also become educational media for children to re-acquaint themselves with traditional forms of life that are increasingly rare in urban life. Visualization through illustrations also strengthens the reading experience and instills the symbolic meaning of these traditional objects.

Local wisdom in this story also touches on aspects of social relations and interpersonal values, such as respect for parents, willingness to help, and the attitude of sharing knowledge among peers. The character of Mama Vero not only plays her role as a housewife, but also as an informal educator who guides Welo and Rato patiently and lovingly. This kind of relationship illustrates the social structure of the local community that is egalitarian but full of respect, where character education is formed naturally in domestic and social spaces. According to Geertz (1973), symbolic forms in such a culture are a reflection of the structure of collective meaning in society that needs to be maintained in the process of modernization.

Overall, the *Tumbuk Jagung* story presents concrete and contextual forms of local wisdom. By making daily activities part of the narrative, this story is not only entertaining but also becomes a medium for cultural revitalization, a place where traditional values are packaged educationally for future generations. The power of narrative and illustration makes this story a relevant and effective cultural learning medium in supporting the preservation of local culture through children's literacy.

4. The Use of the *Riung* language in a Children's Storybook Entitled *Tumbuk Jagung* (Rosak Sela)

The use of the *Riung* language is an important strategy in educating children while revitalizing regional languages that are starting to be eroded by time. This story presents a bilingual narrative that presents text in *Riung* and Indonesian languages in parallel. The use of this model not only makes it easier to understand, but also strengthens the educational function of the story towards the mother tongue.

As an educational tool, this story teaches children important values, such as cooperation, cooperation, perseverance, and concern for family traditions. These values are conveyed through the traditional activity of pounding corn together known as "*Rosak Sela*." This activity is told through child characters such as Welo and Rato, who help each other in studying and working. Through interactions in the *Riung* language, child readers are indirectly introduced to language structure, vocabulary, and the social context of using this language in everyday life.

The presence of illustrations that support the text strengthens the visual and linguistic education process. Children not only read, but also see and feel the village atmosphere and traditional activities that they rarely encounter in modern life. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) idea of the importance of social context in children's cognitive development. When children read stories in their mother tongue, the language learning process becomes more meaningful and contextual.

Furthermore, from a language revitalization perspective, this approach is effective because it links the *Riung* language with cultural identity and positive childhood experiences. Language revitalization is not enough through formal teaching, but requires integration into everyday life, including through children's literacy media. According to Fishman (1991), the use of regional languages in informal and intergenerational environments is the key to the success of preserving minority languages. By making the

Riung language part of the narrative and dialogue used by the child characters, this story strengthens positive associations with the language.

In addition, the story of *Tumbuk Jagung* presents a language learning process that is not rigid. Children are not forced to understand grammatical structures, but are invited to learn the language through strong emotional, social, and cultural experiences. This shows that multilingual literacy can be a transformative tool in education by utilizing the local wealth owned by the community.

Overall, this book shows great potential as a tool for revitalizing the *Riung* language through a gentle, fun, and meaningful approach for children. When used in a school or family setting, this book can be a bridge connecting the younger generation to their linguistic and cultural heritage. Therefore, it is important to continue to encourage the production and distribution of similar children's stories in various regional languages of Indonesia.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Research on the children's story book *Tumbuk Jagung* (Rosak Sela) revealed that the use of *Riung* language side by side with Indonesian in the text has strategic value in an educational context and the revitalization of regional languages. This story is not only a medium for learning educational and character values such as cooperation, responsibility, and respect, but also introduces *Riung* language vocabulary and structures to children in a natural and fun context. This creates opportunities for children to build an emotional attachment to their mother tongue, strengthen cultural identity, and foster pride in their ancestral heritage.

The presence of bilingual narratives strengthens the effectiveness of this book as an intergenerational learning tool, in line with the minority language preservation approach proposed by Joshua Fishman (1991), who stated that the use of language in informal and family contexts is the most effective way to maintain endangered languages. In addition, the down-to-earth narrative approach and strong visuals strengthen the appeal of this book as children's reading material that is not only cognitively educational but also affectively and socially.

As a suggestion, the production of children's books in regional languages like this needs to be continuously encouraged and facilitated by local governments, literacy communities, and educational institutions. It also needs to be integrated into the local content curriculum and learning activities in elementary schools as part of multilingual education. Teachers and parents also need to be given training or assistance so that they can use this book as a learning tool that is rich in local cultural content and values. Thus, the *Tumbuk Jagung* book is not only a means of entertainment or education, but also an important instrument in preserving language and strengthening children's identity as the next generation of culture.

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