



Adapting *Palabe* folk tales into multimodal literacy for early childhood education

Feerlie Moonthana Indhra^{*1}, Muhammad Anshori², Muhammad Solihin³

¹Institut Agama Islam Yasni Bungo, Bungo, Indonesia; monthana71@gmail.com

²Institut Agama Islam Yasni Bungo, Bungo, Indonesia; mr.anshori23@gmail.com

³Institut Agama Islam Yasni Bungo, Bungo, Indonesia; msolihinbungo@gmail.com

^{*}Corresponding author: Feerlie Moonthana Indhra; E-mail addresses: monthana71@gmail.com

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Abstract. This study examines the urgency of adapting *Palabe*, an oral literature from the Bungo community in Jambi Province, into multimodal literacy resources for early childhood education. *Palabe* is at risk of extinction due to limited documentation, reduced oral transmission, and declining interest among younger generations. Yet, *Palabe* contains significant moral, social, and religious values that align with national character education goals. A qualitative descriptive method with a content analysis approach was applied, grounded in Early Literacy theory. Data were obtained from 23 *Palabe* narratives collected from 12 participants (7 males and 5 females) across eight sub-districts in Bungo Regency, selected purposively for their cultural expertise and involvement in oral tradition. Data collection included participatory observation, oral recording, transcription, and documentation. Findings show that 12 *Palabe* stories possess high educational values, including patience, collaboration, sincerity, perseverance, and trust in God. However, these stories

require adaptation to be developmentally appropriate for children aged 5–6 years. The adaptation process involves simplifying sentences, adding repetition, shortening plots, and integrating visual illustrations to enhance comprehension and engagement. The study recommends incorporating adapted *Palabe* into early childhood curricula and developing illustrated storybooks to preserve cultural identity, foster literacy, and strengthen character education through enjoyable, meaningful learning.

Introduction

Globalisation and advances in information technology are recognised catalysts of social and cultural change that affect intangible cultural heritage (ICH) worldwide, including Indonesia, by altering how cultural expressions are produced, shared, and transmitted. In Indonesia, specifically, digital platforms and evolving web environments are reshaping heritage practices and the ways communities document and maintain their intangible traditions (Permatasari et al., 2020; Rivero et al., 2023). These dynamics underscore the need to safeguard ICH as a living heritage that remains meaningful within contemporary media ecologies (Yang et al., 2024).

Palabe, the *Melayu* oral-literature tradition of Jambi, concentrated in Bungo Regency, sits squarely within this safeguarding challenge. *Palabe* serves as a form of folklore that transmits community knowledge, values, and moral teachings, a role that contemporary pressures threaten to erode as the tradition experiences marginalisation in popular and digital cultures (Indhra et al., 2025;

Muslimin & Utami, 2021). Work on *Palabe* and its revival highlights the risk factors associated with documentation gaps, shrinking speaker communities, and declining youth engagement with local culture, all of which threaten *Palabe*'s intergenerational transmission and long-term vitality (Indhra et al., 2025). The broader ICH literature notes that intergenerational transmission is a primary lever for continuity and is jeopardised when younger generations gravitate toward globalised or rapidly consumable cultural forms (Rivero et al., 2023).

The shift from oral to digital modes of cultural communication compounds these risks by favouring shorter, quickly consumable content and algorithm-driven media environments over traditional long-form narratives (Rivero et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the transition to digital heritage platforms and online dissemination alters how traditions like *Palabe* are preserved, accessed, and taught, raising concerns about authenticity, audience reach, and the durability of older oral practices in the digital age (Permatasari et al., 2020). This digital transition is a central theme in contemporary discussions of safeguarding ICH, where digital documentation, public engagement, and co-creative approaches are highlighted as pathways for revitalisation rather than replacement (Rivero et al., 2023).

Palabe, as a form of oral literature, can be situated within the UNESCO framework of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which defines ICH as living cultural expressions that communities continuously transmit, including language, traditions, performances, and folklore passed down through generations and sustained through social practices (Dewi et al., 2025). This understanding of ICH has been the subject of critical analysis and interpretation, highlighting the need for safeguarding living heritage within contemporary social and educational settings (Ortiz & Madariaga, 2021). In Indonesia, *Palabe* is part of the Melayu community in Jambi, particularly in Bungo Regency, where it serves as a means of preserving local knowledge and cultural identity. Empirical research on the Jambi Melayu oral tradition has demonstrated that *Palabe* not only conveys ethical values but also encodes social structures, worldviews, and relationships between humans, underscoring the educational potential of local narratives when integrated into teaching and character education.

However, the integration of *Palabe* into formal education has been limited, as initiatives are often restricted to local programs or academic pursuits rather than being implemented as a widespread policy. This limited integration occurs alongside broader influences from globalisation and digital culture, which affect how *Palabe* is produced, circulated, and consumed, potentially marginalising longer oral narratives within popular and digital media landscapes. Therefore, safeguarding *Palabe* requires proactive documentation, support for intergenerational transmission, and community-centred revitalisation strategies that align with UNESCO ICH principles and sustainable development aspirations (Blake, 2020). In this context, the preservation of *Palabe* is most effectively pursued through educationally oriented, co-creative, and digitisation-enabled approaches that respect local agency while enhancing access and intergenerational engagement (Rivero et al., 2023). However, attempts to integrate *Palabe* into the formal education system have been lacking. If any efforts exist, they are limited to local initiatives or academic research without long-term policy implementation. This is unfortunate, given the potential of *Palabe* as a rich, locally-based teaching resource that carries significant educational value (Nurhelmi, 2019).

Along with the challenges in preserving *Palabe*, especially regarding its integration into the formal education system, there is significant potential to utilise *Palabe* in early childhood education (PAUD). Considering that this phase is a crucial stage in a child's character development, during which the formation of socio-emotional, linguistic, cognitive, and spiritual aspects accelerates significantly (Indhra et al., 2025). Based on Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 159 (2014), education at this stage emphasises the importance

of moral, religious, and social values that must be applied in the learning process. In this context, the integration of local wisdom, such as *Palabe*, can serve as a relevant teaching material rich in cultural values (Putranti, 2025; Widana et al., 2023). However, systematic adaptation of *Palabe* in early childhood literacy has not been adequately implemented yet. One of the main obstacles faced is the complexity of the local language used in *Palabe*, which tends to be difficult for children aged 5–6 years to understand. In addition, the long narrative structure in *Palabe* stories requires higher cognitive abilities (Indhra et al., 2025), while children in the pre-operational stage of development, according to Piaget's theory, are still at a limited stage of development. Nevertheless, this gap should not be a reason to ignore the potential of *Palabe*. On the contrary, it highlights the need for a creative pedagogical approach and adequate documentation to tailor the form and content of *Palabe* to suit the educational needs of early childhood better (Putranti, 2025; Indhra et al., 2025; Suryaningsih et al., 2025).

Previous studies have explored the educational potential of folklore and storytelling in early childhood education, highlighting the value of narrative traditions in promoting language development, moral values, and cultural sensitivity. For instance, Suhardi et al. (2022) demonstrated that the use of local folklore in Indonesian language learning enhances students' reading interest and understanding of noble values, while Rahayu (2019) found that legends in literature learning can foster cultural empathy and awareness. Additionally, research by Dewi et al. (2025) has demonstrated that storytelling is an effective tool for language development in early childhood, reinforcing the notion that folklore can enhance young learners' language skills and cultural understanding. Despite these findings, existing literature generally focuses on folklore as a broad educational tool, without addressing specific adaptations for younger audiences. Moreover, while there is recognition of the educational potential of local narratives like *Palabe* from Jambi, no comprehensive study has focused on adapting *Palabe* into multimodal literacy formats tailored for children aged 5–6 years. This gap highlights the need for pedagogical strategies that incorporate *Palabe* into early childhood education, ensuring it becomes an accessible and meaningful resource for young learners.

While there is substantial research on the broader use of folklore in education, a notable gap remains in studies that systematically adapt local folklore, such as *Palabe*, into multimodal learning resources for early childhood education. Although studies by Fauzi et al. (2025) and Agustini et al. (2024) demonstrate the effectiveness of multimedia formats, including interactive narratives and e-books, in enhancing language and literacy skills, few works have specifically addressed how to adapt *Palabe* to such digital and multimodal platforms for young children. Furthermore, while existing research has emphasised the role of local cultural content in character education and language development (Afifah et al., 2023; Purnadewi & Widana, 2023), there is insufficient attention given to the pedagogical foundations necessary for integrating such content into formal early childhood curricula. Studies by Misnawati (2024) and Lumaauridlo et al. (2021) underscore the importance of curriculum management and teacher–parent collaboration in the success of educational initiatives. Therefore, this research addresses two key questions: (1) What educational values are embedded in *Palabe* folk tales? Moreover, (2) How can these stories be adapted into multimodal literacy formats suitable for children aged 5–6 years? Accordingly, the objectives are to identify the core values of *Palabe* and to design adaptation strategies that preserve cultural heritage while enriching early childhood character education.

Method

This study utilised a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach and content analysis to explore how *Palabe* folk tales can be adapted into multimodal literacy resources for early childhood education. The study was guided by Early Literacy theory, focusing on how oral

traditions, when adapted to simpler narrative forms and integrated with visual elements, can enhance young children's understanding and cultural engagement. A qualitative design was chosen because of its suitability in exploring complex cultural phenomena and deriving in-depth insights from textual and oral narratives (Tabroni et al., 2022; Wahyuningsih & Ulya, 2024). The description of the research stages is visualised in Image 1.

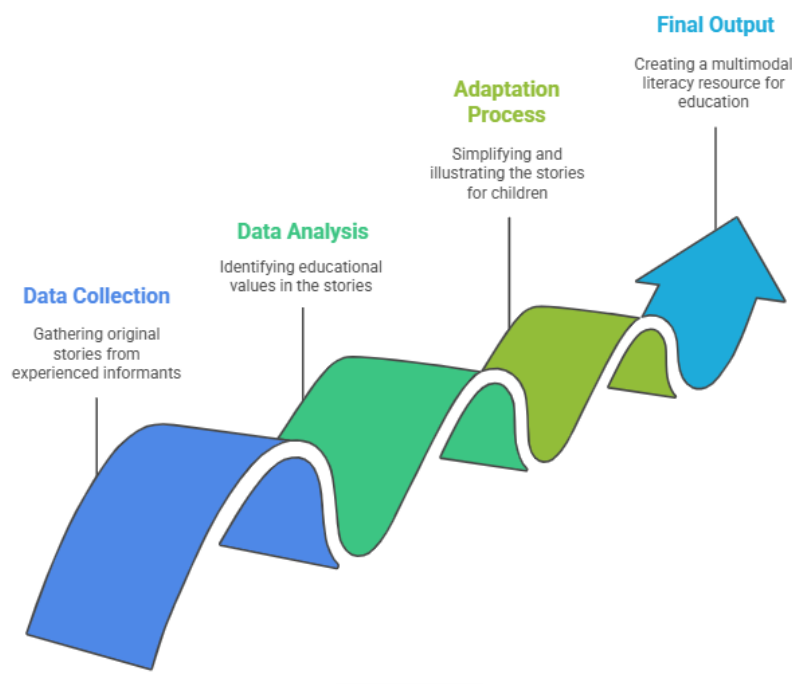


Image 1. Research Stages

The research consists of several stages, beginning with data collection through participatory observation, oral recordings, transcription, and documentation. Observation was conducted by directly participating in *Palabe* storytelling sessions with experienced informants. Oral recordings from these informants were then transcribed to produce authentic *Palabe* story texts. The data obtained consisted of original *Palabe* stories, which were then analysed to identify the educational values contained within them that are relevant to character development in early childhood. Furthermore, data analysis was carried out using a content analysis approach to identify and categorise the educational values in *Palabe* stories. This analysis aimed to evaluate the moral, social, cultural, and religious values contained in *Palabe* stories and how these values could support the character education of children aged 5–6 years. The results of this analysis formed the basis for adapting the story.

The next stage is the adaptation process. This process involves several important steps, including sentence simplification, repetition, and the integration of visual illustrations. Sentence simplification aims to facilitate understanding among young children, while repetition is added to reinforce understanding and help children remember the message being conveyed. Visual illustrations relevant to the local culture are also integrated to support a more comprehensive and engaging understanding of the story for children. The final output of this research is a multimodal literacy resource in the form of a *Palabe* story, adapted for early childhood. This adapted story not only serves as a means of educating children's character, but also plays a role in preserving local culture. This multimodal adaptation enables the *Palabe* story to remain relevant and practical as a learning material in the modern era, while also supporting the introduction of cultural values to the younger generation.

Participants and Research Subjects

The participants in this study were 12 informants from Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, comprising 7 males and 5 females. These participants were selected based on their extensive knowledge of the *Palabe* tradition and their direct involvement in narrating these stories. The informants were key figures in the Bungo community, often regarded as *Palabe* masters, with a deep cultural understanding of the oral tradition.

Sampling Technique and Sample Selection Criteria

The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling, aimed at selecting individuals who were most knowledgeable and involved in the *Palabe* oral tradition. The inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) experience in narrating *Palabe* folk tales, (2) active participation in community-based storytelling activities, and (3) a deep connection to the local culture and heritage. This sampling strategy ensured that the data collected were rich and reflective of authentic *Palabe* narratives.

Location and Duration of Research, and Validity of Results

Research was conducted in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, where *Palabe* is an integral part of the local culture. The study was conducted over six months, from January to June 2025, during which data were collected through participatory observation, oral recordings, and document reviews. To ensure the validity of the results, data triangulation was employed by combining multiple sources, including field observations, informant interviews, and secondary data from local archives. Additionally, peer debriefing with cultural experts was conducted to ensure that the interpretations of the *Palabe* narratives aligned with the cultural context.

Data Collection Techniques and Research Instruments

The data collection techniques employed in this study were designed to ensure the accuracy, depth, and authenticity of the information obtained from the *Palabe* oral tradition. First, the researchers conducted participatory observation, which involved directly participating in the *Palabe* storytelling process, thereby enabling a deep understanding of the accompanying social and cultural context. Second, all *Palabe* narratives were recorded orally to preserve the authenticity of the speech and capture the cultural nuances and intonation inherent in the original delivery. Subsequently, the recorded data were transcribed into the Bungo regional language and then translated into Indonesian using an approach that considered both literal and contextual aspects, ensuring that the meaning and cultural messages were conveyed accurately. Finally, additional documentation, including photographs, field notes, and digital archives, was collected to complement and strengthen the data, as well as to provide empirical evidence to support the analysis. Research instruments included interview guides for informants and observation checklists to ensure consistency in data collection. A grid for data coding was developed to categorise educational values in the *Palabe* stories.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data was analysed using the Antera model through a series of systematic and structured stages. The first stage involved identifying words, phrases, and sentences in the *Palabe* narrative that conveyed educational values, whether related to character, ethics, or social norms. Next, the values were classified into four main categories: religious, moral, social, and cultural, to facilitate further understanding and analysis of their contributions to character building in children (Nuraini & Prasetyo, 2024). The next stage involved evaluating the urgency of *Palabe* as children's literature, considering its relevance and ability to shape educational values in children.

Finally, an adaptation process is carried out to simplify complex narratives into versions that are easier for children to understand and more appealing to them, allowing the messages contained within to be conveyed effectively.

The validity of the data in this study is ensured through various validation techniques, including triangulation of sources involving informants, documents, and field observations. Additionally, peer debriefing and review by local cultural experts were conducted to ensure that the interpretations produced are not only scientifically valid but also aligned with the broader cultural context. This analysis draws on the theory of early literacy and language development proposed by Otto (2015), which posits that young children acquire language through social interaction, repetition, and multisensory stimulation (including both visual and auditory elements). This suggests that effective language learning is contextual, meaningful, and enjoyable, enabling children to develop their language skills optimally through direct experience and deep interaction with their surroundings.

The theory also proposes several important principles that serve to maximise the effectiveness of children's learning and understanding of the stories told. First, the use of language that is close to everyday life is a crucial aspect, as familiar language makes it easier for children to understand and identify with the story's context. Second, stories that contain repetition and rhythm contribute significantly to strengthening children's memory, as repetitive patterns provide opportunities to remember and internalise information more easily. Third, storytelling with emotional expression, accompanied by visual illustrations, also enriches children's experiences, allowing them to connect more emotionally with the story and facilitating their understanding of the message it conveys. Lastly, folk tales adapted for children should encourage active interaction, where children are encouraged to ask questions, make guesses, or even continue the story, thereby creating a dynamic and participatory learning environment.

Results and Discussion

This study examines in depth the educational values embedded in the *Palabe* story, encompassing moral, social, cultural, and religious values that can support the development of character and literacy skills in children aged 5-6 years. A description of the stages of identifying the educational values contained in the *Palabe* story and the adaptation process, along with an analysis of the results obtained, is presented in accordance with research method procedures.

Data collection

The research began with participant observation, in which the researcher accompanied an experienced narrator as they told the *Palabe* story to an audience of local community members, including children and adults. During the storytelling session, the interaction between the narrator and the audience provided in-depth insights into the social and cultural context surrounding the story. The varied audience reactions, such as laughter, silence, or questions after the story was finished, revealed how the Bungo community internalised the values within the story. These observations also showed how the narrator adapted his delivery style to suit the age and understanding of the audience, emphasising specific aspects, such as moral values and life lessons relevant to the local community.

Apart from observation, this study relies on oral recordings from 12 selected narrators in Bungo Regency. These recordings serve as the primary material for compiling the original text of the *Palabe* story, with particular attention to the fidelity of intonation and style of language used by the narrators. Intonation plays an important role in emphasising the dramatic parts of the story. At the same time, the language style, rich in metaphors and symbolism, reflects the local culture

that significantly influences the audience's understanding and emotional experience. Through these recordings, researchers can capture the cultural richness contained in the story and ensure that important verbal elements are preserved.

The *Palabe* stories obtained from the recordings were then transcribed into the Bungo language, which is used by the local community. This transcription process was crucial in preserving the distinctive style of spoken language, including expressions and intonations that enrich the meaning of the stories. Once the transcription was complete, the stories were translated into Indonesian. The primary challenge in this translation was to preserve the cultural nuances contained in the stories, even as they were being transposed into another language. Some words or phrases in the Bungo language have precise meanings within the local cultural context and are difficult to translate directly without losing their intended meaning. Therefore, careful adjustments were necessary to preserve the cultural richness of the stories.

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study employed data triangulation, which combines data from field observations, informant interviews, and additional documents. The triangulation results demonstrate a high degree of consistency among the three data sources, ensuring that the findings obtained are accurate and reliable. By combining various perspectives, this study provides a comprehensive picture of the *Palabe* story, its values, and the process of adapting the story for early childhood education purposes.

Data Analysis

A total of 23 *Palabe* were collected, resulting in 12 stories that contain educational values relevant to children's literature. These stories not only provide moral lessons and teachings but also reflect social, cultural, and religious values that can enrich the character development of children. Through meaningful plotlines and relatable characters, these stories encourage children to reflect on their roles in social life as well as their relationships with nature and God. Additionally, *Palabe* includes teachings related to ethics, which can foster positive attitudes and behaviours in children. Below is a detailed breakdown of the 12 original *Palabe* stories, which carry high educational value but require structural and linguistic adaptation to make them more accessible to children.

Dusun Sirih Sekapur

Original Synopsis: This story tells about an old woman who loved chewing betel leaves. She always carried them wherever she went. One day, she got lost in the forest and was found by a group of farmers. Because of her habit of chewing betel, the villagers later named the hamlet "*Sirih Sekapur*". Values: Cultural: The tradition of betel chewing as a symbol of hospitality and local wisdom. Social: Openness towards strangers. Moral: Consistency in good habits. Adaptation Needs: 1) Long sentences and episodic narrative structure, 2) Regional vocabulary, such as "sekapur" (a piece), needs to be explained, and 3) Visual illustrations are necessary to clarify context. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): Grandmother Siti loves chewing betel. Every day, she chews betel as usual. One night, she got lost in the forest. Fortunately, a farmer passing by came to her aid. Because grandmother always carried betel with her, they named the village "*Dusun Sirih Sekapur*". Until now, the villagers have continued to preserve the tradition of betel chewing.

Bujang Datun

Original Synopsis: Datun is a brave young man who battles a giant to save his village. He relies on wit and courage, rather than physical strength. Value: 1) Moral: Courage, intelligence, determination, 2) Religious: Trust and belief in God's will, 3) Social: Leadership and responsibility. Adaptation Needs: 1) Complex plot with many characters, 2) Long dialogues that

are difficult for children to understand, 3) Needs simplification of the plot and use of repetition. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): Young Datun was not afraid of the giant. He was clever and courageous. He set a trap made of rattan, and eventually, the giant was caught. All the villagers cheered, "Hooray! Young Datun is our hero!"

Bujang Killiang

Original Synopsis: This story is about a small rabbit (*Bujang Killiang*) who helps a dog trapped in the mud. They later became friends. Value: 1) Social: Friendship, helping each other, 2) Moral: Not judging by body size, 3) Language: Use of repeated complex sentences. Adaptation Needs: 1) Animal dialogues are too long, 2) Needs more emotional expressions (e.g., "Oh no! I'm stuck!"). Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): The Rabbit saw the dog trapped. "Wait, I'll help!" It pulled the dog's tail. Pull... pull... hooray! The dog is free! "Thank you, little friend!"

The Karaketu Bird

Original Synopsis: The Karaketu bird carries messages from one village to another. It is loyal and never disappoints. Value Content: 1) Moral: Honesty, responsibility, 2) Cultural: The role of birds as messengers. Adaptation Needs: 1) Use shorter, more easily understood sentences for children, 2) Avoid using complex or lengthy words and simplify dialogue, 3) Add repetition to reinforce children's understanding (e.g., repeating "A message from Mrs. Siti!"), 4) Add more explicit elements of excitement and trust (e.g., "Everyone trusts her because she always arrives on time."). Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): The Karaketu bird was always on time. It flew from one village to another. "A message from Mrs Siti!" it said. The bird never forgot. Everyone trusted it.

Mother Hen in the Bamboo Clump

Original Synopsis: A mother hen searches for her lost chicks in a bamboo clump. She does not give up. Value Content: 1) Moral: Perseverance, compassion, 2) Social: The role of mothers in the family. Adaptation Needs: 1) Repeating words or phrases to reinforce understanding, such as repeating the mother hen's call ("Cip cip cip!"), 2) Adding expressions like "The mother hen was very worried" to convey affection and perseverance, 3) A picture of a mother hen searching for her chicks in a bamboo clump, with a worried expression and finally joy when she finds them, 4) Avoids complexity in the story and focuses more on the compassionate search. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): "Cip cip cip!" calls the mother hen. Her chicks are missing! She searches everywhere. Finally, all the chicks are found. "Hooray! We are home!"

Lukah Icut

Original Synopsis: Lukah Icut is a diligent little child. He helps his mother every day. Value Content: 1) Moral: Diligence, discipline, caring, 2) Social: Independence from an early age. Adaptation Needs: 1) Selecting short and understandable sentences, such as 'Lukah Icut wakes up early' and 'I want to be a useful child!', 2) Adding repetitions of activities performed by Lukah Icut, such as 'He sweeps the house, fetches water, and cooks rice', 3) Bringing out positive expressions, such as adding sentences that show Lukah Icut's pride and enthusiasm, such as 'Lukah Icut is happy to help his mother', 4) Simplifying the storyline by reducing the complexity of the story, focusing on daily activities that show the child's perseverance and independence. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): Lukah Icut wakes up early. He sweeps the house, fetches water, and cooks rice. "I want to be a helpful child!"

Grandma Ale

Original Synopsis: Grandma Ale always gives food to the poor. Value Content: 1) Religious: Charity, practising faith, 2) Social: Social concern. Adaptation Needs: 1) Use simple sentences such as 'Grandma Ale has much rice' and 'Those who have, must share!', 2) Add repetition of words or sentences to reinforce the moral message, such as 'Grandma Ale always shares her rice

with others' to show the habit of sharing, 3) Adding expressions that show Grandma Ale's happiness when sharing, such as 'Grandma Ale is happy to see her neighbours happy', 4) Using dialogue or narration that emphasises the importance of sharing with others. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): Grandmother Ale has much rice. She shares it with the neighbours. "Those who have, must share!"

Grandma Black Shoulder

Original Synopsis: Grandma Black Shoulder has a black shoulder from sunburn. She continues to work hard. Value Content: 1) Moral: Hard work, resilience, 2) Social: The dignity of farmers. Adaptation Needs: 1) Use simple and positive language, such as 'Grandma Black Shoulder harvests rice' and the phrase 'I am strong!', 2) Add repetition of sentences such as 'Grandma works hard, even though the sun is hot', 3) Add motivational elements, such as 'Grandma feels proud of her hard work', 4) Simplify the storyline where the story focuses on Grandma's spirit and hard work without adding complex details, so that children can more easily understand the values being conveyed. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): Grandmother Black Shoulder harvests rice. The sun is scorching, but she does not give up. "I am strong!"

Old Man Tengka

Original Synopsis: The wise old man always gives advice. Value Content: 1) Moral: Wisdom, respect for elders, 2) Culture: The role of elders as advisors. Adaptation Needs: 1) Use direct and straightforward language, such as "Old Man Tengka sits under a tree" and "Honesty is important!", 2) Add repetition to reinforce the message, such as "Listen to my advice, children. Honesty is important!", 3) Adding sentences that show the old man's love and concern, such as "The old man wants the children always to do good", 4) Emphasising moral values, where the focus is on moral messages about honesty and wisdom, in a style that is easy for children to understand. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): Old Man Tengka sits under a tree. "Children, listen to my advice. Honesty is important!"

Puti Bungsu and the Giant Ghost

Original Synopsis: Puti Bungsu bravely faces a giant ghost to save her younger sibling. Value Content: 1) Moral: Courage, affection, 2) Social: Sibling bond. Adaptation Needs: 1) Use short and clear sentences such as 'I am not afraid!' and 'Let go of my sister!', 2) Add repeated sentences or expressions of courage to emphasise the moral message, for example, 'Puti Bungsu is brave... Puti Bungsu is strong!', 3) Adding emotional expressions in the form of feelings, such as Puti Bungsu's tension or courage, so that the child reading can feel the character's emotions, 4) Focusing the storyline on courage and love for her sister, without adding complex or frightening details. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): "I'm not afraid!" said Puti Bungsu. She faces the giant ghost. "Let go of my sibling!" The ghost runs away.

Golden Horned Deer

Original Synopsis: The king searches for his beloved deer. He faces many obstacles and names the places he passes. Value Content: 1) Moral: Patience, perseverance, 2) Culture: Naming places based on events. Adaptation Needs: 1) Employing short sentences such as 'The King lost his golden deer' and 'Every place was given a name', 2) Adding repetitions of the names given to places by the King, such as 'Lubuk Mata Kucing, Batu Kerbau' to reinforce the plot and make the story easier to remember, 3) Adding elements of excitement when the deer is found, such as 'Finally, the deer was found, and the King was pleased!', 4) Focusing on the King's search and naming of places, avoiding overly complex details to make it easier for children to understand. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): The king lost his golden deer. He searched through forests, rivers, and mountains. Every place was named: Lubuk Mata Kucing, Batu Kerbau. Finally, the deer was found!

Lost in the Land of Fish

Original Synopsis: Bujang Bungsu gets lost in the land of fish. He is honest and patient, and eventually receives a reward. Value Content: 1) Moral: Honesty, patience, 2) Religious: Trust in God, 3) Social: Hard work. Adaptation Needs: 1) Using short sentences such as 'Bujang Bungsu got lost' and 'I did not steal it!', 2) Adding repetition to emphasise the values of honesty and patience, such as 'The fish helped him because Bujang Bungsu was honest', 3) Bringing out positive and emotional expressions by adding elements of gratitude and joy after Bujang Bungsu is given a reward, for example, 'Bujang Bungsu was very happy, "Thank God!"', 4) Simplifying the plot by focusing on the themes of honesty and work. Child Adaptation Version (Ages 5–6): Bujang Bungsu gets lost. The fish help him. "I didn't steal!" he says. Because of his honesty, he is given gold. "Thanks be to God!"

Adaptation Process

The *Palabe* stories, as discussed in the preceding section, underwent a comprehensive analysis, with a particular focus on sentence structure, vocabulary selection, and narrative progression. Each element was scrutinised to assess its appropriateness for children aged 5 to 6 years. The findings of this analysis indicated that the 12 *Palabe* stories required adaptation to better align with the cognitive and developmental capacities of young children. This adaptation process involved simplifying sentence structures, incorporating repetition and emotional expressions, utilising visual illustrations, and condensing the storyline. These modifications were made to enhance children's engagement with the story while considering their limited attention span and comprehension abilities at this developmental stage. Additionally, the adaptation sought to mitigate potential confusion arising from overly complex narratives, thereby ensuring that children could focus on the core message without feeling overwhelmed. This process also served to increase the story's appeal by integrating elements familiar to children's experiences, such as easily recognisable characters, settings, and themes. Furthermore, the adaptation aimed to foster a more enjoyable learning experience, thereby promoting the development of social and emotional skills in children through a narrative that is attuned to their specific cognitive and emotional needs.

Simplifying sentences

Simplifying sentences is a crucial step in adapting oral literature, such as *Palabe*, so that it can be understood by children aged 5–6 years. At this stage, children are developing iconic and symbolic language (Vogt, 2017). They begin to understand symbols and abstract ideas, but still depend on clear, concrete, and direct sentences. The original *Palabe* stories often employ complex structures, including lengthy compound sentences, time and cause-effect explanations, and uncommon local vocabulary.

By simplifying sentences, the text is adjusted to the Indonesian Ministry of Education Regulation No. 137 (2014) on Early Childhood Curriculum Standards, especially in the language aspect: the ability of children to "make simple sentences with complete structure (subject–predicate–object)." Simplification also supports the language learning process, according to Otto (2015), who states that children learn grammar through consistent and straightforward input.

Example of an Adapted Story

Original Title: *Bujang Datun and the Giant*. Original Version (story excerpt): "Bujang Datun went to the forest, but he could not close his eyes because he was trying to find a way to escape from the Giant who wanted to eat him. He waited until night came, then secretly made a trap from rattan and thorns." Adapted Version (Simplified):

Bujang Datun went to the forest.
He could not sleep.
He was afraid of the Giant.
The Giant wanted to eat him!
Bujang Datun had an idea.
He made a trap.
From rattan.
From thorns.
In a big hole.
Hooray! The Giant fell!

The adaptation analysis of the *Palabe* stories as described in this section facilitates children's understanding of the basic components of sentences. In this process, complex words such as "escape" are substituted with simpler terms like "run" or are explicitly explained within the context to enhance clarity, as demonstrated in the phrase "The Giant wanted to eat him!" Moreover, complex connectors such as "but," "because," and "then" are omitted to reduce sentence complexity, thereby making the narrative more accessible and easier for children to follow. This simplification aligns with previous research, which shows that replacing complex vocabulary with more accessible equivalents can improve readability and comprehension in young readers (Javourey-Drevet et al., 2022). Furthermore, research by Vecchiato (2022) also emphasises the importance of using clear and straightforward language to help children understand stories more effectively.

Sentence simplification also includes syntactic simplification, which involves reducing the complexity of sentence structure, eliminating overly complex conjunctions, and shortening the length of compound sentences. This aims to facilitate comprehension and improve reading fluency. According to Brunato et al. (2022), appropriate syntactic transformations, such as shortening long sentences or simplifying complex sentence constructions, can help beginning readers follow the storyline more easily. In the context of Indonesian children's stories, these adjustments are also important to avoid confusion in understanding more complex sentence structures, which are often found in traditional stories that employ formal language or metaphors.

Previous research also suggests that syntactic simplification must be carried out carefully to avoid altering the primary narrative meaning. Dmitrieva et al. (2021) caution that while simplification can improve accessibility, there is a risk of factual errors if the simplification process is not carefully carried out. In the context of the *Palabe* story, the omission of specific elements or changes in sentence structure must be carefully examined to avoid damaging the core message or cultural values contained within the story. Therefore, this simplification process requires careful evaluation to maintain a balance between ease of understanding and preserving the essence of the story.

Adding repetition and emotional expressions

Repetition in children's texts can help children remember the sequence of a story, as well as allowing them to anticipate what will happen next, which in turn increases their confidence when retelling. Ilkhomjanovna (2025) demonstrates that repetition and rhythmic patterns serve as predictive structures, enabling children to understand and remember storylines. This finding supports research by Fusaroli et al. (2023), which found that repetition plays a crucial role in facilitating language comprehension, particularly in the context of shared reading, where repetition enables children to engage more actively with the text.

Repetition also plays a crucial role in early childhood language development, particularly in the acquisition of language skills. According to Li (2023), a study of speech repetition in Mandarin-speaking preschoolers found that children's ability to repeat the exact words or phrases can improve their vocabulary and mastery of sentence structure in early literacy. This suggests that repetition in *Palabe* stories can support vocabulary development and language skills in children aged 5–6 years without diminishing the meaning of the original story. In this context, repetition not only makes the story easier to understand but also activates memory processes, allowing children to remember every detail of the story being told.

Besides repetition, emotional expression is also an important element that must be present in children's stories. Emotional expressions such as "Ouch!", "Hooray!", "Scared!" and "Happy!" help children recognise their own feelings and those of others, which supports the development of empathy. Franck & Delage (2022) show that emotions stimulated through stories can strengthen language processing and narrative-related memory. By adding explicit emotional expressions to *Palabe* stories, such as expressions of fear or joy, children can more easily connect emotionally with the characters in the story, which enhances their understanding of the moral and social messages contained within.

Example of an Adapted Story

Original Title: *Hantu Denguik*. Original Version (story excerpt): “*When Dang Bujang went to work abroad. Puti Mayang broke her promise and married another man. Because she broke the vow, she turned into Hantu Denguik.*”

Adapted Version (with Repetition & Emotional Expressions):

Dang Bujang wanted to go away.

“I will go now!”

“Promise me, wait for me to come back!”

“Yes, Dang Bujang! I promise!”

But...

Puti Mayang forgot her promise.

She married another man.

Ouch!

She broke her promise!

The sky turned dark.

The wind blew strong.

Puti Mayang changed...

Into Hantu Denguik!

Wow! So scary!

However, Dang Bujang came.

“Don’t be afraid, Puti! I will help you!”

Hooray!

Puti Mayang became human again!

So happy!

The inclusion of emotional expressions also serves to guide children's empathetic responses to situations in the story. Kubro & Rachmasari (2025) and Baihaqi & Nisa (2023) suggest that incorporating emotional expressions into multimodal narratives can enhance language comprehension and social engagement, particularly among children with special needs. This also applies in the context of the *Palabe* story, where emotional expressions provide children with the opportunity to learn how to manage their own feelings and build social awareness through

interactions with the characters in the story. By consistently utilising emotional expressions, the *Palabe* story can be an effective tool for teaching social values and empathy to children.

In *Palabe* adaptations, the use of repetition and emotional expression must be done carefully to avoid changing the core meaning or cultural message contained within the story. [Devaraj et al. \(2022\)](#) caution that simplification and the addition of new elements must be rigorously evaluated to ensure that the added or simplified information does not diminish the essence of the original story. In the context of *Palabe*, the application of repetition and emotional expression must be carefully considered to maintain the depth of meaning and cultural values contained within the story.

Using visual illustrations

Visual illustrations are an essential part of children's literature because they support multi-sensory learning. Young children learn through all their senses, especially sight and hearing. Illustrations help children understand stories that they cannot fully read yet and also enrich their imagination and vocabulary. [Juita et al. \(2025\)](#) demonstrated that the use of illustrations in children's stories facilitates the introduction of early literacy concepts, including symbol recognition, understanding the relationship between sounds and letter shapes, and recognising one's own name. Illustrations provide visual support that makes it easier for children to understand stories they cannot yet fully read, while stimulating their imagination and enriching their vocabulary. According to [\(Otto, 2015\)](#), children's interaction with their social and visual environment can improve early reading and writing skills. Illustrations also help children connect words with pictures, strengthening early literacy concepts, such as recognising symbols, understanding the link between sounds and letter shapes, and reading their own names.

In the context of the *Palabe* story adaptation, visual illustrations play a crucial role in introducing the main characters, such as Bujang, Puti, Nenek, and Hantu, making it easier for children to identify and connect with the story's protagonists. [Putri et al. \(2025\)](#) explain that images depicting the main characters in the story can help build emotional connections with young readers, which is essential for retelling and processing the story. Furthermore, illustrations depicting local cultural settings, such as traditional houses, rivers, forests, and rice fields, help place the story in a geographical and cultural context relevant to young Indonesian readers. [Fusaroli et al. \(2023\)](#) support these findings by demonstrating how accurate illustrations enrich story comprehension by linking the narrative to a cultural environment familiar to children.

Furthermore, the representation of local culture in illustrations offers children opportunities to connect the narrative to their own cultural identity. Research conducted by [Somadayo et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasised that visual literacy, which integrates cultural symbols such as traditional objects, the surrounding environment, and local cultural practices, can enhance cultural understanding among young children. This is particularly relevant for the adaptation of the *Palabe* story, where local cultural elements must be visually integrated to introduce the cultural values embodied in the story. Illustrations depicting betel leaves, fish traps, and golden horns not only enrich the narrative but also provide young readers with insight into local traditions that are crucial for developing their cultural awareness.

Emotional expressions displayed through illustrations also play a significant role in helping children recognise and manage their feelings, which is crucial for developing empathy. [Franck & Delage \(2022\)](#) demonstrated that vivid facial expressions in illustrations, such as those of fear, joy, or surprise, can accelerate children's understanding of the emotional meaning of a story and facilitate empathetic responses to the characters. In the context of *Palabe*, illustrations that depict the main character's feelings through facial expressions will make it easier for children to

understand the emotional situations the character faces, allowing them to identify and relate these feelings to their own experiences. This also supports the development of children's emotional literacy, which is crucial for building social and emotional skills (Citrawan et al., 2024).

Finally, when designing visual illustrations for Palabe stories, it is essential to consider multimodal storytelling, which combines visual and audio elements to enrich the children's reading experience. (Kubro & Rachmasari, 2025) notes that the use of visual and audiovisual media can improve children's language comprehension and social engagement, especially for those who require additional support. Therefore, visual illustrations in *Palabe* should be consistently aligned with narrative and audio elements, such as explicit facial expressions and repeated dialogue patterns, to enhance children's active engagement in the story. This not only strengthens their language learning experience but also enriches their social skills and empathy through emotional connection to the story.

Shorten the storyline

The ideal duration for a story for children aged 5–6 years is 5–10 minutes. This aligns with the attention span of children at this age, which typically ranges from 5–15 minutes, depending on the level of engagement. Stories that are too long may cause children to become bored, lose focus, and fail to grasp the main message. Shortening the story involves selecting the core narrative and eliminating unnecessary elements. In the original *Palabe*, there are often long descriptions of journeys, repeated dialogues, or historical explanations that are not relevant for children. In the adaptation, only the elements that convey educational values (bravery, patience, and helping others) are retained. This also supports Russell (2024), who states that learning materials should align with children's needs and abilities. A short, clear, and meaningful story is easier for children to remember and understand.

Example of an Adapted Story (7 minutes)

Title: *The Deer with Golden Horns*. Original Version (story excerpt): *A long story about a King searching for his favorite deer, passing through many places, meeting many characters, and naming places based on events (Lubuk Mata Kucing, Batu Kerbau, etc).*

Adapted Version (7 Minutes):

A golden deer is missing!
The King is unfortunate.
"We must find it!"
The King and his soldiers go.
In the forest, they see a cat fall.
"Help the cat!"
Because they helped, the place is named: Cat's Eye Pool.
At the river, a buffalo is stuck in the mud.
"Pull together!"
Hooray! The buffalo is free!
This place is named Buffalo Rock.
Finally...
The golden deer is found!
Under a big tree.
The King is very happy!
"We found the deer because we were kind!"

The adaptation analysis of the *Palabe* story entails a strategic condensation of the original narrative, which exceeds 20 minutes, into a more concise 7-minute version better to

accommodate the limited attention span of young children. In this adaptation process, three episodes were specifically selected, those involving the cat, the buffalo, and the discovery of the deer, each following a consistent narrative framework: a problem is introduced, followed by the provision of assistance, and concluded with the naming of a location or object central to the story. This clear and systematic structure facilitates the comprehension of the storyline by young listeners, while also aiding in the identification of the moral message embedded within the narrative. The moral lesson, "Kindness brings fortune," is explicitly emphasised at the conclusion of the story to reinforce the intended ethical value. Furthermore, the shortened duration aligns with the optimal time frame for storytime sessions in early childhood education, ensuring that children remain actively engaged without experiencing distraction (Rahayu, 2023). This adaptation ensures that the core cultural and moral elements of the original story are preserved while making it developmentally appropriate for young audiences (Anto et al., 2024).

The results described illustrate how this research makes a novel contribution to the preservation of oral cultural heritage, particularly *Palabe*, by adapting it into a multimodal literacy format suitable for early childhood. The novelty of this research lies in its innovative approach that incorporates local cultural values into children's character education, as well as the use of multimedia, such as visual illustrations and repetition, to support children's understanding of the story. Furthermore, this research fills a gap in the existing literature, which generally has not addressed specific adaptations of local folktales, such as *Palabe*, into forms more accessible to the younger generation. Therefore, this research not only enriches early childhood literacy but also plays a role in cultural preservation through relevant and enjoyable education. Its impact, both theoretically and practically, is very significant in the context of developing culture-based education. Theoretically, this research enriches the concept of multimodal literacy by demonstrating how local folktales can be adapted to enhance children's understanding and engagement. From a practical perspective, this research presents opportunities for integrating folktales into early childhood education curricula, thereby not only preserving local culture but also fostering its development.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the *Palabe* folktales of the Bungo community have significant educational potential, particularly in supporting character development in early childhood. Through the identification and adaptation of 12 *Palabe* stories, we discovered the moral, social, cultural, and religious values contained within them, which can support the formation of positive character traits in children, such as patience, cooperation, sincerity, perseverance, and faith in God. These values are highly relevant to the goals of character education, which is expected to shape the personalities of children in early childhood.

The process of adapting *Palabe* stories into a multimodal literacy format significantly contributes to bridging the gap between oral tradition and children's developmental needs. During the adaptation process, the stories were simplified by using more easily understood sentence structures, adding repetition to reinforce comprehension, and incorporating visual illustrations to support children's engagement and understanding. This approach not only makes the stories more accessible but also ensures that the cultural values contained within the stories are maintained and can be conveyed in a way that is appropriate for children's cognitive and emotional development.

This research has made a significant contribution, particularly in preserving local cultural heritage through education relevant to the contemporary context. Adapting the *Palabe* story into a multimodal format not only enriches teaching materials in early childhood education but also

plays a strategic role in introducing and strengthening local cultural identity in the younger generation. This approach opens up opportunities to integrate cultural values into the childhood education curriculum, while simultaneously encouraging the development of literacy and emotional intelligence in children through enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences.

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