

## THE STRATEGY TO ACTIVATE THE MARGINAL ROLE OF FOLKTALES IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*This strategy is aimed at : 1) finding out the causes of the marginalization of the role of folktales from the world of children and 2) finding out a strategy to activate the marginalized role of folktales from the world of children. To achieve the aims the key informants were determined purposefully and the data were collected through interview both for aim (1) and aim (2). The data were analyzed qualitatively. The result of analysis showed that : 1) the causes of the marginalization of the folktale are : 1) internal factors, that is, a) the folktale is not intended solely for children ; b) the folktale is too long for children of elementary school level; c) the setting is not suitable with the world of children and d) similarly, the language and the imagination are beyond the children's range of comprehension, 2) external factors, that is, the folktales do not pay attention to the integration of pictures, colors, writing, and IT and education in the folktale is rather far from the environment. In the light of these findings it is recommended that folktale be crowned in curriculum and the decision makers need to adopt folktale in relation to mental revolution.*

Keyword : strategy to activate, folktale, character

### 1. Introduction

Recently, a girl was raped by 14 boys (Bali Post daily newspaper, April 21, 2016; some national news on TV). Kompas TV on April 28, 2016 reports that a girl of 19 has been harassed by 19 boys. Problems do not only occur among youths, but also among adults of various ages and positions, such as the case of "Papa minta Saham (Dad asks for a share" that caused Setya Novanto, Chairman of the Parliament of the Republic of Indonesia to be removed from his position. Another case that has caused a stir in this country is the dispute between Jakarta Local Parliament and Jakarta Governor, Basuki Cahaya Purnama (Ahok) about Rp 12. 1 trillion of money from an unclear source ( Metro TV news on February 15, 2015).

Such conditions are only a small part of illustrations about the problems faced by this country that indicate the building of a character that is oriented toward a hegemony of capitalism (Rasna, 2015: 1). Students in general are oriented more toward mastery of knowledge through the intelligence of the brain. Consequently, less attention is paid to character formation ( Rasna, 2014:48-49). Less attention paid to the character formation that is marked by an increasingly weaker good moral and behavior tie. This condition is seen when there is a multi-crisis and the increasingly more severe crisis felt is moral crisis that can shift values in the community social life (Suryatmi, 2014: 116). This condition calls for moral education, character education aimed at developing human ability to make decision about good and bad things, to maintain the good and to realize the good in daily living wholeheartedly (Suryatmi, 2011).

Humans have made decisions about good and bad things and have maintained the good and realized the good in daily living wholeheartedly for ages as evidenced by the life of people in the old days which were full of peace, comfort, and obedience to religious values and norms. This was among other things caused by the role played by folktale as a religious moral education media. The effect was felt deeply by all people of the past. They fully obeyed the teachings and even believed what was communicated by the folktale as the truth that needs to be respected and obeyed. If they did not obey it they believed that a disaster would happen. That is why when people wanted to communicate the teachings of values and beliefs to the people, they did it through a folktale. They used folktales because 1) folktales were entertaining media which had no competitors when it came to telling an entertaining story. 2) folktales, in addition to their function as an entertainment, were also used by the ruler to make the ruled obey him or her and this was done by the ruler by incorporating mythology which relates the ruler's power to the spiritual power; folktales have social values since they are often socialized in dances such as in *arja* ( Balinese opera with characters from Panji stories), in *sendratari* ( standing for art, drama and dance)and *wayang* (shadow play) such as Jaya Prana, Rare Angon, Pan Balang Tamak and even a Chinese folktale which is popular in the community entitled Sampik Ing Tai, both in a play and *geguritan* ( a story in the form of poems that can be sung) format; 3) if the folktale is presented in *wayang* format and the *dalang* (narrator and puppeteer of traditional shadow play) is able to present it well, the people will like the folktale very much. The same is true with *sendratari* and *arja*. Thus, folktale ranked first in the past because of a good collaboration between the story and the actors. Unfortunately, the golden age of the folktale has passed, despite of the fact that it contains pedagogical values that play an important role in character education.

### 2. Statements of Problems

In the light of the introduction above the problems of this research can be formulated as follows:

1) Why is the role of folktale marginalized in the world of children?

2) What strategy is used to activate the role of folktale that is being marginalized in the world of children?

### 3. Review of Related Literature

#### 3.1 Concept of Balinese folktale

Folktale is a traditional literature since it was a work born in a community which still adheres strongly to traditional culture (Dharmojo, 1998:21). As a traditional literature folktale is a story passed down from generation to generation orally and by words of mouth whose author is anonymous (Mustakim, 2005: 53). In line with Mustakim, Barbara states that "folktales have been defined as all forms of narrative, written or oral, which have come to be handed down through the years" (Barbara, 2010: 227). Folktale is a short narration in the form of prose whose author is anonymous and it has been spread from mouth to mouth (Abrahams, 1981:66-67). Based on this explanation, folklore is a story which is handed down orally from generation to generation and was born in the community which adheres to the traditional cultural values.

#### 2.3 Folktale as a character educational media

Bunanta (1998: 21) mentions that folk prose tale is one form of oral folklore. Oral folklore is purely oral. Beside oral folklore, there are more big groups, i.e. oral folklore and non-oral folklore. Other forms of oral folklore are folkspeech, traditional expressions, folk poems, and folk songs (Danandjaja, 1991: 21-22). Folktales are differentiated into myth, legend, and fairy tale. In terms of psychological perspective, myth and fairy tale are described as human behavioral model in which the tale gives meanings and life values (Bettelheim, 1977: 35). Folktale teaches children about human growth and human problems. In addition, it also offers some ways to overcome the problems (Bettelheim, 1977: 36 and Darson, 1972: 2-5).

Folktale is a literary form of primitive and nonliterate society. (Macculloch, 1985: 1) defines folktale as the oldest form of literature and romantic and imaginative literature, and non-written fiction of the past and primitive tribes in all parts of the world.

Researchers of (children) literary history mention that folktale is part of literary history, because folktale did not originate from children entertaining tale, but was a kind of the literary narration (Hurliman, 1968:21) folktale is also believed to be the basis of literature and art (Luthi, 1976:144; Wheeler, 2013).

A fairy tale does not describe something in detail. It relates an action that is not trapped by situation and character description (Luthi, 1976: 46-50). Indonesian fairy tale does not always consider two concepts in a story, i.e., aesthetic value and ethical value (Kawai, 1988: 175), for example, the story of Joko Kendil in which a beautiful but snobbish girl is willing to marry Joko Kendil who also has a beautiful and snobbish sister. The snobbishness of the beautiful girls presented in the story is the proof that the writer presents life that contrasted with the ethical value prevailing in the society. Here the writer (narrator) has to be able to explain to children which actions can be imitated and which are prohibited. In this case the writer shows the children the right way, The correct and appropriate way of telling the story will orient the children toward a good and useful choice. This will inspire them to emulate a good character (Nadeak, 1987: 7).

A study by Arnold Gesell in United States by interviewing children showed that children tend to prefer folktales at the age of seven. At this age children start to understand the contents of the story which are understood literally (Tucker, 1982: 69-70). Max Luthi (1976:21) a professor in European folktales who comes from Switzerland states that the ages between 5 - 10 are fairly tale ages. Beside the term fairy tale age, Hurliman (1968: 22) uses fairy - story age, although he does not agree with the presence of age limitation, since many indicate that children outside these ages (especially girls) like fairytales.

Andre Favat concludes that 1) children aged 5 - 10 like folktale. Interest in folktale starts at the ages below 6 and 8 and then weakens; 3) simultaneously with this weakening of interest, the children start liking realistic stories (Norton, 1983: 222).

Talking about children's age means that we cannot omit children's development. Children live in development, especially physical and mental development. Literature gives a high value to the process of children development (Tarigan, 1995: 9). Children's development consists of language development, which leads the children to oral and written literature and cognitive development, because literature triggers children's reasoning ability because language is closely related to children's reasoning. The more skillful the children use languages, the more systematic their reasoning will be. Cognition or reasoning refers to some processes such as 1) perception, 2) memory, 3) consideration, 4) reflection, and 5) insight (Mussen, Canger & Kagan, 1979 : 234: 235; Emia Dwicitawati, 2013, Suputra).

Children language development becomes important when we study folktales. This is because children's character formation can be done by developing their understanding and insights through folktales which are suitable with the nation's cultural roots. This is done because human spirit cannot be left empty and dry. The spirit must be filled (Nadeak, 1987: 5 -6). This filling is done through stories which use good and interesting language since their nature is teaching the truth (Kompas, 16 November 1993: 10) and Nadeak, 1987: 5-6). Thus, in character education through stories, the writer or the narrator has to really understand children (Dagmar, 1993:10). Thus, the character education that we do needs to use persuasive approach. Respecting children, respecting religions, and the stories should have good literature quality (Despinette, 1993: 10). Therefore, telling a story to children is not easy ( Marcus, 1984: 9) because children have difficulty to understand difficult story lines and abstract expressions. Children stories have to be adapted to their way of thinking (Nadeak, 1987: 6). It means children character educators should learn about children's environment, and their psychology ( Markus, 1984: 11; Hasanat, 2012; Rustaningsih 2012).

#### 4. Methods

This study was designed as a descriptive research by using informal conversation approach which is characterized as spontaneous, casual, guiding, appreciating, and giving respect to informants. The informants were divided into a) people who know and understand Balinese folktales and b) children of primary school age (6 - 12 years) in Singaraja and teachers who teach Balinese at primary schools in Singaraja. The selection of experts in folktales as key informants was done purposively based on expertise, experience and credibility. Since folktale experts to be selected as informants are limited in number, the informants were directly used as the sample. There were 12 primary school children aged 6 - 12 years old selected as the sample. Each age was represented by 2 children. There were 6 primary teachers who taught grades 1 - 6 selected as the sample, each grade was represented by one teacher.

To select data for problem (1) why Balinese folktales are marginalized from the children world, a list of questions was used as an interview guide. To select data for problem (2), i.e., what is the strategy to activate the role of folktales that are being marginalized from the world of children, an interview guide was used to interview the experts and the teachers. The data obtained from the primary school children were analyzed with the experts. The categorization was in accordance with similarity of data; 2) it was done by a computation and percentage to find out the factors that caused the folktales to be liked by the children; 3) the information about what elements are exactly possessed and not possessed by the folktales was found out; 4) by knowing the elements of the folktales liked and disliked, problem (1) was answered. As the problem (1) was solved, the main element of problem (2) was solved. data from the experts and the teachers are useful for the policy, for example, of inserting folktale materials into the curriculum.

#### 5. Results

##### 5.1 Reasons of the marginalization of Balinese folktales from the world of children

###### A. The folktale experts' analysis

According to experts of folktales such as Made Taro, Wayan Buda Gautama, Wayan Sudiana, Dewa Ketut Jareken, the marginalization of folktales from the world of children was caused by internal and external factors.

###### 1) Internal Factor

###### 1a) The folktales are not focused for the children.

Folktales for children readers up to the present are not found. What are present are only folktales. On the contrary, theoretically, folktales differentiated into children's stories, i.e, short stories which contain various things and especially about young people and novels that mostly tell about love, social criticism, including politics. This shows that the stories contain various themes and values. It is this variety that makes the stories less suitable for the condition of children and this has the impact on 1) difficulty in understanding the materials by children because the children's ability to think and the contents do not match, like the use of abstract words (paradise, gods,, supernatural power, spirit, jungle, meditation) which are cognitive psychologically cannot possibly be understood by children. This causes them to shift from like to dislike.

Folktales contain too many elements that are not contextual for children education, both in terms of setting in the jungle, on the mountain such such as in the folktale with the title: Lelipi Selem Bukit (black snake on the hill), the story called Cupak-Gerantang (in the jungle), which are obviously not contextual with the present condition for children of primary school level. Since at present, students do not study in the jungle, in a cave, or on a mountain, although today we still have traditional teaching such as in *pasraman*, but the setting is still not in the jungle, in a cave or on the mountain. Moreover, today children study at school. Thus, this obviously makes it difficult to understand it. Thus fewer and fewer children want the folktales. Based on this condition, it is very important that if the folktales are to be used in the teaching and learning process, they should be modified, or arranged especially for children. The aim is in order the stories are especially composed for educating children. The stories used for learning have to consider pedagogical aspects so that the stories can make them intelligent cognitively, skillful affectively and in psychomotor aspect. Therefore, the stories that are composed should consider pedagogical themes, settings (at school, not in a cave, in the jungle or on the mountain), the language should be suitable for the students' stage of development such as to learn how to sing, younger brothers and sisters, older brothers and sisters, mother, father. Good folktales to be used as learning materials are those that have been modified to match the needs of the children. It means that the contents originate from folktales, language, settings that are contextualized according to the needs.

###### 1.b) Folktales are not short

The stories used in the teaching and learning process, especially for lower graders at the primary school are not long, but short like Made Taro's model of story telling. Thus, if the folktales are to be used in the teaching and learning process, then they should be modified. Because they are long, they are not suitable with the children's condition like Satua (I Siap Selem (The Story of Black Hen), I Tuung Kuning (The Yellow Eggplant), I Lebu, I Belog (The Stupid Man), I Bawang-Kesuna (The Onion -Garlic).

###### 1c). The Setting of the Folktales are not Suitable with the World of Children

The setting used in the stories should be those that are close to their life, such as at home, in the neighborhood, not in the paradise, in a cave and on the mountain, in the river, in the bush in in the folktales.

###### 1d). The Language in the Folktales are Less Relevant to the Children

The language in the folktales have complex structures and the sentences are long so that it is less relevant to the children's language development. The example is as follows. Kecerita risedekan dewasa ring suraloka Ida Sang Hyang Siwa ngawentenang peparuman sareng para Dewa-Dewi (Cerita Sri Sedana, 2010:1).

1e). The Imagination in the Folktales are not / not yet in the range of the primary school children's mind.

At the beginning of the pre-school age, children start to develop understanding about relations between the part and the whole and comparison in terms of size. Children know that their small fingers are parts of their hands. He or she knows that his or her body is bigger than that of his or her younger brother or sister, but smaller than his or her father's. The concept of time is not yet perfect, thus he or she makes mistakes as: "Mother I have taken a bath tomorrow." His or her logical thinking ability is still limited. This has an effect on his or her behavior so that he or she is often annoying because of asking questions frequently but it is difficult to tell him or her not to do so. This is because he or she has not yet been able to understand something beyond his or her ability. In other words, his or her imagination is limited. With this condition, we have difficulties in understanding sentences like the one below.

*Di alas wayah ane kalintang madurgama tur serbi, liu kone sarwa kidang beburone ane nongos ditu (Katuturan I Kidang, 2013: 1).*

In the forest that is large, horrifying, many animals live there (Katuturan I Kidang, 2013: 1)..

## 2) External Factor

### 2a) Folktales Pay Less Attention to the Integration of Writing, Pictures and IT.

It is not too difficult to understand that folktales were composed in the past. The story that was composed in the past was suitable with the condition of technology at that time, the development of knowledge at that time, such as the development in psychology of learning, the development in IT which is very different between the past and the present. Thus it has a significant effect on the format and presentation of the folktales. The folktales were presented orally which has a different appeal from the one presented by integrating writing, pictures and IT. The folktales that are presented orally have a different appeal from the ones integrated by writing, pictures and IT. The orally presented folktales only rely on the skill of the narrator. If the narrator or the story teller has a less ability to enliven the atmosphere, this obviously will make the story that is being told less interesting. According to the experts in folktales, folktales are interesting, not only because they are mastered, but because the narrator's ability to inspire the characters of the story. The inspiration of the characters will help enliven the story. Even, not only the characters that have to be enlivened, but also the setting, including the atmosphere. This shows that folktales are left by the children because they are less suitable with the demand of the age, for example there is less integration between the writing and the pictures. Because the appeal of the story is determined, among other things, by the harmony in the integration of the writing and the pictures. This is because pictures as educational media are expected in the teaching and learning process to function in the following domains.

- a) Attention, that is, interesting and directing the attention of the students to concentrate in the contents of the lesson related to the visual meaning that goes with the learning material.
- b) Affective, that is, the visual media presents the degree of pleasure that the students enjoy, for example, the pictures that stir the students' emotion and attitude concerning social problems.
- c) Cognitive, that is, pictures enhance the students to understand and memorize the particular materials (Hasbah, 2016: 2006-2007).

### 2b) Use of Letters

Stories, especially for children under 5 years old, kindergarten children, and lower graders at primary schools (grades 1-3) are written by using bigger fonts than the standard size or are commonly used with the integration of colors that are interesting. In the folktales this is not found. This becomes one of the factors that is omitted in the folktales.

### 2c) Indonesian education becomes farther and farther from the environment

Indonesian education is said to get farther and farther from the environment, for example, because of less use of environment (family, nature, school, society and culture) as learning media. For example, parents take their children to school early in the morning, then, the parents work, they will come home in the afternoon and meet the children. Less use of natural environment since it is rare that the lesson uses natural environment as its media.

### 2d) Scarcity of Story Tellers

Today it can be said that almost in all places in the country, it is difficult to find people who are able to tell stories. This is the impact of the orientation in thinking from traditional to modern.

## B. Teacher's Analysis

The first grade teachers with direct experience in the field said that the folktale materials that are suitable for the primary school students are folktales that are adapted according to:

- a) children's cognitive development
- b) Children's language development
- c) Children's sociocultural environment (ethno-paedagogy)
- d) Natural and learning environment (eco-paedagogy)

Children's cognitive development is needed because the existing folktales are seen more in terms of the values that are to be communicated by the writers, without considering the consumers. Especially, when the consumers are children of the first grade

whose needs should be considered in their learning development. Learning will occur as the impact of good participation in the learning process. Children and the close people in their life including teachers and parents play an important role in learning.

The first graders according to J. Piaget are in the concrete preoperational stage that focus on direct experience, while the folktales do not consider for whom they are written. Hence, the folktales that will be used as learning materials have to be modified by the teacher before being used as a good learning material in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, cognitive level, the suitability in terms of time available in the teaching and learning process to facilitate children in their learning. Children like to know and identify objects around them, thus, educators need to facilitate simple and special directions to facilitate children well.

Based on the analysis of the teachers it can be found out that stories that are suitable to be taught to the first and second grades have the characteristics: 1) civilized as shown by indicators like politeness in speaking, behaving, socializing, faith to God, honesty, 2) simple language, 3) short, 4) contextual with the environment, 5) containing local wisdoms such as love, *Trihita Karana*, politeness, alertness, faith in God, respect, etc.

#### 4.1.2 The Strategy to Activate Folktales that are marginalized from the World of Children

Based on the results/ findings as in point 4.1.1, that is the reasons of the marginalization of the folktales from the world of children are: 1) internal factors, that is, (1) folktales do not focus on the use for children, (2) Use of letters, (3) the folktales are not short, (4) the settings are not suitable with children, (5) the language is less relevant, (6) imagination in the folktales is not in the range of children's thoughts. The external factors are : (1) folktales do not pay attention to the integration of writing, pictures, narrator, and IT, and 2) less attention to the use of letters with colors that motivate children to learn. Based on these, the strategy to activate the role of folktales that are marginalized has to be done by 1) reactivating the internal factors to motivate the children to love folktales, 2) activating external factors, including the narrators whose role has to be activated again, and 3) there has to be an adaptation of the technique of telling stories from traditional to modern. This adaptation can be realized as the telling of the stories in film with animation technique.

#### 4.2 Discussion

In the light of the findings, that is the marginalization of folktales is caused by two factors, internal and external such as: 1) folktales do not focus on being used for children like children stories. This condition shows that folktales are for public consumption. It means that they are not meant specially for children, but also for teenagers, adults and old people. Because the contents of the stories have educational values that are not important for children only, but for all, children, teenagers, adults and old people like the story *Leilipi Selem Bukit* (Black Snake on the Hill) that contain educational value of the environment.

The same can only be found in the story *I Siap Selem* (Black Hen) that contains *karma* value. It is not meant for children only, but for teenagers, adults, and old people. This is because the karma law education [presented in the story of *Siap Selem* describes that *Men Kuuk* walks while tiptoeing in order not to be heard and known by *I Siap Selem* to make it easier for her to take her action. But, as it is an evil deed, *Men Kuuk* has to receive the result of her deed, that is as soon as she arrives at the kitchen, the stone that protects *Si Gundul* she thinks *I Siap Selem*, then, she attacks it. She slides, her teeth fall, her mouth bleeds, crying out loud while complaining. All her children run to her, Mother, why do you cry? This is the value of *karma* in the story as the symbol that evil deeds will cause bad things, which is not written for children only, but for all people. Why can we say that? Since in it there is no indication that it is meant for children, like the use of colors which are interesting for children, pictures that support children's imagination, the use of children's vocabulary, or combination of all of those that are indicators of children-likeness. Not to mention the role of IT, which is completely absent. How can such story not be left or marginalized from the world of children. While stories from foreign countries are very vivid, interesting, both in terms of pictures, colors, language. In short, the world of children is fully occupied by them, such as in the film entitled *Ipin-Upin*, *Doraemon*, *Sponge box*, etc.

Other things that make them to be marginalized 1) the scarcity of folktales or the uneven distribution of folktales. It means that the public do not have them. It means even if one possesses them it is not yet sure whether one will read them, so how can we understand and tell them to children, while not possessing them means inability to read them, so that one cannot tell them. The reason is because one is busy so that has not got time to read them, 2) the scarcity of the story tellers, who become fewer and fewer from one generation to the next, 3) certain people who can tell stories hesitate to do it because it is regarded as out of fashion, and mocked while those who do not know are not motivated. The reason is very pragmatical, that is, they prioritize primary needs triggered by the increasing cost of life which is getting higher and higher and people become more and more competitive, 4) This condition occurs since the government attention to people who care about folktales, activists and people who are interested in maintaining Balinese is low, 5) the competition between folktales and foreign stories is very high and folktales are left far behind compared to foreign stories. As the consequence, folktales are marginalized, 6) the use of animation makes children pay more attention, comfortable, and dependent, while folktales are forgotten, untouched by technology, 7) the effect on parents is that they would rather buy games or films telling foreign stories for children. The reason is they can concentrate on their jobs, since their children become calm or do not disturb them. This becomes an option of the parents today. That is why the parents now are willing to spend millions of rupiah to buy play station, games and children stories in CD, etc. It means our children are now brought up in foreign cultures. Thus, do not blame our children, if they do not know their own culture, but well verse in foreign cultures, and do not be sad if folktales are marginalized from the world of children.

In relation to the condition that has been described above, the strategy to activate the role of folktales which are marginalized from the world of children 1) Bali local government needs to do the followings: a) to modify folktales according to the

demands and needs in child education, b) to multiply folktales that have been modified to be used as guidance, c) to distribute evenly the folktales to every regency/ city in Bali, d) the folktales that have been modified need to be improved to become child stories using IT in the form of animation technology, e) to enhance the role of Balinese reach out teachers assigned to villages by updating their knowledge about folktales that have been modified in terms of content and technique in relation to animation technology.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study produced the following conclusions:

1. The causes of the marginalization of folktales from the world of children are:

a) internal factors such as the fact that folktales are not focused on being used for children, b) folktales are not short so that they are not appropriate for children, c) the setting is not suitable for children, d) the language is not suitable/relevant with child development, e) the imagination in the folktales is not or not yet in the range of child's thought, 2) external factors, i.e., a) folktales do not pay attention to the integration of writing, pictures and IT, b) the use of letters in folktales is not relevant with child development and c) education in folktales is far from the environment.

2. The design of the strategy to activate the role of folktales which are marginalized from the world of children are : the role of the local government of Bali provincetha to 1) modify folktales to be suitable with the demands, needs of learning in the world of children, 2) to multiply folktales that have been modified to be used as guidance, 3) the modified folktales need to be presented with animation technology, 4) the distribution of folktales to regencies /cities in Bali evenly and 5) enhancing the role of educators to optimize the advantages of folktales.

### 5.2 Suggestion

Based on conclusion 5.1 above, it is suggested that

1) Folktales which are rich with character education have to be crowned in the curriculum of Balinese and Hindu Religion as learning material.

2) Folktales do not only have ethical and religious values, but also have the value of environmental preservation. Thus, they can be inserted in environmental preservation material.

3) The policy makers such as principals, heads of agencies, executive and legislative need to adopt folktales very much not for the sake of students' interest at school, but also for the preservation of environment and mental revolution. The role of folktales will become more felt if they are created in the format which integrates art and technology, with the hope that they have a greater role, that is, not only to teach, but also to entertain, so that the philosophy of learning while enjoying an entertainment and educating while entertaining can work well.

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