



Revitalization of Palabe Bungo in Character Education and Early Childhood Communication Development through an Ethnopedagogical Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of palabe bungo in character education and the development of early childhood communication skills through an ethnopedagogical approach. Using a naturalistic qualitative method, this study was conducted in the context of the Bungo community with a direct observation approach, in-depth interviews, and documentation of Palabe practices in early childhood education environments. The data collected were in the form of oral narratives, social interactions, and children's verbal and non-verbal expressions when participating in the delivery of Palabe. The results of the study indicate that Palabe Bungo plays a role as a means of internalizing character values such as honesty, cooperation, tolerance, and respect for others through interactive and contextual storytelling. In addition, Palabe also contributes to developing children's communication skills by encouraging active participation in conversations, enriching vocabulary, and training the ability to listen and express ideas verbally. This study recommends the integration of Palabe in the early childhood education curriculum as an effort to preserve local culture as well as an effective learning strategy in strengthening children's character and communication from an early age.

Keywords: Bungou Palace; Character Education; Early Childhood Communication; Local Wisdom

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INTRODUCTION

Character education and communication skills development are two fundamental aspects in early childhood education. According effective communication plays an important role in shaping children's character from an early age (Jumaera et al., 2024; Lanawaang & Mesra, 2024; Mokoginta & Mokwena, 2024). Therefore, choosing the right learning methods and media is key to instilling character values in children (Elvia et al., 2023; Trisahid et al., 2024). One of the media that has great potential in character education and communication is oral tradition, such as Palabe Bungo, which is rich in moral, social, and cultural values (Anshori et al., 2023; Casillano, 2024; Gestiada et al., 2025). However, the exploration of educational values in Palabe Bungo is still limited, especially in the context of its use as teaching materials.

Folklore, also known as folklore, is an inseparable part of a nation's cultural identity. In Indonesia, which has extraordinary cultural richness, there are various folktales that have been passed down from generation to generation (Sanjaya et al., 2021; Imtiyaaza et al., 2024; Qiu et al., 2025). These stories are not only for entertainment, but also become the main means of disseminating moral and cultural values. According to Musrifah (2021) folklore reflects the mindset and outlook on life of the people who created it. Therefore, folklore can be an effective tool in shaping children's character and social identity, especially if delivered using interactive and contextual methods (Squire, 2009; Safian & Quayum, 2019; Christidamayani & Kristanto, 2020).

In Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, Palabe Bungo is a form of oral folklore that still survives today. Palabe Bungo has unique characteristics compared to other folklore, because in its delivery it can be in the form of speech or song (Riberio, 2023; Aizinsh et al., 2023; Khoviriza et al., 2024;). Some are delivered by one speaker, and some are done in a chain with different speakers (Valentini et al., 2018; Hussain et al., 2020; Cadiz et al., 2024). This uniqueness makes Palabe Bungo an interesting medium in the learning process, because it can involve children directly in the process of communication and social interaction (Sirait, 2023; Kapçiu et al., 2024; Badak, 2024; Eshiev et al., 2025). Thus, Palabe Bungo has great potential to be developed as a teaching material in early childhood education.

As a traditional cultural product, Palabe Bungo has similarities with other folklore in Indonesia. Folklore is generally born from a society that is not yet familiar with writing, depicts a collective culture, and contains elements of imagination, humor, and moral messages (Uyuni & Af'idah, 2023; Kapçiu et al., 2024; Spaska et al., 2025). In addition emphasized that folklore is part of a group's culture that is passed down from generation to generation in various forms, both orally, semi-verbally, and non-verbally (Socrates et al., 2023; Worachak et al., 2023; Farikhah, 2017). In this case, Palabe Bungo is included in the category of oral folklore that contains character education values and can be used in early childhood learning.

A number of previous studies have highlighted the role of folklore in character education and children's communication. For example stated that oral folklore functions as a medium of communication, aesthetic expression, and ritual for a society (Al-Harbi, 2019; Kee et al., 2024; Kwon, 2025). Divides folklore into three main categories, namely oral folklore, semi-verbal folklore, and non-verbal folklore (Sirait & Ratti, 2024; Eshiev et al., 2025). Various forms of folklore have been used in education as a tool to convey social and cultural values (Okui et al., 2021; Zakaria et al., 2021; ZhengKang et al., 2025). However, research that specifically discusses Palabe Bungo in the context of character education and early childhood communication development is still very limited, so a more in-depth study is needed.

This study has novelty in several aspects. First, this study not only examines Palabe Bungo as a cultural heritage, but also analyzes how this tradition can be integrated into early childhood learning through an ethnopedagogical approach. Second, this study explores how Palabe Bungo can be used as a medium to improve children's communication skills through verbal and non-verbal interactions. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the development of a more contextual and applicable local culture-based learning model (Moreno et al., 2021; Moghadas; 2023; Pralta, 2025).

Although this study offers a new perspective on the use of Palabe Bungo in early childhood education, there are several limitations that need to be considered. This study uses a naturalistic qualitative method, which means that the findings are descriptive and cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. In addition, the implementation of Palabe Bungo in early childhood education learning requires adaptation to suit the curriculum and needs of today's children. Therefore, further research is needed to test the effectiveness of the Palabe Bungo-based learning model in various educational environments.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a naturalistic approach. The naturalistic qualitative method can help researchers understand phenomena naturally, without external intervention or manipulation (Jang & Kim, 2016; Hsu et al., 2024; Mathias & Standal, 2025). The naturalistic approach is used to reveal the values of character education and early childhood communication development in the Palabe Bungo oral tradition. Thus, this study focuses on an in-depth exploration of how Palabe Bungo is maintained, taught, and utilized in the learning process in early childhood environments.

This research was conducted in eight sub-districts in Bungo Regency, namely Batin Tiga, Tanah Sepenggal, Tanah Sepenggal Lintas, Jujuhan, Limbur Lubuk Mengkuang, Muko-Muko Batin Tujuh, Rantau Pandan, and Batin Tiga Ulu. The selection of this location was based on the existence of informants who still master Palabe Bungo. However, access to several areas, such as Limbur Lubuk Mengkuang and Batin Tiga Ulu, is quite difficult due to inadequate infrastructure conditions and remote locations. Initially, this research was planned to cover all sub-districts in Bungo Regency to obtain broader data. However, after conducting a search, only in the eight sub-districts were informants still found who were able to use Palabe. Most of the informants were elderly people, even one of the main informants, a community leader from Candi Hamlet, Tanah Sepenggal District.

The subjects in this study consisted of early childhood education students, teachers, and community leaders who still had skills in using palabe (Suri & Chandra, 2022). Early childhood education students were chosen as the main subjects to observe how they respond and interact with Palabe Bungo. Teachers were involved to understand the extent to which this tradition can be applied in learning in early childhood education, while community leaders, especially those who still master Palabe, became the main informants in understanding the form, structure, and educational values contained in this tradition.

The instruments used in this study include observation and interviews. Observations were conducted on early childhood education students to see how they interact and understand the Palabe Bungo story in the context of learning. Interviews were conducted in depth with teachers and community leaders to explore information about the Palabe delivery method, the character values contained therein, and the challenges in maintaining this tradition amidst the development of the times (Erkkilä et al., 2023; Lobo, 2023). In addition, according to the regulation of the Minister of Education Number 137 of 2014, aspects of early childhood language development include receiving language, expressing language, and literacy. The following are aspects of communication development for the observation sheet for students.

Table 1. Aspects of Early Childhood Development

Language Aspects	Description
a. Language Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to understand and carry out several instructions simultaneously - Able to repeat sentences with more complex structures - Understand and obey the rules in a game - Enjoy and appreciate the contents of the reading
b. Language Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to provide answers to more complex questions - Group images based on similar sounds - Communicate verbally, have a growing vocabulary, and recognize symbols as preparation for reading, writing, and counting - Compose simple sentences with a complete structure (subject-predicate-adverb) - Have more vocabulary to convey ideas to others - Able to continue parts of a story or fairy tale that have been heard - Show understanding of concepts in story books

c. Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize familiar letter symbols - Know the initial sound of the names of objects around you - Group images that have similar sounds or initial letters - Understand the relationship between sounds and letter shapes - Able to read and write his own name - Understand the meaning of words in a story
d. Language Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrate an attitude of tolerance in communicating - Express feelings according to the situation experienced (happy, sad, excited, etc.) - Understand and apply manners and politeness - Act according to applicable social and cultural norms

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (McIntire-Mills et al., 2023; Noviana et al., 2023; Nurdauletova, 2024).

1. Data reduction was conducted by filtering relevant information from the results of interviews and observations to obtain the essence of character education values in Palabe Bungo.
2. Data presentation was conducted in the form of a narrative description that describes how Palabe Bungo is applied in early childhood education and how this tradition contributes to the development of children's communication.
3. Drawing conclusions was conducted by identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings that emerged from the data that had been collected, so that a deep understanding of the relevance of Palabe Bungo in the formation of character and communication in early childhood could be obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Palabe, is part of Jambi Malay Literature originating from Bungo Regency, which is believed to be rich in religious, moral, social, and cultural educational values that are important to be transmitted to the younger generation as the successors of the nation's civilization. This study will examine these values in depth. Researchers assume that Secure attachment is an indicator of good love, and children with secure attachment grow into individuals who are more sociable, independent, empathetic, emotionally mature, and have better problem-solving abilities (Tovar-Gálvez, 2023). Palabe Bungo conveys a deep moral message about life, one of which is that true love requires sacrifice. The story of the young man Pagaruyung and Puti Juli shows that love is not only about happiness, but also struggle and sincerity. They are willing to work hard to mine gold in order to realize their shared dreams, which teaches that true love must be fought for with effort and perseverance (Al-Harbi, 2019; Gill et al., 2025).

In addition, this story also emphasizes that obedience to parents is a form of affection. The young man Pagaruyung obeys his mother's message as a sign of respect and devotion. This teaches that parental blessings and prayers play an important role in a person's life journey. More than that, the Palabe Bungo story teaches about appreciating destiny and sincerity in life. The incident of the ring that magically flew to Puti Juli's finger symbolizes that destiny often comes in unexpected ways. Although destiny does not always go according to plan, sincerity in accepting it is the key to inner peace.

Finally, this story instills the values of harmony and social ties in society. When a disaster befell Puti Juli and the Pagaruyung youth, the surrounding community showed solidarity by working together to help them. This reflects the importance of togetherness and social concern in building a harmonious life. Thus, Palabe Bungo is not just a story, but also a cultural heritage that is full of life values that should be used as a guideline.

Regarding palabe bungo, the researcher conducted direct interviews with community leaders from Candi Hamlet, Tanah Sepenggal District, the results of the interviews that have been analyzed can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Results of interviews with community leaders

Questions	Answer
What do you think about Palabe Bungo in shaping the character of early childhood?	Palabe Bungo is a local wisdom that is very good for instilling moral values such as honesty, cooperation, and respect for others. Through the stories and games carried out in this tradition, children learn about manners and ethics in communicating.
How can Palabe Bungo improve children's communication skills?	Children involved in Palabe Bungo interact a lot with peers and adults. They learn to express opinions, listen to others, and understand the rules of good communication, such as speaking politely and respecting the opinions of others.
What are your expectations for the use of Palabe Bungo in children's character education?	We hope that Palabe Bungo will continue to be preserved and become part of the early childhood education curriculum. That way, children will not only have strong characters, but also better communication skills and a love for their local culture.

From the perspective of community leaders, Palabe Bungo is considered a form of local wisdom that can instill moral values in children from an early age. Through stories and games that are part of this tradition, children learn about manners, ethics in communication, and social values such as cooperation and respect for others. In addition, Palabe Bungo is also a means for children to practice expressing opinions and understanding effective communication in their social environment.

The origin stories in Palabe function as a link between history and mythology, explaining the background of a place or important event in society. The tales often contain fantastic elements with animal figures or mythological creatures, which are used to convey moral lessons indirectly (Yang et al., 2021; Jamaluddin, 2022). Meanwhile, the advice in Palabe contains advice or life teachings that play a role in guiding individual behavior to comply with applicable social norms and values.

Symbolism in Palabe also plays an important role in conveying messages. The symbols and metaphors used in the story allow listeners to understand and absorb moral values more deeply. Thus, Palabe not only functions as entertainment, but also as an effective educational media in instilling ethics, social values, and cultural identity of the Bungo community.

States that language development aims for children to be able to express their thoughts in simple language, communicate effectively, and have a good interest in language (Gill et al., 2025; Govender & Juggernath, 2025). Explains that children's language and thoughts are initially different, but along with mental development, both are united through social interaction (Squire, 2009). Language skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are interrelated. Thus, children's language skills are a tool for conveying opinions, expressing ideas, and expressing desires and rejections, so that they can develop optimally. Early childhood language development goes through three stages: enactive (interaction with real objects), iconic (developing symbols with objects), and symbolic (developing concepts) (Muangasame & Tan, 2023). Divides language development into four stages: prelinguistic (0-1 years) with the meraban stage, linguistic (1-2 years) with the holaphrastic and phrase stages, grammar development (3-5 years), and grammar approaching adulthood (6-8 years) (Valentini et al., 2018).

This conclusion confirms that early childhood language development takes place through natural and gradual stages from birth to the age of six. In this process, appropriate stimulation is needed so that children's language skills develop optimally. Parents and educators have an important role in providing good stimulation, both through daily communication and interesting learning that is in accordance with the

child's developmental stage. Thus, children's language development can run well, helping them communicate, think, and interact effectively in their social environment.

Kindergarten-aged children are in the expressive language development phase, where they can already express desires, rejections, and opinions through spoken language. Spoken language is their main means of communication (Muangasame & Tan, 2023), which develops through interaction with the environment. Three main aspects of children's language development include vocabulary, syntax, and semantics. Children's vocabulary increases along with their experiences interacting, while syntax develops through examples of language they hear, even though they do not yet understand grammar formally. Semantics, namely the use of words according to their meaning, also begins to form. Thus, language-rich interactions are very important in supporting the development of early childhood communication. Therefore, researchers conducted observations of early school children regarding their communication development, based on this, the results of the observations can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Observation results

Development Aspect	Child Development Indicators	Student Observations	The Role of Palabe Bungo
Language	Understanding Language	Children begin to understand multiple commands simultaneously and are able to repeat more complex sentences.	Through the traditional game Palabe Bungo, children learn to follow the rules of the game and understand instructions from peers and companions.
	Expressing Language	Children answer more complex questions and have a wider vocabulary.	When playing Palabe Bungo, children are invited to interact and construct simple sentences to communicate with their friends.
	Literacy	Children begin to recognize letter symbols and understand the relationship between sounds and letter shapes.	Palabe Bungo is used as an educational medium by adding elements of letters and words to the game, helping children recognize the initial letters of the names of objects used in the game.
Development Aspect Language	Tolerance	Children demonstrate mutual respect in games and share roles.	Palabe Bungo teaches the values of togetherness, cooperation, and respecting each other's roles in the group.
	Emotional Expression	Children are able to express emotions according to the conditions of the game.	In the game, children learn to control their emotions, both when winning and losing.
	Manners and Politeness	Children are increasingly familiar with manners and politeness when interacting with friends and companions.	Through interactions in Palabe Bungo, children are taught how to speak well, wait their turn, and respect the opinions of friends.

Table 2 of the observation results above shows the role of Palabe Bungo in developing various aspects of child development, especially in language and social tolerance. In terms of language comprehension, children begin to understand and convey more complex commands and are able to repeat

more complicated words or sentences. In addition, the literacy aspect develops through the introduction of letter symbols and the relationship between sounds and letter shapes. In terms of tolerance, children show mutual respect in games and share roles. Emotionally, they learn to express feelings according to the situation in the game and control emotions when winning or losing. In terms of politeness, interactions in Palabe Bungo teach children to speak well, wait their turn, and respect the opinions of friends. Overall, Palabe Bungo plays a role as a means of cultural education that not only improves children's language skills but also instills character values such as cooperation, respect, and communication skills.

After the observation results were conducted, the researcher continued to interview one of the early childhood education teachers so that the research results were more in-depth. The following interview results that have been analyzed and reduced have been presented in table 4 below

Table 4. Results of teacher interviews

Questions	Answer
How do you see the role of Palabe Bungo in learning at school?	Palabe Bungo can be used as an interesting culture-based learning method. Through the folklore and traditional games in it, children can more easily understand moral and social concepts.
Does Palabe Bungo contribute to children's language development?	Yes, children who are involved in this activity tend to have a richer vocabulary, because they are used to hearing and repeating sentences in stories and games. In addition, they also learn to understand more complex language symbols and expressions.
What are the challenges in integrating Palabe Bungo in early childhood education?	The main challenge is the lack of understanding from some teachers regarding the importance of local wisdom in education. In addition, the influence of technology also makes children more interested in gadgets than traditional games. Therefore, efforts are needed to adapt Palabe Bungo so that it remains relevant to the present era.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of early childhood education teachers, Palabe Bungo can be used as an interesting and effective culture-based learning method. Teachers see that children who are often involved in this activity tend to have a wider vocabulary, better speaking skills, and a deeper understanding of language symbols and concepts. However, in its implementation, there are several challenges faced, such as the lack of understanding from some teachers regarding the importance of local wisdom in education, as well as the influence of technology that makes children more interested in gadgets than traditional games.

The results of this study indicate that Palabe Bungo has a significant impact on shaping the character of early childhood and improving their communication skills. Through naturalistic qualitative research methods, it was found that children involved in Palabe Bungo activities showed better language development, such as the ability to understand and express language more complexly. In addition, character values such as tolerance, cooperation, and politeness also develop naturally through social interactions in games and stories that are conveyed.

This study provides new insights into the importance of local wisdom in the world of education, especially in the formation of character and communication skills of early childhood (Kapçiu et al., 2024; Qiu et al., 2025). The implementation of Palabe Bungo in an educational environment can create a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere, so that children can develop communication skills optimally. In addition, this study also encourages educators and stakeholders to pay more attention to culture-based learning methods that can support children's holistic development.

This study strengthens the results of previous studies that emphasize the importance of traditional games in improving the language and social skills of early childhood (Safian & Quayum, 2019). Several previous studies have shown that games based on local culture can help children understand communication concepts more deeply, as well as instill strong moral values (Yang et al., 2021; Ngao & Sang, 2024). However, this study highlights more specific aspects of Palabe Bungo as an effective educational medium, by providing an in-depth analysis of its impact on children's character and communication skills.

The novelty of this study lies in the in-depth exploration of Palabe Bungo as a learning method based on local wisdom that has not been widely studied in the context of early childhood education. This study not only shows its effectiveness in improving children's communication skills, but also proposes a strategy for integrating Palabe Bungo into the formal education curriculum. Thus, this study opens up new opportunities for the development of innovative learning methods based on local culture.

This study has several limitations, including the limited sample coverage in certain areas and limitations in measuring the long-term impact of Palabe Bungo on child development. Therefore, further research is needed to expand the scope of this study by involving more participants from various regions (Niiku et al., 2023). In addition, the main recommendation of this study is the need for training for educators so that they can implement Palabe Bungo effectively in the learning process, as well as support from the government and the community to preserve traditional games as part of early childhood character education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the naturalistic qualitative research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that Palabe Bungo has a significant role in character education and the development of early childhood communication skills. Through a local wisdom-based approach, children not only gain a deep understanding of moral and social values, but also experience an increase in natural language skills in the context of social interaction. The implementation of this research can be realized by integrating Palabe Bungo into the early childhood education curriculum as an interactive learning method that prioritizes local culture. In addition, training for educators on the application of Palabe Bungo in the learning process also needs to be carried out so that its benefits can be felt optimally. Thus, Palabe Bungo can be one of the educational strategies that supports the strengthening of children's character and communication skills from an early age in a more contextual and meaningful environment.

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