



## Transforming Literacy and Social Skills through Storytelling in a Community-Based Setting

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### Abstract

The research question of this study evaluates the impact that the storytelling tradition at Rumah Baca Rambutan has on children concerning literacy, emotions, social skills, and creativity. Through the qualitative case study, the study discovers that storytelling enhanced the children's reading appreciation, language, and literacy learning as well as culture. Emotional literacy interconnection was also achieved through the use of storytelling since learners developed empathy and social relationships with characters. In addition, storytelling can act as main constructors of narratives what would support their cognitive flexibility and problem solving. Notably, the study enjoys the use of storytelling in the passing of cultural values of a certain group besides enhancing the sense of belonging in children. The study contributes to the knowledge that informal narrative intervention enhancing formal and community learning can promote literacy, well-being, and cultural identity when implemented in low and rural context, such as Indonesia. Implications of these outcomes for reform in education include the need to embrace cultural production approaches that are educationally relevant so as to facilitate consideration of children's developmental experiences.

## Introduction

Child literacy is a child's ability to read, write and communicate effectively. Children's literacy is important for their cognitive, social and emotional development. The concept of literacy in children is an ongoing process that is very dynamic, starting from the emergence of curiosity, critical thinking skills, oral language, to the ability to read and write (Nurgiyantoro, 2018). These abilities follow the times to be used in the learning process throughout their lives. Developing children's literacy in library science is an effort to improve children's ability to read, write, speak, and understand information (Fadlan, 2019). In this digital era, literacy is becoming increasingly important because children are faced with a variety of information circulating on the internet and social media (Umar & Batubara, 2023; Awaliyah et al., 2021).

However, let alone literacy skills, Indonesian children's interest in reading is still relatively low (Handayani et al., 2024). According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BSP), the total population of Indonesia in 2023 was 278.69 million. Unfortunately, this is inversely proportional to the amount of interest in reading. Reporting from UNESCO data, only 0.001% of Indonesian people have an interest in reading. One way to develop children's literacy is by reading stories. Storytelling is a long-standing tradition that has proven effective in developing children's literacy. Storytelling can help children to develop their interest in reading, storytelling skills and vocabulary (Zein & Puspita, 2021). The benefits of developing children's literacy include (Rukiyah, 2018) The first is improving the ability to read, write, speak, and understand information, the next is increasing interest in reading and learning, the third is

developing creativity and imagination, the fourth is building character and positive values, and the last is preparing children for a better future.

In order to improve community literacy, many reading communities have been established in each province, and North Sumatra is no exception. Rumah Baca Rambutan is one of the reading houses that is active in developing children's literacy in Medan, North Sumatra. Rumah Baca Rambutan has various programs to develop children's literacy, one of which is the storytelling tradition class. The storytelling tradition class activity is an activity created by volunteers at Rambutan Reading House and makes children the main object. The children chosen are the children from Rumah Baca Rambutan. The specific target of this storytelling tradition class activity is to develop children's interest in reading and their literacy skills. Traditional storytelling classes are classes that use folktales, legends and fairy tales to develop children's literacy (Muammar et al., 2020). This class usually involves activities such as reading stories, storytelling, discussing stories and creating creative works based on stories. Storytelling traditions are messages that are passed on from one generation to the next or across generations. It is conveyed through speech, oratory, songs, rhymes, folklore, advice and ballads. Jan Vansina defines oral tradition as testimony passed down orally from generation to generation (Jumiatih, 2020).

The storytelling tradition is an important part of library science and has several meanings including (Novrani & Caturwulandari, 2021) First, preserving local culture and wisdom, for example, folklore, legends, and fairy tales contain cultural values and local wisdom that have been passed down from generation to generation. Libraries, as custodians of knowledge, play an important role in preserving the storytelling tradition for future generations, second; increasing interest in reading such as providing interesting and interactive stories that can attract children and adults to read books. Libraries provide various types of stories in various formats, such as storybooks, audio books, and videos, to increase people's interest in reading, third; developing Creativity and Imagination in this case storytelling can help develop children's creativity and imagination (Diana et al., 2023). The library organizes various storytelling programs, such as storytelling, storytime, and shadow puppet shows, to help children develop these skills. Fourth, building community, storytelling can be a means to build community and strengthen relationships between community members. Libraries organize storytelling programs, such as book clubs and family storytime, to build a community of readers and story lovers, fifth; improving literacy in the storytelling tradition can help improve people's literacy, both literacy and information literacy. Libraries provide a variety of information resources and educational programs to improve community literacy (Harris, 2003; Lai, 2011).

Example of Implementation of Storytelling Tradition in the Library (Dwiyanti, 2020): 1) Storytelling: Librarians tell interesting stories to children using puppets, props and different voices; 2) Storytime: Librarians read storybooks to children in an interactive and engaging way; 3) Shadow Puppet Show: A shadow puppet show that tells traditional stories; 4) Book Club: Book discussions about interesting stories and themes; 5) Family Storytime: A shared storytelling program involving parents and children. The storytelling tradition is one way to increase interest in reading, develop creativity, build community and improve literacy. Libraries have an important role in preserving and developing storytelling traditions in society (Azizah, 2021).

## **Literature Review**

Children's literacy can be defined as the ability to access, evaluate and integrate information from various sources. Literacy includes the ability to read, write, think critically, and use media

to express thoughts and adapt to the environment (Kurniawati, 2020). Children's literacy is the ability of children to understand and use information obtained through reading, writing, speaking, listening and seeing. Children's literacy is not only about the ability to read and write, but also about the ability to: process information, understand complex ideas, think critically, communicate effectively, create new knowledge. Children's literacy is important because it can help children to: develop language skills, increase knowledge and insight, expand imagination and creativity, shape character, prepare for the future. The concept of children's literacy continues to evolve along with the times. In the past, children's literacy was only defined as the ability to read and write. However, nowadays children's literacy is interpreted more broadly, namely the ability to understand and use information from various sources (Yulia & Eliza, 2021; Livingstone, 2004).

### ***Components of Child Literacy***

Children's literacy consists of several components, namely: first, reading; the ability to understand written information (Karima & Kurniawati, 2020). Includes the ability to identify words and understand their meaning, understand the structure of sentences and paragraphs, identify main ideas and details in a reading, analyze and evaluate the information read, secondly writing; the ability to communicate information in writing clearly. This includes the ability to develop ideas and put them into writing, use appropriate sentence and paragraph structure, choose the right words to convey meaning, pay attention to spelling, punctuation, and grammar, thirdly speaking; the ability to communicate information orally in a clear effective and structured manner. Includes the ability to organize ideas and convey them fluently, use appropriate intonation, volume, and body language, adapt language to the situation and audience, listen to and understand information conveyed by others. Fourth, listening; The ability to understand information heard from others. It includes the ability to focus attention on the speaker, identify the main ideas and details in the talk, understand the speaker's intent and purpose, ask questions to clarify information. Fifth, seeing: the ability to understand information seen from a variety of sources, such as pictures, videos and graphics. It includes the ability to identify objects and understand their meaning, understand the relationship between objects in an image or video, draw conclusions from the information seen, critically evaluate the information seen (Dwiyanti, 2020).

### ***The Importance of Child Literacy in the Digital Age***

In this digital era, children's literacy is increasingly important as children have easy access to information from the internet and social media. Children need to have the ability to sort out true and false information and to use information responsibly. In this digital era, children's literacy is becoming increasingly important for the following reasons: First, children in the digital age have easy access to information through the internet and social media. This provides many benefits, such as: expanding children's knowledge and horizons, helping children to learn and understand new things, preparing children for a future full of information. However, this easy access to information also has some risks, such as: children can be exposed to false or misleading information, children can have difficulty sorting out true and false information, children can be addicted to the internet and social media, the second is the need to communicate effectively. In the digital age, the ability to communicate effectively is becoming increasingly important. Children need to have the ability to write and speak clearly and structurally, understand and use communication technology well, communicate with others from different backgrounds and cultures, children's literacy can help children to develop effective communication skills. The third is preparation for the future. In the future, literacy skills will become increasingly important for various jobs and activities. Children who have good literacy

will find it easier to get a good job, participate in society actively, achieve success in life (Lindriany et al., 2022).

Therefore, it is important for parents, educators and other relevant parties to raise awareness about the importance of children's literacy in the digital era, develop effective and targeted literacy programs, provide appropriate support to children in their learning process, help children to become successful learners and be able to face various challenges in the future. Here are some tips to improve children's literacy in the digital era: first, read books to children from an early age, second, take children to libraries and bookstores, third, provide interesting books for children at home, fourth, encourage children to read and write, fifth, talk to children about what they read, sixth, watch educational movies and videos with children, seventh, play educational games with children, eighth, limit children's time using the internet and social media, ninth, teach children how to find correct and incorrect information, and finally, teach children how to use communication technology properly. By making these efforts, we can help children to become literate individuals who are able to face various challenges in the digital era (Resterina et al., 2023).

### ***Developing Children's Literacy***

In a digital era full of information, children's literacy is the main key to opening the gates of knowledge and a bright future. Literacy is not only about the ability to read and write, but also about understanding, analyzing and using information wisely. Developing children's literacy is an ongoing process that starts early. Parents, educators and communities have an important role to play in fostering children's love for literacy and equipping them with the skills needed to be successful learners. Children's literacy can be developed in many ways, viz: reading books to children, taking children to the library, providing interesting books for children, encouraging children to read and write, talking to children about what they read, watching educational movies and videos with children, playing educational games with children (Hidayati, 2020).

### ***Definition of Storytelling Tradition***

The tradition of storytelling is a cultural heritage that has long been practiced in various parts of the world. In Indonesia, the storytelling tradition is known by various names, such as storytelling, bertutur, and wayang kulit. This tradition is not only about entertainment, but also has an important role in developing children's literacy. Storytelling is the act of telling stories to others, either orally or in writing. This tradition is usually carried out from generation to generation and has high cultural and social values. In the storytelling tradition, storytellers usually use various techniques to attract listeners' attention, such as voice intonation, facial expressions, and body movements (Laela et al., 2019). The storytelling tradition has many benefits for children's literacy development, including: first, increasing interest in reading; the storytelling tradition can foster children's love for books and stories. When listening to stories, children are swept up in imagination and want to know more about the world being told. This can encourage them to read books and explore other stories. The second is to develop language skills; the storytelling tradition helps children to develop their language skills. While listening to stories, children learn new vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and how to use language effectively. This can improve their ability to communicate orally and in writing. The third is to enhance imagination and creativity; the tradition of storytelling takes children into a world of fantasy and imagination. They learn to imagine things, create their own characters and stories, and express their ideas creatively. The fourth is building knowledge and insight; Storytelling can be a source of knowledge and insight for children. Through stories, they can learn about different cultures, history, moral values, and other general knowledge. And the last is to strengthen emotional bonds; Storytelling is a special moment that can strengthen

emotional bonds between parents and children. When listening to stories together, children feel loved, valued and safe. This builds confidence and closeness between parents and children. The storytelling tradition is an effective and fun way to develop children's literacy. By practicing the storytelling tradition regularly, we can help children to become successful and future-ready learners (Sufiati & Paramita, 2021).

### **Previous Research**

Research related to the effectiveness of storytelling tradition classes in developing children's literacy has been conducted by several authors. Among them, an article written by Luluk Ulfa Hasanah and Novi Andari with the title "Oral Tradition as a Medium for Learning Social and Cultural Values of Society" in 2021. The purpose of this study is to explore in depth the oral traditions in Becirongengor village as well as the social and cultural values contained in these oral traditions so that the values in question can provide learning for the local community. The qualitative method with an ethnographic approach was the chosen research design (Hasanah & Andari, 2021).

Furthermore, an article written by Rani Gemelly Uswatun Hasannah with the title "The Effectiveness of the Storytelling Method in Improving Preschoolers' Early Literacy Skills" in 2021. This study aims to determine whether there is effectiveness in the storytelling method to improve preschoolers' early literacy skills. The research method used in this research is experimental with a quantitative approach. The sample of this study was 30 students of ABA 1 Kindergarten. This study used a one group pre-test post-test design. Statistical analysis technique using paired simple T-Test (Hasannah, 2019).

Also, an article written by Ainul Adawiyah, Fanni Hanifa, Aida Diana Astarie with the title "The Effectiveness of the Storytelling Method on Speaking Ability in Early Childhood at TKIT Edelweis Serang in 2022" in 2023. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling method on speaking ability in early childhood at TKIT EDELWEIS Serang in 2022". This type of research is quasi-experimental research (Quasi Experiment Design). The design used is One Group Pre-test and Post-test Design. The selected sampling technique used was Nonprobability Sampling with Total Sampling technique. Analysis of statistical test results using Wilcoxon (Adawiyah et al., 2023).

Based on the introduction and previous research described above, the authors are interested in conducting research on the effectiveness of storytelling tradition classes in developing children's literacy at Rumah Baca Rambutan. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the storytelling tradition class is effective in developing children's literacy at Rumah Baca Rambutan.

### **Methods**

This research uses a qualitative case study design to assess the benefits of storytelling cultures to promote children's literacy in Rumah Baca Rambutan. The reason for selecting the qualitative approach was to get comprehensive understanding of the experiences of participants in the process, their behaviors and the social storytelling cultural practices. Case study strategy is most appropriate for the current study since it helps to focus on one community-based literacy programme that is implemented in actual social context, which corresponds to Webster & Mertova (2007) advice to enhance examination of current developments within their context.

### **Research Design**

The following explains the research design of this study in detail with a view to understanding the aspect of the little learners' literacy development in the storytelling tradition classes at

Rumah Baca Rambutan. Case study was considered suitable for the study due to its ability to provide detailed and comprehensive description of occurrences in real life. Webster & Mertova (2007) states that case study methods are relevant where gaining an understanding of the 'how' and 'why' pertaining to social phenomena in given context is required, which is also the research objective of this study to investigate the impact of storytelling on literacy in a community setting.

The study was designed to gather naturally occurrent data that would not only attend to the quantity and quality of literacy learning, but also would attend to the process through which these outcomes emerged in relation to the children's interactions with both each other and with the storytellers and the storytelling material. It aimed at investigating a general concept of how the storytelling process is used to establish a number of forms of literacy such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, cultural competencies, as well as thinking creatively.

The sample targeted in this study was chosen through purposive sampling technique to make sure that only children who have been attending storytelling classes for at least six months were selected. This was an important decision in order to ascertain the influence of long-term participation in the tradition of storytelling. The eligibility criteria were deliberately set in a way that selected children who had earlier develop some level of literacy, that is read and write at a minimum level. In this way the study was able to track the literacy gains of children progressing from an early literacy level, as the children in this study interacted with the stories over time.

With purposive sampling also, the writer ensured that participants of different ages and levels of literacy were selected in order to get an even better view of the effect of storytelling on children of different age and literacy experience. Furthermore, the qualitative approach provided a research flexibility whereby the researcher modified the focus of the study while conducting the research due to emerging insights in qualitative case studies (Baskarada, 2014).

### **Research Instruments**

There are three main data gathering tools that are used in this study, which, all serve to offer a diverse approach to understanding the dynamism of the storytelling tradition to literacy.

In-depth interviews were conducted with two key groups: its what the children who participated in the storytelling tradition classes, and the manager of Rumah Baca Rambutan wanted. When interviewing the children, the questions were partly fixed as to enable the researcher have a uniform set of questions while at the same time introducing some flexibility in case new subjects came up. All interviews asked general questions to allow the children to openly express their experiences within the storytelling classes, their impressions as to how these experiences impacted their reading and writing talents and their desire to attend more literacy sessions. Choosing this semi-structured format also allowed children to recount their experiences in their own voice and words making the data more genuine.

The questions asked in the interviews with the manager of Rumah Baca Rambutan were about goals and the working insights of the storytelling classes. Thus, the researcher tried to find out from the manager of the programme what the programme's goals and objectives were, in light of these observed literacy practices. These interviews were invaluable with regard to understanding the instructional approach of the storytelling courses and the overall purposes of the classes in the given community concerning literacy.

This method was important more especially in the recording of the interactions between the storytellers and the children during class storytelling. Working as an active participant the researcher had a unique position that allowed to recognize the children's reaction, their interest

and behavior while listening to stories. A special feature of the participatory observation is noted in qualitative research studies where the observer becomes involved as part of the subject of observation in order to understand the social context of behaviors in more depth, and to learn certain behaviors (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011).

While conducting these sessions, the researcher observed the children's physical responses, the extent to which they understood the various narratives being read to them, or their engagement and responses during discussions after the books had been read to them. Particular focus was made in how the children engaged with the storytelling material, if they posed any questions, made comments or how they linked stories to own life experiences. Dependency on the storytelling was also captured by the researcher as how narrative shaped group processes especially, peer related activities and learning arrangement.

The final technique of data collection was aimed at collecting sundry documents concerning the storytelling tradition classes. This comprised of storytelling training, stories applied in the classes, and written documentation of events in the classroom. It would be impossible to overstate these materials' usefulness for comparing interview data and observation data. For example, the storybooks allowed understanding how difficult it was to facilitate the further discussion based on the language used in the books children read and the themes. The class activity notes reflected the patterns of the children's participation and the types of the stories that were most successful in terms of engaging the children. This way, the researcher was able to validate the results and provide richer analysis of the effects of the storytelling classes on children's literacy.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data was collected systematically in the next six months, as the researcher believed that period was long enough to study the effects of storytin tradition on literacy learning. The once a week meetings provided the frequencies that were needed for follow up with the participants and the storytelling. By organizing the data collection process over a long period, the researcher could monitor other dynamics such as changes in behaviour, literacy skills and engagement profiles, which would help in filling a longitudinal gap regarding the usefulness of the storytelling tradition. All the interviews were systematically planned and carried out when the clients were in the final stages of the six months duration. This was a conscious one as it would enable the participants to share their experiences at different this was because the participants were able to recount their experiences throughout their participation in the storytelling classes. Every child was interviewed for 45-60 minutes to allow them to express themselves concerning the disclosure questions without being pressured. The use of recording and transcribing the interviews exactly as they were conducted avoided data loss and presented the children's views as closely as possible.

When performing the participatory observation, the researcher wrote detailed notes next to the behavior and actions of children and the storytellers; remarkable reactions of the participants were also recorded here. Besides, the researcher kept a reflexive journal in order to keep track of self-observations and possible prejudices during this investigation.

### **Data Analysis**

The second form of analysis was thematic analysis, and to conduct the analysis, the Stanton & Welsh (2012) six-step guide was followed because of its appreciated systematic and versatile approach when looking for patterns in text data. To employ an appreciative stance in analysis, the researcher listened and re-listened to the interviews and notes, as well as perused

documentation. It was during this stage that the researcher made his/her first impressions and possible themes.

After coding, the researcher started assembling like codes into what could form potential themes. For instance, we found subthemes under the main theme that included the role of story telling in expansion of vocabulary list, creative thinking and the promotion of reading culture. To achieve this, themes that emerged during the study were checked to conform to the data as presented. The second criterion was that the themes were well-defined and did not overlap and thus complementarily made a holistic contribution to understanding of the research questions. As will be observed later, each of the themes was clearly defined and given what can be viewed as a descriptive name to aid in the organisation of the results' presentation. At the end of the themes, connections were made to the research questions and literature review for relevance and academic validity. The last part was distilling the results in a writing format where the themes were well articulated, and evidenced by participant narratives.

To maintain the validity of the findings, data triangulation was conducted through comparing interviews, observations and documents collected. This prevented the results from being drawn from one source since they combine information from different sources. The data was also subjected to member checking to ensure that the interpretations made in this research are accurate after the participants reviewed and confirmed the information.

## Results and Discussion

The ensuing outcomes of this research concern the existing storytelling practices of Rumah Baca Rambutan with child's literacy acquisition as the primary interest which includes, interest in reading, language and literacy learning, cultural values and virtue.

### Increased Interest in Reading

Different storytelling methods improved children's reading motivation at Rumah Baca Rambutan. Get the picture? Changing the type of the reader from a non-attentive one to an active and engaged one was quite easy when children transformed the way they read into an activity they really love.

*"Before I came here, I didn't care much about reading. But now, I look forward to it because the stories are so fun. I even read them to my younger siblings."* (Participant 4)

This quote shows clearly how a particular aspect of storytelling changed the way the child has to read, pointing directly at the fact that before the storytelling the child did not see reading as an interesting and worthwhile processes. This view supports Rukiyah (2018), who stressed that, using stories, especially in culturally meaningful ones, people develop affection toward the material and understand it in the most comprehensible way for students. Critical here is the socio-emotionally driven process of production and consumption, and not just a straightforward function of text processing; what is at work here is not only reading, but reading as a social activity. When children read stories to siblings, a potential effect is that of the ripple effect, where others within the family read too, and to the community at large.

The deeper point is that with storytelling the students are told what is fun, and this is an aspect that the conventional approach to learning rarely succeeds in reaching. In the perspective where children are experiencing themselves as the narrators, the child also becomes a reader but more importantly the writer and proclaimer of a particular culture and knowledge of storytelling. This place literacy as functionally empowering where, reading is a way through which children can have power and control over their lives at home and in the community. This was also in

line with the findings of Hasanah & Andari (2021) where storytelling that is shared tolerated by the children made them see themselves as part of a grand narrative and thus learn literacy within their identity.

*"I never used to read outside school. Now I can't wait to come to Rumah Baca because the stories are different, and I get to choose my own books."* (Participant 6)

This quote is brightly exemplifies freedom of choice, which is an important aspect of reading activity, but can be limited in the framework of educational process. The storytelling classes promote an internal locus of control since children are free to choose their books and learn from stories which interest them, and this is the major components of sustaining long-term literacy engagement. Zein & Puspita (2021) maintain that when children have some control over what they read, they master the course and are more comfortable with their studies; they are more genuine with the readings since they own the processes. This pattern of result is also in contrast with most traditional models of literacy which assume that children are mere passive recipients of texts selected by the authorities.

What comes out of this space is what will be referred to here as the reader agency, that is the extent to which young Children have the ability to guide their reading experiences by choosing what to read. This autonomy, shared with the course of telling stories in a group, overturns individual, utilitarian approach to literacy into a collective and enabling one. According to Vygotsky [Social Constructivism, 1978], learning, especially when it come to literacy, is most effective when it is in a social context where the learner is afforded an active learning role. Therefore, the storytelling tradition at Rumah Baca is not just tell the children to read; it is, in fact, redesigning literacy of the society.

### **Learning Language and Literacy**

The tradition of storytelling produced important positive changes in the children's reading, writing, and speaking abilities – with the results suggesting that literacy is a function of interactive, oral-processing instruction.

*"I didn't know the meaning of many words before, but after hearing the stories, I can use new words in my own writing. I even wrote my own story about an animal like the ones in the stories."* (Participant 2)

This shows how learning occurred when story telling was contextualized. Unlike memorization of specific vocabulary list, which are usual practice in most schools, storytelling makes it possible for children to be presented with meaningful contexts in which the new words are usually used. The way that the child applies the learned words in their own writing shows that storytelling builds both the receptive and the productive skills which ensures that Abidin et al. (2018) who postulates that language development is most effective when is entwined with cultural and emotional significance. Writing on own after storytelling exposure also substantiate the Input Hypothesis by Gu (2003) stating that words are learnt most appropriately when learner comes across a text which is slightly beyond his/her proficiency level.

The critical aspect here is that, the storytelling, as extended to be a means of initiating linguistic input for, necessarily brings in an element of creativity and cognitive participation. Decoding the tradition involved in the self-authored stories, that will erases the barrier typically set between the learner and the creator. In general children are no longer just receiving linguistic knowledge but are the agents of language in cultural sense actively constructing a narrative. This reinforces the notion that literacy is a holistic skill set involving not only decoding and comprehension but also creativity and self-expression.

*"When we talk about the stories, I feel more comfortable speaking in front of others because I know what the story is about. It's easier to talk about things I understand."*  
(Participant 5)

This quote symbolizes the connection in between understanding and speaking and writing, especially the fact that speech and listening should be considered as parts of literacy. Gaining of confidence in speaking in front of other people is evident from the child in the tradition of storytelling as a dialogical process where children act as active discussants in processing the stories. The result of this study confirms dialogism theory developed by Smith & Semin (2004) that postulates that meaning is achieved socially through interaction and not through cognitive processes.

The general format of sharing stories in groups entails a socially mediated context which requires children to acquire the thinking and talking skills to share their stories. This is especially so in Indonesia, as conventional tutored classroom learning tends to be based on rote learning. However, the present kind of system established for enriching the storytelling enhances the willingness and activity for the child to enhance the holistic aspect of the language. In this sense, storytelling acts as a catalyst for oral fluency, providing a safe, structured environment for children to practice and refine their speaking skills.

*"Now I understand stories better, and I can explain what happens in the story and what it means. Before, I couldn't remember all the details."* (Participant 8)

This, therefore, shows the advancement in the understanding of the narratives and memory performance, which are essential aspects for literacy and generally excluded from the most used teaching and learning methods. The fact that through storytelling there prevails the order of repeated construction that is manifested through variations of the same story with regards to the difference or repetition of the particularities, is helpful in the retention or memory and comprehension. This relates to Saputra & Ilmi (2022), who opined that storytelling assists in children improving on the structure of the narrative therefore reading and retaining information both in short to long term basis.

It also emphasize the need for the cognitive scaffolding within literacy acquisition. Through the process of rereading and listening to new material, children learn significant aspects of a series of events, characters, place, and lesson which create the basis for future reading and writing. In that sense, the presented process aligns with Bruner (1990) who claimed that people are narratively oriented when perceiving the world, or, in other words, mastering various accounts is the key to literacy.

### **Make and Model, Association and Peculiarities**

Apart from literacy the storytelling tradition was responsible to a larger extent in engaging the children culturally and enriching their character by quipping the moral ethical aspects of life within the body of the story..

*"The stories are about people who help others and are kind. I want to be like them and help my friends at school."* (Participant 1)

Critical Discussion: This quote thus shows that the narrative acts not only a cognitive agenda, but an ethical/moral agenda by infusing a culture's values into the narrative format. The stories portrayed at Rumah Baca Rambutan can be categorized as traditional ones, which are a great source and impact Indonesian folklore that teaches about unity, compassion and ethical behavior. From the participant's observation, one can deduce that storytelling has a significant influence in the participant's formation especially in building character and imbuing good

moral values, thus providing credence to Hasanah & Andari, (2021) suggestion that oral narratives are indeed influential in transmitting moral imperative especially to rural and hard to reach communities.

This finding do not downplay the conventional and Western oriented view of literacy as information competence with added other aspects of literacy; the moral and cultural literacy. By embedding ethical lessons within culturally resonant narratives, storytelling reinforces social cohesion and community values, making literacy a tool for both individual empowerment and collective well-being.

*"My parents told me they heard these same stories when they were kids. It makes me feel connected to them, and I want to share these stories with my friends."* (Participant 7)

This quote portrays how Gbanla transmits cultural knowledge across generations using the narratives highlighting how literacy practices are appearance of cultural process. That the participant picks stories from the parent is a pointer that oral stories act as a link that fosters continuity of culture by the generations involved. This is in line with Novrani & Caturwulandari (2021),and oral forms of history provide for the preservation of cultural practices especially where formal school structures have not placed much emphasis on local knowledge.

Intergenerationality of the process also underlines the aspect of storytelling as the form of cultural capital. In telling these stories, children continue to bring forward lessons about culture and morality of their community, strengthening their own self-identification in the process of building better culture ties. This process is very important in passing down culture within the community since people rely on word of mouth methods of learning and also relate with each other. In this sense, it is not enough to say that storytelling is an approach of imparting understanding of written word; it is an effort at enshrinement of the cultural heritage and the re-socialization of the young in the ways of the culture. This accords with Bourdieu's (2011) cultural capital concept whereby inheritance of culture gives individuals a sound frame of social stratification making them confident in the cultural parameter.

*"In the stories, the characters always find ways to solve problems by helping each other. I learned that we can solve problems together at school too, just like in the stories."* (Participant 9)

Still, this quote points at the kind of problem-solving and ethical reasoning that takes place during storytelling. Entertainment is used to depict role models who present models of moral behaviors or conflict solving models to use in solving a social/ethic dilemma The shown cross conectivity between the storyworld and reality in terms of social interactions proves that storytelling fosters transferable interpersonal skills such as cooperation, social orientation and problem solving among members of a society. This backs Rukiyah's (2018) assertion that there is an effectiveness of using storytelling as a teaching approach to instill social values and cooperative behaviors since conventional learning models may not adequately promote.

Finally, the integration of ethical problem solving within the three stories demonstrates the extent to which literacy learning is integrated in this context. This therefore means that cognitive, linguistic, and moral development is not in isolation but processes occur while the children are processing the competence in narratives that they come across in the social world. This means that in storytelling, one attains a critical thinking skill in regard to language, ethic and social issues that make him or her a well-rounded person in all aspects of his or her life including academic and social.

## A New Way to Support Emotional and Social Development

In addition to reading and language learning, storytelling helps in the development of emotional and social life of the children of Rumah Baca Rambutan. Children construct meaning from engaging with characters, narratives, and group discussions, and in so doing, cue themselves about the many feelings, attitudes, and behaviours that they are likely to experience and exhibit throughout their lives.

*"When I hear stories about characters who feel sad or scared, it makes me think about my own feelings, and I talk to my friends about it."* (Participant 10)

This quote emphasized on children being emotionally attached to the characters in the stories. Narration creates an opportunity for the child to describe feelings that, under normal circumstances, must be difficult for him or her to put into words. As such, storytelling shapes a very fundamental part of child development, which is emotional intelligence. Children are familiarised with different emotional status by identifying, describing and critical self-emotional experiences as well as appreciating the emotional experiences of others.

This discovery confirms Bruner (1990)'s idea of a narrative form as an avenue through which one can make sense out of existence experiences. This is the case because identification with story characters means not only children's cognitive activity but also the creation of a model for encoding affects. According to Hidayati (2020), earlier storytelling acts to enable pupils to identify and understand composite feelings, hence foster effective emotional nascent.

Furthermore, talking about emotions into a group encourages children to form goodwill relationships and Relatedness. The interaction about shared feelings helps to foster a culture of emotional support helping children to develop personal and social-emotional competence.

*"Sometimes when the hero helps his friends in the story, I feel like I want to help my friends too. It feels good to be like the hero."* (Participant 11)

This quote can be used to explain an example of figuring out an aspect of oneself through experiencing another characters' feeling/action. By watching and listening to these and similar stories, children absorb these values as part of their social conscience. According to Nurgiyantoro (2018), storytelling can be a good way of ensuring that children develop not only their cognitive skills but also their social behavior inclinations as well as disabilities.

The role of emotional aspect indicates that children use literary characters' experience to map their own social experiences. This finding accords with the social learning theory developed by Bandura (1986) in which children emulate observed behaviour via identification with characters in a story. In mimetic ways, children explain dialogue and action from the vantage point of others and develop greater emotional understanding in their fictional experiences and, consequently, in actual interactions.

*"I used to be scared to talk to the other kids, but after we talk about the stories together, I'm not scared anymore. It feels easier to make friends now."* (Participant 12)

This quote focuses on unveiling the social development in the course of group storytelling. Storytelling allows children to communicate with each other as it organised interaction in a safe environment. Shy and reluctant children will find that discussion about stories focuses on a safe area as it serves as the bridge to social interaction building blocks of confidence in communication and social interaction This is in line with Vygotsky's 1978 in Wertsch & Sohmer (1995) social learning theory which posited a link between cognitive and social development-is possible through individual and group work.

Also, the above result is further evidence of the idea that all children are welcomed to engage in storytelling irrespective of their social status or functioning capacities for communication. Through the given context and concentrating on a single story, children are able to build friendly relationships with each other on noncompetitive basis which remains different from competitive basis of the class system.

Narrative meaning and reception are as important from the perspective of affect and interpersonal relation as from the perspectives of cognition and language. Resterina et al. (2023) note that, through the use of storytelling, children obtain social emotional processes by observing and learning from different experiences and feelings of people. The present research supports these studies in stressing out that not only the literacy skills of the children that run Rumah Baca Rambutan are being impacted positively, but they also emotionally and socially develop through the practice of story reading.

The actions of the children striving to identify with the characters and generalize the latter's actions to their own experiences show how much the stories affects their emotions. Hidayati (2020) opines that, stories have the potential of developing the emotion understanding; this paper paves ways in demonstrating how, Interactive Model of Story Sharing enhances both the emotional cop and social relationship. Based on these results, it is recommended that storytelling be included in academic curriculum for reasons beyond enrichment of cognitive development, but also improvement of emotional and social health of learners in, especially, disadvantaged environment.

### **Independently Organise a Programme that Nurtures Creativity and Imagination**

The second important theme identified in the course of the research refers to the necessity of storytelling as the means of developing the child's imagination and creative thinking. Because of long syntax of staking and the use of numerous stories based on folklore and myths, children may create their concepts easily.

*"I like to make up my own endings to the stories. Sometimes I change what the characters do because I think of different ideas." (Participant 13)*

This quote is a true evidence of creativity which story telling motivates in children. One advantage of doing this is that children are able to sharpen their creativity since they are free to come up with almost any ending of the story. This supports Bruner (1996) way of thinking that the formation of narratives is a way of 'world-building'; that reality is experimented on through the use of stories. In this way the learning with stories helps the child to develop the necessary types of cognitive flexibility to think creatively and logically.

Furthermore, storytelling offers an avenue for play and hence fulfills a vital developmental area of play in human's life. According to Vygotsky simulation is an effective form of learning emphasizing on it as one of the principal activities of a child. At Rumah Baca Rambutan children are encouraged to introduce new details to the story and develop various versions of the events so that they practice critical and creative thinking applied to both the story's characters and real-life challenges.

*"After listening to the stories, I started drawing pictures of the characters and places. I like to imagine what they look like in my head." (Participant 14)*

In this quote, one can easily see not only the growth of verbal creativity but also of visual and, any other creative kind. When children are drawing objects represented in a story, they are highly likely to analyze the story more than when they are just told to read it. The above form of creative visualization fosters Paivio's (1991) dual-coding theory which postulates that

learning is best facilitated by association of content words and images. Even while making pictures of story elements, kids are illuminating their language as well as spatial thoughts, effectively grounding their understanding of story well.

This and more so relates to the concept of today's literacy as being multimodal where children employ verbal, visual, and art to make sense of the world around them. Technology of drawing characters from stories demonstrate how learning occurs in an integrated manner resulting in integration of creativity and literacy.

*"Sometimes after we hear the stories, we make up new ones with different characters. It's fun because we get to imagine new worlds."* (Participant 15)

This quote lays focus on the fact that storytelling fosters creative cooperation. Thus, the creation of new narratives gives a child an opportunity to expand on each other's dialogue and to construct a collective imagination. This form of creative writing does not only promote imagination in each child, but also makes the little learners realize the importance of team work in solving common emergent situations. Through the collaboration to generate new stories, children manage to put together different accounts of a singular innovative project.

In this case, narrative frameworking is coincident with Sawyer & Henriksen (2024) concept of flow, in which creativity is fostered both within constraint and by freedom to roam within those parameters. As in traditional storytelling, Rumah Baca Rambutan offers children a certain scaffolding that enables them construct fabulous and fantastic worlds; at the same time, the rather open-ended type of activity promotes indefinite further creativity.

Creative use of imagination, in its turn, is one more essential aspect of learning with the help of storytelling that remains partially uncovered. When children read, they foster their thinking abilities or ways and learn the necessary creative thinking skills to succeed in their school and life. Bruner (1996) stated that storytelling is a kind of narrative proactivity and this research establishes how children build upon stories to create their own using writing, art and language.

The research also indicates that storytelling, especially in oral and shared form, is a potential model of promoting both distinct and shared creative practices. Not only do children have this personal relationship and interaction with stories but the creation of new stories through discussions with peers sharpens the part of the brain that fosters creativity within a community. It is this kind of creative cooperation that is so relevant today when innovation is based on the conjunction of multiple vision and concepts.

### **Implication**

The implications of the research being presented within this study extend to the core principles of education, literacy and personal/social/emotional development, learning creativity, and the protection and promotion of culture. At the base of these implications is the significant function of narrative in the development of cognitive literacy and Emotional, Social and Creative learning in children. By focusing on Rumah Baca Rambutan, the studies presented in the paper show that storytelling can change how literacy, education and child outcomes are to be delivered and consumed, especially when the conventional models of learning fail to address existing learner needs.

Undoubtedly, one of the strongest conclusions of this work is the necessity of the incorporation of storytelling practices into learning processes. In the studies, the approach of storytelling has passed the test of relevancy that other mainstream forms of teaching and learning never achieve in children. Thus, the specific approach that is inherent in using stories in teaching enables children not only to listen and to receive information, but to participate and be

culturally engaged. This seems to work contrary to the existing Indonesian education system that focuses on rote learning and examinations that in the process isolate the student from the essence of learning. These results further support the opinion that the educational process cannot remain a mere transmission of knowledge as, for meaningful and effective reading, interest in the material must be developed, based on emotions, which storytelling can awaken (Hasanah & Andari, 2021).

The third is the way that through storytelling, home contextual aspects are transferred to school curriculum and vice versa. The children in this study have learnt that storytelling is also a good way of passing information at home and thus the traditions enhance family based literacy. When formal [...] literacy promotion efforts do not always filter into the household, storying provides a mechanism through which children and adults both learn alongside one another. It supports the work of Fadlan (2019) whereby they noted that through storytelling firms, home-based co-operative learning relations and family bonds are strengthened. Scholars and policy makers should understand the necessity to work beyond schools and offer a community oriented approach in literacy with the use of storytelling as a productive forum to increase the importance of family literacy and its integration into multiple cultures.

The results also have a significant support for the essence of emotional and social development which is brought out by narration. The study proves that while engaging in the characters and narratives of the game, children learn important social emotions and ethical characteristics. Emotional literacy tends not to be taught in educational contexts where teachers and other educators focus on academic success while little attention is paid to the social and the emotional aspects of the learner. However, the children in this study are assumed to be able to level up in how they maintain awareness of their own feelings as well as the feelings of other people due to their involvement with the moralities and feeling-development of the story characters (Nurgiyantoro, 2018) It is for this reason why SEL should be integrated in academic curricula with stories being a natural fit for the youth and culturally appropriate.

In addition, the results concur with the research on the general category of psychological benefits of narrative. The action of children being able to identify with some of the principles of the stories and relate them to what they would do in like circumstances makes a convincing testimony for the use of storytelling as a form of character minds and moral education. This tallies with the findings of Hasanah & Andari (2021) that embodied knowledge within storytelling tradition is pivotal inculcation of moral lessons in learner. In exposing children to strong positive moral values such as courage, cooperation, and kindness in culturally familiar stories, storytelling socializes children through appealing and easily understood stories. This showed that one cannot ignore the possibility of using storytelling not only in teaching but also in building young learners' ethical character.

The other important factor which has emerged out of this study is creativity. Not only did storytelling improve literacy but also imagination and creativity, several children who previously started to write their own stories or to point out characters and places. This study puts to question the conventional view of education as development of intellect outcomes alone, highlighting that creativity, the ability to envision and invent may also be a desirable outcome (Bruner, 1996). Organizations that fail to embrace creativity infringe the abilities of students to solve most problem situations independently. Haven (2007) also suggested that creativity happens when there is balance between order and randomness and, due to storytelling providing children with a framework of structure in which to operate and a degree of freedom within that narrative, the two theories are complements of each other. Thus, there appears a

greater need for curriculum designers to develop and incorporate additional possibilities for creativity especially concerning stories in classrooms.

This paper identifies storytelling as one of the significant objectives of the study as pertains to culture. In a context where educational systems imposed from the global level tend to erase local cultures and their related knowledge, storytelling serves the purpose of preserving, as well as reinforcing, children's identity in the context of their culture (Novrani & Caturwulandari, 2021). The children's attachment to these stories being told perhaps suggests the greatest function of storytelling as a cultural mediator, to bring the children in touch with their ancestors' values and expectations of them. This finding directly relates to Bourdieu's Cultural Capital (2011) whereby possession of the culturally dominant narratives provide the holder with a social tool or symbolic power within a society. It is not just valuable as a teaching technique but a necessity when it comes to how cultural continuity and diversity must be kept alive when inculcated into education.

In addition, this study broaden the discussion to policy interventions for educational change in Indonesia and other settings. Non-governmental organizations involved in the development of literacy as well as Ministry of Education should be aware of the fact that storytelling has not been fully exploited in the aspect of education. As opposed to conventional regulated approaches to teaching, storytelling is can easily reach the ears of the neglected rural or underprivileged audiences and is effective, inexpensive, and culturally sensitive. It suggested that government policies in this direction for the implementation of storytelling both in formal and non-formal education could well help overcome the root causes of literacy engagement in Indonesia, for which the UNESCO index shows reading interest consistently coming in some of the lowest in the world.

Also, the availability of storytelling vastly determines the literacy levels since the approach is all embracing, making it effective at teaching those in black phoned schools or firstly exposed to the education system. Telling and listening exclude literal representations and prevent students, with various levels of literacy, from developing cliffs and gaps in Project understanding based on their reading levels or home environments. According to Darmalaksana (2020), storytelling may function as a tool that serves as the element of competency different from the conventional mechenism of reading to learn in class. This in turn reinforces the necessity for educational requirements that support cultural appropriate, inclusive means of literacy attainment especially in relation to marginalized areas.

The implications of the study also extend to future research in the field, as the following Section will detail. However, this study explicitly aimed at the short-term impact of the storytelling intervention for children's literacy and emotional states, while the extended investigation could examine the ways, these effects are sustained and shape additional academic and socio-emotional outcomes in the further school years. It is also possible for future studies to investigate the external validity of storytelling programs across various learning environments and more specifically within large urban centres where culture may be less interwoven into the day to day mainstream curriculum. Research on rural compare to urban could cast further light in how storytelling operates differently in different educational environment and how it could be properly approached to different demographic and cultural group.

## Conclusion

The traditional storytelling class at Rumah Baca Rambutan has proven to be an effective method in developing children's literacy in the Medan Tembung area. Using an interactive approach based on local culture, the class has attracted children who were previously less

interested in reading. The method focuses not only on technical skills such as reading and writing, but also on developing comprehension, critical thinking and storytelling skills. The children who attended the class experienced improvements in language skills, including vocabulary enrichment and understanding of sentence structure, as well as their ability to construct and retell stories in their own words. Through storytelling techniques that involve interactive elements and the use of props, children are not only passive listeners, but also actively participate in the learning and discussion process. In addition, the presence of this traditional storytelling class shows that learning methods that integrate local cultural values are more easily accepted by children. They not only learn from the stories told, but also understand the moral messages and life values contained in the stories. This helps strengthen their understanding of the social and cultural context that is important in character building. Although the program has shown positive results, there are challenges such as time constraints and lack of parental involvement that need to be addressed to further improve the effectiveness of this program. Engaging parents through additional training and more flexible scheduling of sessions could strengthen support at home and expand the impact of these storytelling classes. A community-based approach that engages parents and communities more actively will help strengthen children's literacy foundations and create a more supportive environment for long-term literacy development.

The storytelling tradition classes at Rumah Baca Rambutan have succeeded in not only increasing children's interest in reading, but also contributed significantly to the development of their language skills and cultural understanding. This success can serve as inspiration for other communities to develop similar initiatives, demonstrating that with the right approach and strong support, children's literacy development can be effectively achieved. Rumah Baca Rambutan has proven that with determination and commitment, positive change in the education of children and communities can be achieved.

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