

The Use of Folk Songs as a Learning Medium: an Ethno-Poetic Study

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ABSTRACT

The research explores 1) the values and meanings of folksongs in learning and 2) the learning media development and implementation in folksongs. A descriptive qualitative method using ethno-poetic approaches was employed to translate literary works from local cultural backgrounds into learning media for language and literature. The target folksongs were *Soleram*, *Kicir-kicir*, *Gambang Suling*, *Yamko Rambe Yamko*, and *Tokecang*. The data, collected using an online library method, consisted of song lyrics and their analysis results. Using ethno-poetic approaches, we discovered that the values and meanings of folksongs in learning could vary, ranging from educational and historical to cultural. Additionally, when developed as learning media, folksongs could encourage students to become familiar with their country's features, particularly in language and literature, by helping them understand the language of folksongs. Teachers could use folk songs while playing games or opening class to create a habit of listening to the songs and narrating their meanings afterwards. It was a way to preserve folksongs and foster more cultured traits among the younger generation.

Keywords: folksong, ethno-poetics, learning media

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini untuk memaparkan 1) nilai dan makna dalam lagu daerah dalam pembelajaran, 2) pengembangan media pembelajaran dan implementasi pada lagu daerah. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnopoetika untuk menerjemahkan karya sastra yang berlatar belakal budaya lokal untuk dijadikan media pembelajaran bahasa dan sastra. Lagu daerah yang digunakan adalah lagu berjudul *Soleram*, *Kicir-Kicir*, *Gambang Suling*, *Yamko Rambe Yamko*, dan *Tokecang*. Data berupa lirik lagu dan analisis makna dari lirik lagu tersebut. Data diperoleh dari metode pustaka secara daring. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnopoetika nilai dan makna lagu daerah dalam pembelajaran dapat bervariasi seperti nilai pendidikan, nilai sejarah, dan nilai budaya. Selain itu, bagi pengembangan media pembelajaran, lagu daerah dapat membuat siswa terbiasa dan mengenal negeri. Mengetahui negeri dengan cara mengetahui bahasa yang dipakai dalam lagu-lagu daerah tersebut sebagai penunjang pembelajaran bahasa dan sastra. Guru bisa menggunakan lagu-lagu ini sebagai permainan dan pembuka di awal kelas sebagai bentuk kebiasaan mendengar lagu-lagu daerah dengan setelahnya menceritakan makna di balik lagu tersebut. Penelitian ini menjadi salah satu cara

melestarikan lagu-lagu daerah di generasi muda serta mendukung generasi muda yang lebih berbudaya.

Kata Kunci: lagu daerah, etnopoetika, media pembelajaran

INTRODUCTION

Songs serve as an enjoyable tool in learning. Many topics that are considered difficult become easier to grasp when presented in song form (Nasrullah, 2024; Nasrullah et al., 2023; Ramli et al., 2024). It is this cheerful atmosphere that makes songs easily accepted by students. The songs introduced to students can start with those from their own country, namely, folk songs (Muzakka, 2019; Nasrullah, 2020). Folk songs are created against various backgrounds and, of course, represent their respective regions. In addition to serving as entertainment, they convey a message to listeners. According to Rasiah, Putra, Masri, Martisa, dan Bilu (2022), regional songs are among the many cultural products associated with specific regions (demographically), and their presence in society serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of conveying messages.

Folk songs are usually sung only by people from the local community (Pavlović, 2021). This is because people from other regions do not understand the local language. According to Malatu (2014) A folk song is a song that originates from a specific region and subsequently becomes well-known and widely sung by the people of that region. In light of this, introducing students to regional songs at an early age—even if they are not from that region—helps preserve this cultural heritage.

The ethno-poetic approach applied in this study is the most appropriate method for adapting locally-based literary works into tools for learning language and culture (Windle & Morgan, 2020). The research process involved identifying songs that possess both educational and cultural value. Educational value is not limited to what is taught in the Classroom but also includes character education, which is beneficial for students' future development.

Teachers can also use this diverse collection of songs as a teaching tool, particularly to make language learning more enjoyable (Subandiyah et al., 2024, 2025). Knowledge of these regional languages will strengthen existing local values. This is necessary because Indonesia has a diverse population. By using an ethno-poetic approach, this culture can be harnessed to build children's character while preserving it. Additionally, the research findings can support character education policies that are more contextually aligned with Indonesian culture (Basuki, 2019; Dewi et al., 2021).

In light of the background outlined above, the objectives of this study include (1) identifying the educational and cultural values embedded in regional songs, (2) developing an ethno-poetics framework as an approach to teaching Indonesian culture,

and (3) exploring teaching materials that teachers can use to teach language and culture in the Classroom.

The importance of teaching these regional songs stems from the fact that they embody many positive values for students. Research by Rasiah et al. (2022) indicates that the Muna regional songs she studied contain rich meanings and values. These values include reverence for God, respect for ancestral wisdom, a spirit of nation-building, and brotherhood. These values will shape students' characters into outstanding personalities who uphold cooperation, religiosity, nationalism, and integrity.

In line with Rasiah, Lestari (2012), research indicates that there are two elements in Papuan folk songs. The first element is the intellectual element, which encompasses diligence and perseverance in the pursuit of knowledge, independent behavior, a commitment to preserving nature and its contents, a refusal to give up, and behaviors of mutual aid, solidarity, or cooperation. The second element is the ethical and religious element, which in this case includes respectful behavior toward parents, friendly behavior, resilience, and mutual love; and c) the philosophical element, which in this case is a love for one's homeland (country and hometown).

Folk songs are not only the identity of a region within an Indonesian province but also the identity of Indonesia itself. This is because Indonesia is a country with many provinces, each with its own distinct culture. In line with this, a study conducted by Fina, Cahyani, Kamilah, dan Santoso (2022) indicates that national and regional songs are among the many works of art important to Indonesia. In particular, many young people are beginning to forget regional songs and the Indonesian national anthem. It is this lack of familiarity with regional and national songs that leads them to show little respect for these domestic works. Many have begun to treat these songs as a source of humor by changing the lyrics, failing to memorize them, and failing to appreciate the meaning contained within these regional and national songs.

Just like names, songs are often used as prayers and expressions of hope directed toward the Creator. This aligns with the research conducted by Arum (2020), which found that the song "*Lelo Ledhung*"—the focus of that study—serves as a form of prayer and hope from parents for their children as they grow into adulthood. Fundamental character education values include religiosity, patience, compassion, and wisdom. The above research supports the use of regional songs as a medium for language learning and for introducing Indonesian culture and history. This study serves as the foundation for developing an ethno-poetics approach in this research.

Fun songs can make the learning environment enjoyable. In this regard, research by Ilmi, Respati, dan Nugraha (2021) found that using children's songs as a learning medium can increase elementary school students' interest in learning. Specifically, there are three benefits of using children's songs as a learning medium: they enhance students' memory

retention, foster a sense of calm and joy during learning, alleviate anxiety and discomfort while studying, and make it easier for students to understand the learning material.

Songs not only bring joy but also convey positive moral messages. In a study conducted by Rachmawati dan Pramudya (2022) It was found that the lyrics of Sunan Giri’s children’s songs contain a hegemonic element related to Islamic ideology. The concept of hegemony, as related to advice on seeking wealth, is implied by the song “*Padhang Bulan*,” which presents Islam as a guiding light, and by “*Gambang Suling*,” which suggests the hegemony of strategy in balancing life. This ideology makes the lyrics of *tembang dolanan* more comprehensive, easier to interpret, and applicable to various aspects of life. The moral leadership structure of the creators of these *tembang dolanan* is evident in the history and methods of da’wah used to spread Islam.

As mentioned above, songs can be used as a learning tool. In a study conducted by Nuzulia (2020), children’s songs were adapted by incorporating elements of the curriculum into their lyrics. This adaptation resulted in songs serving as a medium for character education. Based on the findings of this study, using songs as a medium for character education can enhance the effectiveness and appeal of learning and help students develop Islamic character.

The next study is one conducted by Bala (2020) on ethno-poetics. In this study, the researcher examines the ethnic diversity of the Lio people, particularly as reflected in their literature and songs. Consistent with the point made above—that songs can serve as a means of teaching history—this study demonstrates that the song “*Ende Deku Dengu*,” composed by Jakobus Ari, reflects a highly tolerant way of life among the people of Ende when viewed from the perspectives of attitudes toward life and sociology. From a poetic perspective, the song “*Ende Deku Dengu*” exhibits symbolic and multidimensional qualities, such as stylistic and poetic elements, rhyme and imagery, metaphor, and metonymy.

Table 1. Relevant Previous Research

Research Title	Author (s)	Research Objectives	Method	Key Findings
The Cultural Meanings and Values in Muna Folk Songs as a Model for Building Excellent Character	Rasihah et al. (2022)	The purpose of this study is to reveal the cultural meanings and values contained in Muna folk songs as a model for fostering strong character.	Field research and literature review	The traditional songs of Muna embody cultural wisdom and life lessons rich in messages of goodness, order, and balance. They encompass themes of spirituality, respect for ancestral wisdom, a spirit of nation-building, and the values of

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Research Title	Author (s)	Research Objectives	Method	Key Findings
				brotherhood, which serve as models for fostering strong character in education.
Didactic Elements in Papuan Folk Songs	Lestari (2012)	Describe the didactic elements found in the lyrics of Papuan folk songs.	Descriptive method	Papuan folk songs contain intellectual, ethical, and religious elements, as well as philosophical elements that reflect the lives of the Papuan people.
Introduction to Regional and National Anthems of the Republic of Indonesia for Prospective 21st-Century Elementary School Teachers	Fina et al. (2022)	Describes the influence of regional and national songs on character education in schools.	Literature review method	Folk songs and national anthems convey the meanings, messages, and language of specific regions to instil a sense of respect for and love of the homeland.
<i>Lelo Ledhung</i> : A Representation of Character Education Values in Javanese Lullabies for Children	Arum (2020)	Explain the meaning of the song " <i>Lelo Ledhung</i> " and describe the character education values it conveys.	Hermeneutical method	Explaining the meaning of the song " <i>Lelo Ledhung</i> ," which embodies character values such as religiosity, patience, compassion, and wisdom
The Benefits of Children's Songs in Boosting Elementary School Students' Interest in Learning	Ilmi et al. (2021)	Providing an explanation of the benefits of children's songs in boosting elementary school students' interest in learning.	Literature review method	The use of children's songs as a learning tool helps improve memory, reduces anxiety and discomfort during learning, and makes it easier for students to understand the material.
Ideological Hegemony in the Lyrics of Sunan Giri's Play Songs	Rachmawati and Pramudya (2022)	Examining the leadership structure of Sunan Giri in his missionary work.	Qualitative descriptive method	The lyrics of Sunan Giri's children's songs reflect the dominance of Islamic ideology. They convey messages of guidance, enlightenment, and balance in life.
The Development of Songs as a Medium for Character Education for	Nuzulia (2020)	Developing children's songs by adapting the lyrics as a tool for	Mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative descriptive)	The development of songs as a medium for character education can help enhance the effectiveness and

Research Title	Author (s)	Research Objectives	Method	Key Findings
First-Grade Students at SDN Purwantoro 01 in Malang		character education.		appeal of learning and assist students in developing Islamic character
The Ethno-poetics of the Song “Ende Deku Dengu” by Jakobus Ari	Bala (2020)	Describing the diversity of literature and song by examining the Lio people’s way of life and the poetic elements in songs sung in the Lio language.	Documentation methods	Based on that song, the people of Ende are very tolerant, and its poetic elements are symbolic and multidimensional.

The studies cited above support the relevance of regional songs as a medium for teaching Indonesian language and literature. This study is grounded in an ethno-poetics-based approach that will facilitate language learning from a cultural perspective.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive approach to identify the life values embedded in an Indonesian folk song and to develop language learning through an ethno-poetic perspective. This method is used to identify a literary work in the form of a song that can be beneficial for language learning. The data sources in this study consist of five popular regional songs from various parts of Indonesia. The song lyrics were obtained from reliable websites, namely www.gramedia.com and www.kompas.com (Gramedia, 2024; Kompas, 2024).

The data, consisting of song lyrics, were analyzed by examining the meanings and values within the songs. Regional songs in indigenous languages were translated into Indonesian to make their meanings more accessible. Naturally, the translations were sourced from official websites, in accordance with each song’s context.

Data were collected through a literature review. This involved reviewing previous research, books, and articles in relevant journals. This stage aimed to construct an ethno-poetic framework for a regional song. Second, the song lyrics were analyzed to examine the educational and cultural values they contained.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and interpretive approaches. The analysis process included data reduction to filter relevant information from the literature and documents, as well as ethno-poetic analysis that described lyrics, meanings, and the cultural messages they contain. This analysis also involved poetic studies such as rhythmic patterns, repetition, and diction, as well as the interpretation of the socio-

cultural context. The results of the analysis were then grouped according to the educational and cultural values present in each lyric of these regional songs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Values and Meanings in Folk Songs in Education

This study identifies the values and meanings in a song through ethno-poetic analysis. Based on the available data, the songs featured here appear to be useful as a learning tool for students, particularly for gaining a deeper understanding of Indonesia and the nation's identity. The regional songs selected come from various parts of Indonesia.

Table 2. Studies Demonstrating the Value and Significance of Folk Songs in Education

Song Title	Analysis of the Lyrics and Their Underlying Values	Meaning and Benefits in Life
<i>Soleram</i>	The lyrics "If you make a new friend, my dear, don't forget your old friends" encourage students to maintain their friendships.	This song advises people to continue upholding the customs and religion they have always followed.
<i>Kicir-Kicir</i>	The lyrics "Who am I, sir? I work hard. I'm sure to become a useful citizen" encourage students to keep striving so that they may one day become useful members of society.	This song encourages people to keep trying and stay enthusiastic about life.
<i>Gambang Suling</i>	The lyrics "The gambang suling resounds with its melody. Tulat tulit, so soothing to the ear. It's just so soothing." Introduce students to a bamboo musical instrument with a beautiful sound.	This song expresses admiration for the flute.
<i>Yamko Rambe Yamko</i>	The lyrics "Teemi nokibe kubano ko bombe ko. Yumano bungo awe ade. Teemi nokibe kubano ko bombe ko" tell students that a war once took place on their own land. Many heroes fell in that war.	This song tells the story of a war between tribes.
<i>Tokecang</i>	The lyrics "Tokecang tokecang, the army of gendirs has been defeated. The peanut shell is empty," depict greed that should not be indulged.	This Tokecang song alludes to greed or avarice, suggesting that people with these traits have no concern for others and, of course, think only of themselves.

The table above shows that each song conveys a meaning that can aid students' learning. This method can also be used to introduce students to regional songs that are heard less and less frequently these days. The following are findings from more comprehensive, detailed research on regional songs, including their content and the values they convey.

a. Soleram

“Soleram” is a traditional song from Riau. The song advises people to continue upholding the customs and religion they have always practiced. Here are the complete lyrics to “Soleram”.

*Soleram
Soleram
Soleram Anak yang manis
Anak manis janganlah dicitum sayang
Kalau dicitum merah lah pipinya*

*Satu dua
Tiga dan empat
Lima enam Tujuh delapan
Kalau tuan dapat kawan baru sayang
Kawan lama ditinggalkan jangan*

There is a lyric that says, “*Kalau tuan dapat kawan baru sayang. Kawan lama ditinggalkan, sayang,*” which encourages students to maintain good relations. The song is full of messages about always maintaining traditions and religion.

b. Kicir-Kicir

The song “Kicir-Kicir” originates from Jakarta. It uses Indonesian as the unifying language of Indonesia. Here are the complete lyrics to “Kicir-Kicir.”

*Kicir kicir ini lagunya
Lagu lama ya tuan dari Jakarta
Saya menyanyi ya, tuan, memang sengaja
Untuk menghibur hati nan duka
Burung dara burung merpati
Terbang cepat ya tuan tiada tara
Bilalah kita ya tuan suka menyanyi
Badanlah sehat ya tuan hati gembira
Buah mangga enak rasanya
Si manalagi ya tuan paling ternama
Siapa saya ya tuan rajin bekerja
Pasti menjadi menjadi warga berguna
Kicir kicir ini lagunya
Lagu lama ya tuan dari Jakarta
Saya menyanyi ya Tuan, memang sengaja
Untuk menghibur menghibur hati nan duka
Burung dara burung merpati
Terbang cepat ya tuan tiada tara
Bilalah kita ya tuan suka menyanyi
Badanlah sehat ya tuan hati gembira
Buah mangga enak rasanya
Si manalagi ya tuan paling ternama
Siapa saya ya tuan rajin bekerja
Pasti menjadi menjadi warga berguna*

The message of this song is a reminder for people to always stay motivated in life. As seen in the lyrics, “*Siapa saya ya tuan rajin bekerja Pasti menjadi warga berguna*”, the song encourages students to always strive to be useful members of society.

c. *Gambang Suling*

The song “*Gambang Suling*” originates from Central Java. It tells the story of someone fascinated by a bamboo musical instrument. Here are the lyrics to “*Gambang Suling*.”

*Gambang suling ngumandang suarane
Tulat tulit Kepenak unine
Unine mung nrenyuhake
Bareng lan kentrung
Ketipung suling
Sigrak kendangane
Gambang suling ngumandang suarane
Tulat tulit Kepenak unine
Unine mung nrenyuhake
Bareng lan kentrung
Ketipung suling
Sigrak kendangane*

This song was composed by an artist from Central Java named Ki Narto Sabdo. He is a musician and a *wayang kulit* puppeteer. The lyrics “*Gambang suling ngumandang suarane. Tulat tulit Kepenak unine*” reveal just how deeply he loves the flute. This song can also serve as an introduction to Indonesia’s traditional musical instruments.

d. *Yamko Rambe Yamko*

The song titled “*Yamko Rambe Yamko*” originates from Papua. It tells the story of intertribal warfare in Papua. Here are the complete lyrics to “*Yamko Rambe Yamko*.”

*Hee yamko rambe yamko aronawa kombe
Hee yamko rambe yamko aronawa kombe
Teemi nokibe kubano ko bombe ko
Yumano bungo awe ade
Teemi nokibe kubano ko bombe ko
Yumano bungo awe ade
Hongke hongke hongke riro
Hongke jombe jombe riro
Hongke hongke hongke riro
Hongke jombe jombe riro*

These lyrics contain a passage that illustrates just how tragic the situation in Papua was during the inter-tribal wars. The lines “*Teemi nokibe kubano ko bombe ko. Yumano bungo awe ade. Teemi nokibe kubano ko bombe ko*” tell students that wars once raged on their own land, claiming the lives of many heroes.

e. *Tokecang*

“*Tokecang*” is a song from the island of Java, specifically West Java. The word “*Tokecang*” is an abbreviation of the phrase “*tokek makan kacang*” (gecko eating peanuts). Some people also say that “*Tokecang*” is a person’s name. Here are the lyrics to the song “*Tokecang*.”

Tokecang tokecang bala gendir tosblong
Angeun kacang sapependil kosong
Aya listrik di masigit meuni caang katingalna
Aya istri jangkung alit karangan dina pipina
Tokecang tokecang bala gendir tosblong
Angeun kacang sapependil kosong

This song conveys the message that overeating has negative consequences. It suggests that being greedy or self-centred is not good. In truth, humans are creatures who depend on one another, which is why they are often referred to as social beings. Therefore, as social beings, humans need to share and help one another.

Development of Educational Media and Its Implementation in Folk Songs

Every folk song that is created has its own purpose and meaning. One way to put this into practice is to use folk songs as a learning tool. Introducing students to other regional languages will also help foster their love for Indonesia. Moreover, each song has its own linguistic characteristics and profound meaning. Teachers can use the following folk songs to develop ethno-poetic-based learning materials.

Table 3. Development of Instructional Materials and Implementation in Regional Folk Songs

Aspect	Data	Folk Songs	Implementation in Education
Implementation Method	Folk songs are used as a means of introducing regional languages	All songs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers can play a song at the beginning of class. - Teachers can use song snippets in a lyric-ordering game after playing the song at the beginning of class for a few days.
Cultural Values in Songs	Folk songs are used to introduce Indonesian culture and history	All songs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The song “Soleram” is used to remind people of the customs and religion that serve as a firm foundation in life. -The song “Kicir-Kicir” can be used to encourage students to keep moving forward until their dreams are realised. -Teachers can use the song “Gambang Suling” as a way to introduce students to Indonesian culture and heritage. Teachers can -The song “Yamko Rambe Yamko” can be used to introduce the history of Indonesia, particularly Papua. Familiarizing students with the language and its meaning will help them better understand Indonesia’s diversity. -The song “Tokecang” can be used for character education, teaching students to

remain humble and caring toward those around them.

The table above summarizes several strategies teachers can implement in the Classroom by utilizing regional songs. The cultural contexts present in these regional songs encompass a wide variety of cultures. The cultures of Central Java, Papua, and West Java are the three highlighted in this study. This study employs an ethno-poetics framework, emphasizing the song's lyrics, meaning, and cultural elements, as well as their utility in learning. This applies not only to language learning but also to culture, particularly Indonesian culture. For example, the lyrics of the song "*Tokecang*" are in Sundanese. This song has two layers of meaning: it is an abbreviation for "*tokek makan kacang*" (gecko eating peanuts) and a personal name. The Sundanese lyrics of this song carry a deeper meaning behind the lines "*Tokecang tokecang bala gendir tosblong. Angeun kacang sapependil kosong,*" which convey that one should not be greedy and should share with others.

The second element is the cultural aspect that can be shared with students. This can be seen in two song examples: "*Gambang Suling*" and "*Yamko Rambe Yamko.*" As we look to the future, young people increasingly prefer digital media. The traditional musical instrument, the flute, can be introduced through the song "*Gambang Suling.*" This serves as an effort to preserve the flute, which is now used only by certain groups. Additionally, the song "*Yamko Rambe Yamko*" introduces students to historical events that occurred in Papua. This encourages students to strive for peaceful coexistence with Indonesia's highly diverse society.

The types of educational media that can be developed are actually quite diverse. Furthermore, the use of regional songs is not limited to language learning but can also be applied to history and culture—subjects essential to a child's development. This is particularly true for the process of getting to know and loving one's homeland. By learning more about Indonesian culture, children will develop a sense of love and ownership for their own country.

CONCLUSION

It turns out that traditional Indonesian songs can be effectively used as a medium for language learning with a cultural backdrop. The ethno-poetic approach used in this study demonstrates that the five songs—*Soleram*, *Kicir-Kicir*, *Gambang Suling*, *Yamko Rambe Yamko*, and *Tokecang*—can convey educational and cultural values through music. Values such as fostering unity to maintain social bonds, always striving to be a useful person, learning about traditional musical instruments, understanding the history of wars that have occurred on Indonesian soil, and avoiding greed as human beings make these five songs an ideal and important tool in culture-based language learning.

Teachers can begin implementation by playing these regional songs at the start of class. This will help students become familiar with and get to know their country through songs from various regions in Indonesia. In language learning, this can also be used to learn regional languages and discover the meanings behind songs in those languages. By becoming more familiar with other regional languages, students will develop a deeper understanding of Indonesia and foster a sense of love and ownership of Indonesia's cultures.

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