Promoting senggi folktales as media of contextual teaching learning in Papua

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A B S T R A C T
In EFL class, some students mostly struggle to comprehend reading since the material is not contextually suitable for their needs. Senggi folktale is one of the media to teach reading skill contextually and is now forgotten by Papuan youngsters. This study aimed to explore how to engage students to read narrative text and promote the teaching of reading by using Senggi folktales. This descriptive-qualitative study took place in Keerom, Papua, Indonesia between July and September 2015. There were students of Junior High School, 1 Junior High School teacher, 1 ex-elementary school teacher, 1 tribal chief, and 2 elders as the informants. The data were collected by using observation, interview, and FGD (Focus Group Discussion). The study discovered that students could effectively and enthusiastically learn the social function, generic structure, and linguistic features of the contextual reading material, Senggi folktale. They also indirectly do cultural heritage preservation and get the good socio-cultural values revealed in Senggi folktale.

1. INTRODUCTION

Schools in Papua are facing challenges in integrating the learning culture in schools with the cultural values of families and communities. Even the implementation of model schools has not been successful in bridging the gap between the level of adaptation to cultural changes within the community. As Modouw (2013) noted, education in Papua should be based on the social, cultural, economic, political, and natural context of each community, with a more holistic approach to support progress based on the level of their civilization's development.

Many schools continue to rely on the Curriculum 2013 (K13) as the full implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka Belajar has yet to take place. According to K13 guidelines, students in grade IX should have the standard competency of comprehending the meaning of written texts and simple short essays in the forms of narrative and report texts, allowing them to interact in daily life contexts. However, at SMP Negeri 1 Web, students' ability to understand written texts remains poor. One potential factor is their unfamiliarity with reading materials, which may include texts from foreign cultures that they have yet to encounter. This makes it difficult for them to grasp the reading content, resulting in suboptimal learning outcomes.

Senggi is a district situated in Kabupaten Keerom, bordering Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Covering approximately 1,912,500 hectares, this district is home to four villages: Senggi, Warlef, Molof, and Yabanda. A primary survey conducted by researchers revealed the presence of several ethnic and tribal groups living in scattered communities

across these villages. As the government has had little impact on this region, the people of Senggi have chosen to maintain a simple and traditional way of life, primarily to preserve their cultural heritage, particularly their folktales. However, the elders face challenges in passing down their traditions as younger generations seem less interested in listening to these stories.

Papua is rich with folktales spreading in the coastal and inland areas. The people used to utilize folktales as the source of philosophy, cosmology, socio-culture, and character education (Yektiningtyas & Modouw, 2017; Yektiningtyas, 2019). Unfortunately, those folktales are not recognized by people anymore, especially the young ones (Fiharsono et al., 2023). Infusing folktales in language learning is not only giving students with new experiences (Lazar, 1993), but also introducing students with their ancestors' cultural heritage (Modouw, 2021;Awoitauw, 2020). Folktale is a form of literary work. Folktale is a traditional narrative, usually anonymous, handed down orally (Danandjaja, 2002). Most of the youth of natives grow folktales from their village (Shadiqin, 2015). According to Rahmanto (1992), students will benefit from the literary work they appreciate, namely by improving language skills, increasing cultural knowledge, developing creativity and taste, and supporting character building. Kamal et al., (2023) states literary work presents the eloquent side of language from its aesthetic perspective and its beauty can entertain and be a pleasure for readers to keep reading it and enjoy its uniqueness. Lazar (1993) said there are some reasons why we use literature in language teaching: (1) it is very motivating, (2) it helps students to understand another culture, and (3) it is a stimulus for language acquisition. Furthermore, teaching literature in class is believed to be able to increase students' learning motivation and curiosity of students if the teachers' strategy is well implemented (Azmi et al., 2023; Purtanto et al., 2023; Rosyadi et al., 2023)

Aisyah in Purwantiningsih (2021) explained that the contextual approach is a teaching model that enables students to understand the significance of their school lessons in relation to their daily personal, social, and cultural experiences. Moreover, (Yektiningtyas et al., 2023) said, based on their research, utilizing teaching materials that are culturally relevant to students can have two significant benefits. Firstly, it can contribute to a more effective learning experience as compared to using unfamiliar materials. Additionally, it can play a role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage among students.

Yamin (2017) mentioned that the right English learning method is the key to learning, as for English learning methods are as follows: (1) Song and games, (2) Field Study (direct object), (3) The Reading Method, (4) TPR Method (Total Physical Response Method), (5) Teaching English by Using Song, (6) Teaching English by Using Games, (7) Teaching English by Using Stories, and (8) Conversation Method.

Some research utilizing the contextual teaching-learning approach in teaching English had been done. This approach is believed to improve students' engagement, motivation, ability to think critically and creatively through teaching teaching-learning process. Additionally, the students unconsciously learned character-building and preserving their cultures (Fiharsono et al., 2023; Jubhari et al., 2022; Mantra & Kumara, 2018; Nasaruddin et al., 2020; Shadiqin, 2015; Yektiningtyas, 2019; Yektiningtyas et al., 2023; Yektiningtyas & Modouw, 2017). Although the CTL used by the researchers is beneficial, research using Senggi folktales has yet to be unnoticed.

Based on these issues above, improving reading skills can be achieved by using local folktales, which aligns with one of the key features of Curriculum 2013 - school

contextualization. This approach aims to embed the school within the community, offering students chances to apply their learning to real-life situations and utilize the community as a valuable resource for learning.

The aims of this research are to explore how to: (1) engage students to read narrative text, and (2) promote the teaching of reading by using Senggi folktales. This research offers several benefits: (1) to improve students' English reading skill (pedagogical advantages), (2) to help teachers to build students' character based on values contained in Senggi folktales, (3) to help stakeholders to do cultural heritage preservation, especially Senggi culture and also can be the reference of local culture, and (4) to be an alternative English teaching media.

2. METHOD

This descriptive-qualitative study was conducted between July – September 2015 in Keerom, Papua, Indonesia. The study aimed to involve all Junior High School students in Keerom, but only ten grade IX students from SMP Negeri 1 Web were chosen. The small number of subjects was intentional, as each student represented two offerings and the study was a pilot to introduce Senggi folktales for educational purposes and raise cultural awareness in the community. If the pilot study is successful, Senggi folktales could be officially included in teaching English in High School. Apart from the students, one junior high school teacher, one ex-elementary school teacher, one tribal chief, and two elders were also involved in the study. They were being involved since they are also part of Senggi Traditional Community Institution, LMA (Lembaga Masyarakat Adat).

The Junior High School's name was SMP Negeri 1 Web, Kabupaten Keerom, and it was the one that had native students in it. Grade IX was chosen because it was in accordance with the demands of the standard competence required in the syllabus of Curriculum 2013 for the students in this grade is to comprehend the meaning of written texts and simple short essays in the forms of narrative and report texts, allowing them to interact in daily life contexts. Besides, curriculum 2013 has a significant feature called school contextualization. Its objective is to integrate the school into the community, enabling students to use their learning in practical situations and benefit from the community as an essential learning resource. For that, Senggi folktales would be both suitable learning media and great concerning cultural heritage preservation.

From 8 English learning methods by Yamin, (2017), there were three methods adapted by researchers: (1) Teaching English by Using Stories, (2) The Reading Method, and (3) Field Study (direct object). To gather the necessary qualitative data for this study, two methods were employed and were adapted by Yektiningtyas et al. (2023), they were: (1) interviews and (2) Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The interview process was conducted in an open-ended format at two different locations. The first interview was conducted with students and teachers to ascertain their behavior following the learning process. The second interview was held in Kabupaten Keerom with the tribal chiefs, people, and elders of Lembaga Masyarakat Adat (LMA) [Traditional Community Institution] Keerom to gather their opinions on incorporating Senggi folktales into reading classes.

After collecting data from interviews and focus group discussions, the researchers utilized Miles et al. (2014) model, which included: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Engaging The Students to Read Narrative Text Using Senggi Folktales

Mastering narrative text is a requirement for (SK) standard competence, and it is also supported by KD (basic competence) numbered 4.7 in the 2013 curriculum: capturing the meaning in the context of very short and simple narrative texts, oral and written, related to fairy tales, paying attention to social functions, text structures, and correct language elements according to the context. Indonesian grade IX students are expected to have this competency. As previously mentioned, we utilized Senggi Folktales to teach this particular competency in our research. In order to foster a love of narrative reading, three methods were implemented: (1) Teaching English by Using Stories: a native narrator was invited to share Senggi folktales with the class, (2) The Reading Method: Senggi folktales were used as a substitute for traditional narrative texts, and (3) Field Study (direct object): students went on a field trip to the Festival Budaya Keerom. During class time, students were encouraged to ask questions, gather information, and make connections before reading the narrative text. These strategies were implemented to enhance student engagement and focus on learning. Following the trial, it was observed that the frequency, quantity, and quality of questions related to text structure, language features, and content of narrative text increased significantly throughout the learning process. Evidence of students' enthusiasm was found in their semi-formal interview responses during the process of reading narrative text.

> *"I used to be bored in learning English, but now I am excited!"*
> *"I am happy that I easily understand and learn English since it has my own cultural stories."*

The teacher established a compelling educational atmosphere, which instilled a sense of motivation within the students, prompting them to diligently apply themselves from start to finish.

Initially, the native narrator was invited to the class. Together with the teacher, they conducted brainstorming activities by asking the students about their neighborhood, their ethnic group, and their daily routine. Following this, the native shared a Senggi folktale in their language. The students then had the opportunity to engage in a small discussion with the native narrator and the teacher.

Then, the students were tasked with reading the Senggi folktale in English and completing some exercises after hearing the story. Their proficiency in identifying the text's generic structure, comprehending the language features employed, and understanding its content improved significantly over time.

In the last meeting, a group of students, along with their teacher, embarked on a field trip to the Festival Budaya Keerom, with the aim of fostering interactions with the local community. During the trip, they had the opportunity to meet and interview ethnic chiefs and locals, gaining insights into Senggi's rich cultural heritage, particularly its folktales. Despite the tiring nature of the excursion, one teacher remarked that it was well worth it, as it instilled a sense of enthusiasm, discipline, and hard work within the students. As a delightful outcome, the students made remarkable progress in their ability to read narrative texts.

3.2. Promoting The Teaching Reading Using Senggi Folktales

The data gathered from interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with students, teachers, tribal leaders, and Senggi elders revealed the significance of Senggi folktales in improving reading comprehension of narrative text. In addition to understanding the social functions, structure, and language features of narratives, students can also benefit by (1) learning about ancestral heritages and social values, (2) indirectly preserving and sharing Senggi folktales, and (3) developing good character traits from the ancestors' stories. There was growing concern among educators, tribal leaders, and elders in Senggi that their rich tradition of folktales was not receiving the appreciation it once did. There was a fear that younger generations may be losing touch with their cultural heritage. However, these leaders remained committed to preserving these cherished tales and were exploring ways to do so. When approached about the possibility of integrating these stories into the educational curriculum, they expressed enthusiasm and encouragement.

From the FGD it was conveyed by traditional leaders that Senggi folktales need to be taught to the young generation because if not, they would not recognize their own identity. Infusing folktales in learning English was considered as an effective way because students learn the cultural heritages of their ancestors indirectly (Yektiningtyas & Modouw, 2017; Fiharsono et al., 2023). Moreover, it was supported by Mantra & Kumara (2018) that elaborated folktales aid in developing critical reading skills, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension of events while helping differentiate moral values, characters, and impolite expressions. Thus, this was an effective promotion of Senggi for the young generation. It was hoped that the students would also socialize it to their friends. Meanwhile, in the FGD the teachers also hoped that tribal chiefs or Senggi elders would be more open in providing data of folktales so that they could use it in learning at school.

Building strong character was crucial for the younger generation. The tribal chief and Senggi elders expressed concern over the weak character of their youth. In fact, out of 18 national character-building values (Santika, 2020), there were 9 values contained in Senggi folktales, i.e. (1) honesty, (2) hardworking, (3) creativity, (4) independence, (5) curiosity, (6) loving motherland, (7) caring environment, (8) social caring, and (9) responsibility.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored strategies to engage students in reading narrative text using Senggi folktales, one of the Senggi cultural heritages. The results showed that the teacher's selection of media could affect students' motivation in reading narrative text. Students expressed positive attitudes when introduced to local-based media such as Senggi folktales in reading narrative text lesson. They could effectively and enthusiastically learn not only the generic structure, language feature, and contents of the narrative text, their ancestral heritage and social values embedded in it. A teaching media that was culturally close to the students, as shown in this study, could play a dual function. Pedagogically, the familiarity of media was able to facilitate better learning compared to old ones and culturally, their heritage was preserved. Therefore, this study recommends that the use of such media as Senggi folktale in teaching other language skills and components still needs to be done. This research left some gaps waiting to be filled by further research and keeping this heritage alive, useful, and beneficial is a task that remains to be done. For that purpose, this research is beneficial: (1) to improve students' English reading skill (pedagogical advantages), (2) to help teachers to

build students' character based on values contained in Senggi folktales, (3) to help stakeholders to do cultural heritage preservation, especially Senggi culture and also can be a reference of local culture, and (4) to be an alternative English teaching media.

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