

Revitalizing the Values of Local Wisdoms Contained in Sumbawanese Folklores as Bilingual Learning Sources for Character Education

Untung Waluyo, Henny Soepriyanti, Sudirman Wilian, Rizki Kurniawan

English Department
Universitas Mataram
West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia
hennysoepriyanti@unram.ac.id

Abstract—This study aims to explore, reconstruct and produce bilingual reading texts stemming from the folklores that contain the local wisdoms of the people of Sumbawa District, West Nusa Tenggara. The design used for this study is research and development which is oriented to the production of supplemental bilingual reading texts to support the implementation of Curriculum 2013. The data were collected from various sources: (a) in-depth interviews with key informants who inherit oral tradition stories, (b) available documents of folklores and (c) critical notes from fellow teachers and lecturers about the prototype products produced. All data sources were analyzed descriptively, qualitatively by using data triangulation technique. Data analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion and verification. The study revealed two major themes: (1) tangible cultural products and intangible cultural products. Under these themes, five categories of folklores containing the values of local wisdom that became the sources of character education within the Sumbawa ethnic group, i.e. (1) family education, (2) societal collective practices, (3) folktales, (4) myths and (5) superstitions. Analysis of each of these categories was discussed in the paper. Upon completion of the study, these products of folklores would be rewritten in both Indonesian and English to supplement the present available student book with a variety of local-based bilingual texts.

Keywords—cultural products; local wisdom; folklore; bilingual; character education

I. INTRODUCTION

Although in the consecutive years of 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 the annual reports of Indonesian students' achievement participating in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) have shown substantial improvement [1], the position of Indonesia remains in the 10 lowest among 72 participating countries. The reports identify that in general Indonesian students lack reading competence. This low PISA test results imply that the practice of reading literacy carried out in Indonesian schools remains problematic.

To respond this challenge, the Government of Indonesia launched the School Literacy Movement (SLM) as a national program which is expected to encourage the growth of students' interests in reading. As a national policy, SLM is

strengthened by the Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture No. 23 of 2015 and the implementation guidelines contained in the School Literacy Movement Handbook [1]. In general, the School Literacy Movement aims to facilitate the establishment of a reading culture in schools so as to create lifelong learning. Through the provision of early reading habits, students are expected to be able to seek and explore information from various sources independently, both from Indonesian and foreign languages.

In line with the issue, Sujana et al. reported that Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, has substantial number of folklore products originating from the local oral tradition [2]. These folklore products contain ethical values and local wisdom that potentially can be utilized as a source of character education, which is promoted by the Government of Indonesia at present. Despite such a potential, Soepriyanti et al. found that the implementation of the school literacy movement (SLM) in Lombok still experienced a number of hindrances, one of which is the lack of reading materials for school literacy activities [3]. In general, the number of Indonesian language reading materials available in schools is still poorly limited. The reading materials in English language are in the same vein. With the lack of literacy reading supplements in both languages, Indonesian and English, students tend to interact only with limited reading resources available at schools. Such a condition is obviously incongruent with the goal of the School Literacy Movement (SLM) set forth by the Government of Indonesia, i.e. to prepare students to adapt to the demand of the global era through literacy reading activities. At this point, it can be restated that the need to provide students with the early reading program in two languages has a strategic meaning as a medium for preparing them to deal with the challenge of the global era.

The argument for the importance of folklore as a source of community learning is elaborated by Hyme in his work "*Foundation of Sociolinguistics*" [4]. In his views, folklore has the potential to explain not only linguistic problems but also basic social rules that affect the choice of language expressions for members of a language user community. In general, folklore contains a collection of shared knowledge, ways of thinking, ways of life and worldview handed down from

generation to generation. This definition entails that folklore is a cultural product that can be utilized to understand the mindset, worldview, knowledge, and value system of a nation. In the same vein, Banda defines folklore as a source of knowledge, wisdom and community learning [5]. The definitions generated by both authors signify that folklore serves as a source of collective knowledge that lives and applies in a society and becomes a medium for communicating shared values, norms, practical knowledge and local wisdom across generations.

Materially, folklore is cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and protected as it contains cultural identities, knowledge and skills that people practice in their daily life [6]. This cultural heritage is divided into two broad categories, i.e. (1) the tangible and (2) intangible cultural products [7]. The tangible cultural products deal with the daily material properties created and used by members of a society whereas the intangible cultural products are non-material things containing cultural values practiced by members of a society. In Putnam's view these cultural values have shared potentials that can be used by members of society to deal with issues of moral duties and to maintain social relationship [8].

Linguistically, folklore is expressed in a language that is easily understood by the people who own the folklore and passed down informally from generation to generation orally. Because the distribution of folklore is carried out orally, varied versions of folklore products are usually derived from the same folklore [9]. This explains why the patterns of folklore narratives always change from time to time [10-13].

In terms of form, folklore is usually expressed in oral speech, such as rhymes, songs, jokes, myths, legends and fairy tales. In line with Hyme and Banda, Dégh elaborates that this oral literacy product contains traditional values, social rules, hopes and beliefs, and community behaviors [14]. According to Kozar, the collective behavior of a society is strongly influenced by the teachings contained in folklore, such as etiquette, customs, beliefs and worldviews conveyed through oral literacy products as mentioned above [15]. Because of its collective nature, folklore has enormous contributing potentials to the formation process of self-identity and at the same time the construction of character education of a society. In other words, when used positively, the values contained in folklore can be a source of spirit to build thinking patterns, acting patterns and interacting patterns of a society.

Due to the dynamically ever-changing society, the existence of folklore can be threatened to be extinct and may soon be lost from people's lives when the society is preoccupied with the coming of modern life [5]. In some instances, school students are faced with various choices of literacy products from other countries, both from western and eastern countries, available commercially or freely, online or in print. These products will gradually alienate them from the legacy of their local literacy. As such, the continuity or extinction of local folklore is largely determined by the attitude of the community itself in treating its cultural products. If this is not anticipated earlier, the local wisdom contained in local folklore will be slowly eroded and replaced by new ideologies that come from outside their own. Moreover, with the

decreasing number of informants who can tell the folklore in the community and the unavailability of written folklore manuscripts, the existence of folklore in Indonesia, especially in West Nusa Tenggara (WNT), will be jeopardized as the process of handing down the folklore is cut off. If no attempt is made to revitalize the local folklore, in the long run, people in WNT will lose the important cultural heritage that becomes the source of their philosophy and identity. This is the main issue that motivates the researchers to conduct the current study.

Currently efforts to revitalize folklore as a literacy reading resource in WNT have not been much undertaken. In the school library and in book-shops, folklore books originated from the WNT's oral traditions, both in Indonesian and English, are not widely found. In general, the available folklore books come from other regions, such as Java and Sumatra. Thus, students in WNT are more familiar with folklore products from other regions than from their own. At this point, efforts to revitalize folklore as a literacy reading source for students in schools need to be done immediately.

Philosophically, the availability of reading sources originating from folklore will certainly strengthen the sense of nationalism and self-identity; pedagogically, it will positively contribute to the national character education and the world of literacy. These philosophical and pedagogical principles are congruent with National Education Goal, i.e. to develop educational output, that is, students possessing religious, honorable, healthful, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, democratic and law-abiding characters.

Despite such ideal thoughts, however, at present both the Indonesian and English 2013 Curriculum is not well equipped with supplementary reading books. In general, schools only have one kind of student book while additional materials for enriching students' literacy reading activities outside the classroom, especially in the form of bilingual literacy readers, are not available yet. Under such a situation, the reproduction of local folklore in two languages, as a source of bi-literacy readers, becomes imperative because these products of folklore will support not only the development of students' learning Indonesian and English languages but also the acquisition of their own cultural norms, values and morality relevant to the National Education Goal. As such, the provision of bilingual literacy materials derived from the values of local wisdom will facilitate students not only to master Indonesian and English languages but also to recognize and understand the values of their local wisdom as self-identity before they are exposed further to universal values contained in the foreign literacy readers. Through the revitalization of folklore, they will be able to understand and compare the similarities and differences of values that exist in their society with new values that emerge from their interaction with the global community.

The general purpose of the current study is to explore, reconstruct and produce bilingual reading texts stemming from the folklore that contains the local wisdoms of the people of Sumbawa District, West Nusa Tenggara. In particular the study aims to (1) explore the potential oral traditions (folklores) in Sumbawa Regency containing the values of local wisdom in line with the characters of Indonesian people, and (2) analyze the values of local wisdom contained in the oral tradition

(folklore) in Sumbawa Regency. Results of the current study would be used to reconstruct literacy products for bilingual supplemental readers.

II. METHOD

This study combined exploratory approach and research and development design (R&D). The approach was used to uncover the phenomenon that was not clearly known yet. Through R&D the researchers attempt to clarify specific questions concerning the intended data.

As regards the use of R&D research design, the current study was directed toward creating prototypes of bilingual supplemental readers for the beneficiaries of education. The study adapted a series of R&D activities suggested by Gal, Gal & Borg [16] such as (1) data collecting, (2) developing preliminary research product, (3) field testing, (4) revision of research product, and (5) dissemination and implementation.

Initially, the researchers collected data about oral traditions that contained local wisdom values, especially those that were in line with the spirit of character education in Indonesia. The data were obtained from (a) informants who inherited folklore that contains local wisdom in line with the spirit of character education and (b) written documents of folklore products obtained from various sources available in the community. The data were collected through a number of techniques, such as: (a) in-depth interviews with key informants who owned oral traditions, (b) focused group discussions, (c) document studies and (d) field-notes obtained from the key informants' colleagues who were familiar with the local folklore. Documents that were matched with oral story manuscripts and character education values were further classified according to themes. This was intended to determine whether they were relevant to the values of character education.

Pertaining to in-depth interviews, the researchers met 8 key informants who inherited stories of oral traditions in Sumbawa Regency. Similarly, the interviews aimed to gather folklore products that contained the values of local wisdom relevant to character education. Prior to meeting these key informants, the researchers made preparatory steps to determine the types of topics, questions and map of location of folklore origins. All data from the in-depth interviews were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively. Folklore manuscripts related to the local wisdom were compared with data recorded from the key informants. At the end of the data analysis, the researchers managed data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The resulted data were then translated into English as a bilingual literacy reading materials.

Further, the translated data were used to develop preliminary products in the form of prototype books based on the content of local wisdom values. These products were edited, rewritten and adjusted to the level of language proficiency of the end users, i.e. junior high school students. The product prototype was planned to be printed with attractive layouts and illustrations to support the content of the stories that contained the values of local wisdom that could be used as a reference for character education. Finally, these products would be distributed to teachers to get input on their critical views before the dissemination process.

III. FINDINGS

A. *The Potential Oral Traditions (Folklore) in Sumbawa Regency Containing the Values of Local Wisdom in Line with the Characters of Indonesian People*

Findings of the study identified two major themes that contained exemplary, good character education in the Sumbawanese oral tradition, i.e. (1) tangible cultural products, (2) and the intangible cultural products. One tangible cultural product found in the study was in the form of an artistic creation of cultural heritage contained in the architecture of Sumbawanese traditional 3house. Under the second major theme — tangible cultural products — five sub-themes were found: (1) principles of family education, (2) societal collective practices, (3) folktales, (4) myths and (5) superstitions. These sub-themes encompassed a number of community beliefs and practices, such as family education, social interaction, farming, festivity and religious activities in the Sumbawanese society. These beliefs and cultural practices functioned as pedagogical devices that were used to inculcate values into community lives.

The first sub-theme of intangible cultural product deals with the basic principles of family education for a respectable conduct, known as *Raboat-aji* (devotion). Two categories of societal collective practices appeared from the second sub-theme: (1) *Basiru* and (2) *Antat Pinulong*. *Basiru* is a kind of mutual assistance done by groups of people in completing an agricultural activity. In order to get help from others, every member of society should participate in *Basiru*. Social rules and sanctions apply when people violate it. The same is with *Antat Panulong*. People work together to practice *Antat Panulong* when they carry out festivities, such as circumcision and wedding ceremony. In both *Basiru* and *Antat Pinulong* people share not only jobs but also basic needs for the activities.

The third sub-theme deals with folktales. Data analysis identifies that three folktales contained educational values, i.e. (1) *Untir Ponan*, (2) *Rangala Polak* and (3) *Bara Baol*. The first folktale was story about a young perseverant man who wandered to seek religious knowledge far away from home after he committed a mistake to his parent. His efforts to repair his mistakes made him travel to Mecca. Upon his return to the village, people believed that he brought blessings and fertility to his village. For that reason, until now he is honored as the pious person in the form of prayers and festivities known as *Sadaka Orong di Ponan*.

The second folktale is about the story of two befriended characters: *Mandung*, a generous man and *Bungkik*, a stingy man. *Mandung* got troubled when he borrowed *Bungkik*'s plow and broke it. *Bungkik* demanded *Mandung* restore the plow as ever before. *Mandung* offered his plow in exchange but *Bungkik* refused it. In the end, *Mandung* asked help from God to restore *Bungkik*'s plow. Because of his honesty and sincerity, *Mandung* was blessed to magically restore *Bungkik*'s plow as it was. These two characters remained good friends although they had some conflicted behaviors.

The third folktale was about buffalo fighting used to solve a conflict between two groups of villagers. The story happened at

the border of *Empang* and *Plampang* districts. Two groups of villagers almost broke into fights to dispute the border of their villages. Fortunately, the community leaders of both villages met together to seek a solution to the problem. Then, they agreed to hold buffalo fighting to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Each of the villager groups had different motives to win the buffalo fight: People from *Empang* were only interested in the acquisition of new border land whereas people from *Plampang* were only interested in winning the buffalo fighting. On the specified day, both parties brought their buffalos to the fighting field. They all committed to the consensus: i.e. wherever the lost buffalo fell down, that place became the new border agreed upon by both parties. The story ended when the buffalo from *Empang* lost and fell down the ground of *Plampang*. Both parties claimed the victory with their own reasons and thus a win-win solution was settled.

The fourth sub-theme pertained to popular myths that were believed to have relations with the existence of a number of places in Sumbawa. Three sub-themes of these myths emerged from the data: (1) *Lampaq Lenong Kebo*, (2) *Olat Jaran Pusang* and (3) *Tanjung menangis*. The first myth is about the adventure of Buffalo-leather slippers owned by the King of Sumbawa. These slippers turned into figures they dreamed of as they prayed to God. They were transformed into different figures from time to time but they never felt satisfied. The more their dreams come true, the greedier they are. Ultimately, they wanted to become God. The story ends tragically: those entities returned to become ragged pairs of slippers like before because of their greed.

The second myth was about the cursed horse. The story was told about the King of *Muer – Plampang*. He went hunting on his strong, loving horse and was accompanied by his hunting dogs. After a long journey, the horse was jittery as he was restless. The King forced the horse to continue the journey but it refused and jumped up and down so wildly that the King was shocked then fell down. Unable to control his anger, the King cursed the horse into stone. Due to his magical power, the King's curse came true and the horse turned into stone. The King was sad and regretful by the curse he made. Until now the figure of this stoned horse can be seen at the top of *Jaran Pusang* Mount.

The third myth was about the popular myth of *Tanjung menangis* (Weeping Cape). The daughter of Sultan *Samawa* had long been sick. The Sultan had tried to find healers for his beloved daughter but nothing was resulted. The Sultan then made a contest. Whoever could heal his daughter, he would be granted to marry her. One day an old shaman who came from the land of Sulawesi managed to cure the princess. Yet, the Sultan denied his promise and disapproved of the shaman to marry his daughter. Even though the Princess said she fell in love with the shaman, the Sultan insisted on disapproving them. With sad feeling, the shaman went sailing back to his homeland. The Princess who was cured by the man ran after him until she reached the cape where the shaman turned into a handsome and young man as he set sail. The princess stood staring and crying for the shaman who left her for good. The story was told that she kept weeping as she was drowned at the cape.

The fifth sub-theme dealt with superstitions that contained symbolic educational values practiced among Sumbawanese. There were three kinds of the superstition widely believed and still practiced by the present Sumbawanese: (1) prohibition to sleep at dusk time, (2) prohibition to hum and sing in the kitchen, and (3) prohibition to sit on top of a bamboo tray. It is believed that when these superstitions are violated, bad lucks will happen to the violators. For example, when superstition (1) is violated, she/he will easily get sick and die. The same is true from the superstition (2). When a woman hums or sings in the kitchen, they will soon become a widow and/or being hated by her father-in-law. Similar rule is attributed to superstition (3). When someone sits on a bamboo tray (an instrument for rice cleaning) unpleasant boils will grow at his/her bottom.

B. Analysis the Values of Local Wisdom Contained in the Oral Tradition (Folklore) in Sumbawa Regency

In relation to the first major theme, the tangible cultural product of a two-story traditional Sumbawanese house has a number of philosophical values that characterize the identity of ethnic group of Sumbawa. All doors, staircases, guest rooms and guest bedrooms are divided based on gender-role. For example, the front staircase of the house specifically designated for male guests is named *Selaki* (a male staircase). In contrast, the back staircase for female guests is called *Sawai* (a female staircase). In the same vein, the door for male guest is named *Lawang Selaki* (a male door) whereas the door for female guests is called *Lawang Sawai* (a female door). Each of these parts of the house contains the philosophical values of respecting guests and the provision of privacy to the guests of different gender.

With reference to the second major theme, the first intangible cultural product is contained in the family practices in educating children known as *Reboat-aji*. Principally, there are three entities that every child should respect: (1) God, (2) parents and (3) teachers. These practices characterize codes of conduct practiced among the Sumbawanese. Three core values of *Reboat-aji* are emphasized within the family education in Sumbawa: (1) *Raboat aji lako Nene* (devotion to God the Almighty), (2) *Raboat aji lako ina-bapak* (devotion to parents); and (3) *Raboat aji lako ne-guru* (devotion to teachers). These principles show that religion, parents and teachers have an important place in the family education. They shape not only children's moral behaviors but also their self-identity as members of the Sumbawanese society. The values of local wisdoms contained in these intangible cultural products are congruent with the outputs of exemplary good character education explicitly mentioned in the National Education Goal.

The second intangible cultural product lies in the societal collective practices called *Basiru* and *Antat Pinulong*. These collective practices reflect the materialization of collective assistance activities that involve participation of all members of community. Both concepts share similar values: (1) maintaining collective action of the society and (2) strengthening the spirit of mutual assistance. The difference between both is that while *Basiru* is typically practiced in the cultivation of agricultural land — e.g. land clearing, land ploughing and crops planting — *Antat Panulong* is specifically performed in the ceremonial festivities, such as circumcision

and wedding parties. These two intangible cultural products are still widely practiced among the Sumbawane as they have significant cohesive potentials to unite people in maintaining solidarity and cooperative action.

The third sub-theme presented in the findings above contained the virtues of good human quality, such as spirituality, honesty, modesty, friendship, and commitment to consensus. In general, the three folktales depicted the stories of laypersons but they constituted significant symbolical moral values that embodied the Sumbawane daily conducts. These values have a common ground with the emphasis of the basic Indonesian moral education, i.e. spirituality, wisdom, honesty, kindness, and respects for others. These folktales were identified to have educational values that shape the Sumbawane beliefs systems.

All categories under the sub-theme of superstitions above contain indirect ways of teaching moral values to children. In general superstition (1) is used to prevent children from sleeping during a sunset prayer time (*Maghrib*) as the time for it is extremely short. Children will be very likely to abandon the prayer when they fall asleep during this time whereas their religion (Islam) suggests that no abandoning prayer is allowed. Superstition (2) deals with moral values of appropriateness. The bamboo tray is the main instrument used by parents to process food staple. It is a clean instrument that children have to respect. Thus, when children sit on top of it, their act is considered morally inappropriate. In this case, the superstition teaches children to use the right instrument for the right purpose.

IV. DISCUSSION

Results of the study have shed to light on two Sumbawane cultural products relevant to the concepts generated by Smith & Akagawa [7] and Swensen et al. [6]: (1) tangible and (2) intangible cultural products. These two types of cultural products reflect the world-view, the cultural identity, societal shared knowledge and beliefs and collective behaviors of the Sumbawane people. Through folklore, they learn appropriate manners and correct behaviors according to the social rules set forth by their society. These empirical findings support Hymes' theoretical postulates which claim that folklore provides activity, purpose, and genre as lessons for lifelong learning [4].

Concerning the intangible cultural products, the current study reveals that the four sub-themes under the study are rich with educational values that shape the self-identity and self-concept of the Sumbawane people. The values contained in the Sumbawane folklore has become the powerful source of ethos that characterize the frames of reference, belief-systems, patterns of communication, codes of conduct, and rules of engagement practiced by members of the society [14,15]. All these important traits become the potential source of character education shared among the Sumbawane people.

Considering all those valuable cultural traits, it is necessary for the educational authority of WNT Province to take an immediate action to revitalize its folklores as a source of school literacy. The reason for this is that while the number of owners of oral tradition is getting lesser, the process of handing down

of the folklore undergoes stagnation. Thus, by revitalizing the folklore available in the WNT society, the young generation of WNT can learn and internalize the living cultural values of their society. Subsequently, this can guide them to gain better understanding of the exemplary sound morality and conduct existing in their own society

V. CONCLUSION

The overall findings of the study show that all themes contained in the Sumbawane folklore have potential educational values that can be used as a source for school literacy movement. A number of themes and sub-themes have shown their substantial roles as media for educating young people to solve societal problems collectively, develop a sense of togetherness and build better relationships with others. The study concludes that the educational values contained in the Sumbawane folklore studied are congruent to the ideals of national character education and thus they need to be preserved immediately. It is expected that the reproduction of the folklore in the form of reading materials will help students to recognize and learn their own cultural traits and ethical values.

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