

## **Developing Sundanese Language and Cultural Literacy in Early Learners through Educational Picture Board Games**

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**Abstract:** The study explores the integration of storytelling using Educational Pictured Game Board as an innovative pedagogical approach to preserve the Sundanese language and cultural identity among early childhood learners at PAUD Sahabat Syurga. This method employed a qualitative design with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, focusing on children aged 5-6 years. The use of culturally resonant stories, traditional songs, and interactive educational tools made from recycled materials created an engaging and immersive learning experience. The results indicate significant improvements in children's Sundanese vocabulary acquisition, narrative skills, and cultural awareness. Parental involvement played a crucial role in reinforcing language use at home, while teachers' creativity and adaptability were key to delivering effective lessons. Challenges included limited parental fluency, resource constraints, and the dominance of Indonesian as the primary language in families. The study highlights the scalability of this approach to other regional languages and its potential to contribute to cultural preservation efforts. By demonstrating the effectiveness of culturally integrated storytelling, this research underscores the importance of early interventions in sustaining linguistic and cultural diversity. Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of such initiatives and investigate the use of digital tools to modernize regional language education.

**Keywords:** storytelling, Sundanese language, cultural preservation, early childhood education, interactive learning, Educational Pictured Game Board.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language serves as an essential medium for communication, facilitating the expression of thoughts, emotions, and cultural values. Indonesia, with its remarkable linguistic diversity encompassing approximately 715 indigenous languages, features the Sundanese language as one of its most significant, spoken by an estimated 27 million individuals (Wongso et al., 2022). Regional languages not only function as tools for interaction but also as repositories of local wisdom, traditions, and identities (Yosfiani & Nurhayati, 2023). However, the rapid encroachment of globalization poses an existential threat to the preservation of these linguistic heritages, particularly Sundanese (Awal, 2024).

The decline in Sundanese usage stems from urbanization, the growing prevalence of bilingualism, and the dominance of national and global languages in educational and social contexts. Grenoble and Osipov (2023) identified generational shifts in linguistic preferences, with

younger populations often perceiving regional languages as outdated. This changing perception has weakened the transmission of Sundanese as a primary communicative medium within families and communities. Consequently, the Sundanese language faces an endangerment trajectory similar to trends observed in numerous regional languages globally (Awal, 2024). Given the intrinsic role of language in shaping cultural identity and fostering a sense of belonging, deliberate efforts to sustain Sundanese are essential to safeguard cultural continuity and regional pride (Yosfiani & Nurhayati, 2023).

Amid these challenges, early childhood education (ECE) emerges as a promising avenue for intervention. Developmental research underscores the formative years as critical for language acquisition and cultural imprinting (Heryanti & Nurhayati, 2023; Kusmiatiningsih et al., 2024; Marlina et al., 2021; Nurhayati & Millenia, 2024; Patimah & Nurhayati, 2023). Structured educational programs during this period can foster positive attitudes toward regional languages, embedding linguistic and

cultural competencies early in life. Scholars advocate for pedagogical innovations that integrate storytelling, play-based learning, and culturally relevant educational materials to optimize language learning outcome (Yosfiani & Nurhayati, 2023). Storytelling, as a well-documented pedagogical strategy, holds significant promise in language education due to its capacity to immerse learners in engaging narratives (Ghofur & Nurhayati, 2023b, 2023a). By fostering active participation, storytelling enhances vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and critical thinking skills (Vaahtoranta et al., 2019). The inclusion of visual aids, such as illustrated boards or props, further enriches this engagement, offering children tactile and visual stimuli that reinforce linguistic inputs (Ghofur & Nurhayati, 2023b). Additionally, culturally aligned storytelling can serve as a means of preserving local traditions and instilling pride in regional identities, particularly when implemented in educational settings.

The importance of culturally tailored educational interventions is supported by prior research, which demonstrates that language acquisition is more effective when instructional materials align with learners' sociocultural contexts (Ghofur & Nurhayati, 2023b; Yosfiani & Nurhayati, 2023). For example, integrating narrative techniques with locally relevant content has shown significant impact in other regional language preservation efforts. Maureen et al. (2020) emphasized that storytelling combined with interactive play creates an engaging environment conducive to linguistic and cognitive development. Despite these insights, research addressing the specific application of these methodologies to Sundanese remains limited.

Research indicates that game-based learning (GBL) significantly enhances cognitive development in early childhood. Anuar emphasizes that GBL encourages critical and strategic thinking skills, as children are required to plan their actions and consider the consequences of their decisions during gameplay (Aminah et al., 2021; Anuar, 2024; Rosita et al., 2020). This aligns with findings from Alotaibi, who conducted a systematic review demonstrating that GBL increases engagement, which is crucial for motivation and interest in learning among young children (Alotaibi, 2024). Furthermore, Putra's study highlights that board

games can effectively support children's thinking processes and knowledge acquisition, particularly when integrated into thematic learning (Putra, 2024). These findings collectively underscore the cognitive benefits of incorporating board games into early childhood education curricula.

This study investigates the application of storytelling using Educational Pictured Game Board at PAUD Sahabat Syurga. This innovative tool, crafted from recyclable materials, is designed to depict Sundanese cultural themes and engage young learners. Observational data from PAUD Sahabat Syurga suggest that this method has been enthusiastically received by both children and educators. The institution's "Rebo Nyunda" program further reinforces this pedagogical initiative by mandating the use of Sundanese in weekly activities, thereby normalizing its usage. These efforts align with research advocacy for mother tongue-based education to sustain linguistic and cultural diversity (Pandey, 2023).

Building on these insights, this study uniquely combines the principles of storytelling and culturally aligned educational media to promote Sundanese language proficiency. The Educational Pictured Game Board not only serves as a linguistic tool but also acts as a cultural bridge, introducing children to local traditions and narratives. Unlike prior research, this investigation evaluates both the linguistic outcomes and the socio-cultural ramifications of employing culturally relevant pedagogical tools in Sundanese ECE contexts. By addressing a critical gap, this study contributes to the discourse on regional language revitalization and the broader field of culturally responsive pedagogy.

The primary objectives of this study are threefold. First, it seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of Educational Pictured Game Board in enhancing Sundanese language skills among children aged 5 to 6 years. Second, it identifies the challenges and facilitators associated with implementing this storytelling-based approach in ECE. Finally, it explores the scalability and adaptability of this method to other linguistic and educational settings. The study's novelty lies in its integration of pedagogical innovation with cultural preservation, offering a pragmatic response to the challenges of linguistic homogenization in the contemporary era. By presenting actionable

findings, this research aims to inform educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders committed to sustaining regional languages and cultural heritage. These insights aspire to contribute meaningfully to the body of literature on language preservation, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their cultural roots through innovative educational practices.

## **METHOD**

This section delineates the rigorous and systematic approach employed to examine the implementation of storytelling in Sundanese using the Educational Game Board at PAUD Sahabat Syurga. A qualitative descriptive framework underpinned this study to facilitate a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. The study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach, as articulated by Iswahyudi et al. (2023) and Nurhayati et al. (2024), which emphasizes the meticulous depiction of real-world phenomena through textual or verbal data. This methodological choice was particularly apt for exploring the pedagogical and cultural implications of Educational Pictured Game Board in enhancing language acquisition among children aged 5 to 6 years. The research was conducted at PAUD Sahabat Syurga, situated in Babakan Tarogong, Baros Village, Arjasari District, Bandung Regency, West Java. This institution serves as an active proponent of Sundanese language and culture, prominently featuring initiatives such as the “Rebo Nyunda” program. The study engaged a purposive sample comprising the headmaster, teachers, parents, and a cohort of 20 children aged 5 to 6 years. Additionally, parents of these children contributed indirectly by fostering language practices at home. As delineated by Sugiyono (2019), purposive sampling ensures the selection of participants who are most relevant and insightful concerning the research questions.

Data collection encompassed interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with the headmaster and teachers to extract rich insights into their perceptions of Educational Pictured Game Board’s efficacy, encountered challenges, and observed impacts on student engagement and language skills. Parental interviews further contextualized the role of familial support in sustaining Sundanese language development. Observations were systematically carried out during storytelling

sessions to evaluate instructional delivery, student interaction, and linguistic progress. These observational studies were conducted on May 22, May 29, and June 5, 2024, and detailed notes captured elements such as storytelling techniques, classroom dynamics, and learner responses. The importance of direct observation in capturing the subtleties of pedagogical processes, thereby validating this approach. Complementary documentation, including lesson plans, assessment records, and session photographs, provided additional data to triangulate findings. Documentation enriches qualitative research by offering tangible evidence to substantiate observed phenomena.

The analysis of collected data adhered to a systematic and iterative process, integrating the phases of reduction, presentation, and conclusion derivation as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). Initial raw data from interviews, observations, and documentation underwent a reduction process to filter extraneous information and identify core themes such as pedagogical efficacy, learner engagement, and implementation barriers. These thematic categories were then organized and presented in structured narrative forms, augmented with tables and figures to enhance interpretability. For instance, themes like “Linguistic Skill Development” and “Interactive Engagement via APE” were elaborated upon to underscore key findings. The inductive derivation of conclusions was firmly anchored in observed patterns, theoretical frameworks, and prior studies, thereby reinforcing the study’s validity. Validation procedures included member checking, wherein participants reviewed preliminary interpretations to ensure authenticity and credibility.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **1. Implementation of Storytelling Using Educational Pictured Game Board**

The implementation of storytelling using Educational Pictured Game Board at PAUD Sahabat Syurga offers a compelling approach to mitigating the decline of the Sundanese language among early learners. By incorporating recycled materials such as bottle caps, fabric scraps, cardboard, and corn husks, educators created an eco-friendly, cost-effective educational tool. This medium bridged cultural narratives and pedagogical objectives, enhancing the tactile and

visual engagement of children. The findings align with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which underscores the role of cultural tools in fostering cognitive and social development (2022) as well as emphasis on contextual relevance in learning materials.

The selected Sundanese stories, including *Sakadang Monyet jeung Sakadang Sireum* (The Monkey and the Ant), *Monyet rek Ngala Manggu* (The Monkey Picking Mangosteen), and *Sakadang Monyet jeung Sakadang Lalay* (The Monkey and the Bat), featured characters and themes familiar to children's cultural context. These narratives, supplemented by traditional Sundanese songs (*ngawih*), provided a multisensory learning experience that captivated the learners' attention. As reported by one teacher, "The children were immediately drawn to the storytelling board, engaging eagerly with its colorful and interactive elements." This initiative integrated seamlessly into the "Rebo Nyunda" program, a weekly Sundanese language immersion activity. The program mandated exclusive use of Sundanese among teachers and students, fostering consistent language exposure. External validation of the Educational Pictured Game Board's efficacy came through its first-place award in a regional competition, reflecting its innovative contribution to both educational practices and cultural preservation. These results further align with Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, which highlights the importance of diverse learning modalities (Setiawan et al., 2020).

## 2. Improvement in Sundanese Language Proficiency

The storytelling sessions yielded significant improvements in children's mastery of Sundanese vocabulary, narrative skills, and oral fluency. Observational data showed children rapidly acquiring terms such as *sireum* (ant), *lalay* (bat), and *monyet* (monkey), along with verbs describing movements like *ngarayap* (crawling), *ngapung* (flying), and *naek* (climbing). These results resonate with Krashen's input hypothesis (1985), emphasizing the role of comprehensible input in language learning (Ramahlo, 2019), and Janif et al. (2016) studies on the value of oral traditions in linguistic development. Children demonstrated increased proficiency in retelling the stories, using new vocabulary and character descriptions like *sarakah* (greedy) for the monkey and *getol*

(diligent) for the ant. One parent remarked, "My child now narrates these stories at home in Sundanese, sparking interest in our family to revisit our cultural roots." Such outcomes validate the integration of cultural narratives as a vehicle for meaningful language learning. The inclusion of traditional songs further enriched the program. Initially challenging for some, consistent repetition allowed children to sing *Pupuh Kinanti* and *Pupuh Balakbak* with growing confidence. Gardner's (1983) framework supports the use of auditory and kinesthetic elements, which enhance engagement and reinforce learning outcomes (Setiawan et al., 2020). These findings also align with Ghofur and Nurhayati (2023a) emphasis on the impact of visual and auditory aids in educational settings.

## 3. Observed Child Responses

Children displayed heightened curiosity and engagement when interacting with the Educational Pictured Game Board, actively participating in storytelling sessions. Teachers noted that the tool inspired a sense of wonder among children, prompting them to ask insightful questions. For instance, one child inquired, "Why do bats hang upside down during the day?" Such inquiries reflect not only the children's growing linguistic abilities but also their cognitive and cultural curiosity. This outcome resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) theory, which emphasizes the role of cultural immersion and social interaction in fostering learning (Alkhudiry, 2022). Empirical data from classroom observations revealed that children demonstrated enthusiasm in collaborative activities, such as arranging story elements, counting animals, and mimicking movements related to the narrative. For example, during one session, children collaboratively identified and sorted animal images, reinforcing vocabulary acquisition. Teachers also observed children enthusiastically imitating the movements of ants (*ngarayap*) and bats (*ngapung*), which not only enriched their understanding of Sundanese vocabulary but also fostered kinesthetic learning. This active participation aligns with Lloret (2020) findings that collaborative tasks enhance both social and linguistic development. Furthermore, Gardner's (1983) assertion that multisensory approaches heighten motivation and retention was validated as children exhibited sustained interest throughout the sessions (Setiawan et al., 2020). Teachers highlighted that the colorful, tactile

materials used in the APE board captivated the children's attention, making the lessons memorable. One teacher remarked, "The children's excitement was evident as they eagerly awaited their turn to interact with the board."

Parental feedback further corroborated these observations. One parent shared, "My child often narrates what they learned in class, especially the stories and songs, which they excitedly repeat at home." This enthusiasm at home underscores the program's success in creating a meaningful connection between classroom activities and familial engagement. These findings align with research by Kan et al. (2020), which underscores the importance of creating linguistically rich environments both at school and home to sustain language acquisition. Moreover, children's responses during storytelling sessions demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating cultural elements into pedagogy. For example, one child, while recounting the story of *Sakadang Monyet jeung Sakadang Sireum*, confidently described the character traits of diligence (*getol*) and greed (*sarakah*), showcasing an understanding of both language and moral lessons. Teachers noted that this ability to integrate cultural values into language learning aligns with previous research findings that emphasize on the contextual relevance of educational tools (Komara et al., 2021; Nurhayati, Dina, et al., 2024; Syafrudin & Nurhayati, 2020). Overall, the observed child responses highlight the multifaceted benefits of using Educational Pictured Game Board. The tool not only enhanced Sundanese language proficiency but also fostered cultural awareness and social interaction, providing a holistic learning experience that is both engaging and educationally impactful.

#### 4. Role of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement emerged as a pivotal factor in reinforcing language acquisition. Teachers encouraged parents to use Sundanese at home and practice traditional songs with their children, leading to notable improvements in linguistic proficiency. One parent shared, "My child's excitement has inspired our family to incorporate Sundanese into our daily lives." Parents also reported that children often corrected their use of Sundanese vocabulary, indicating that learning extended beyond the classroom and influenced familial language practices. One father commented, "My son reminds me to use

proper Sundanese words, which has made our family more conscious of our heritage." However, challenges persisted. Some parents expressed difficulty navigating the formal linguistic levels of Sundanese (*undak usuk basa*), while others struggled with balancing Sundanese and other languages spoken at home. For instance, a mother explained, "It is hard to switch between Sundanese and Javanese when my husband and I come from different linguistic backgrounds." Despite these challenges, parents appreciated the structured guidance provided by teachers. Another parent noted, "The examples and materials from school have helped us integrate Sundanese into our daily routines." These findings corroborate current research findings which emphasize the interplay of familial and educational environments (Gondiwati & Nurhayati, 2024; Latif et al., 2023; Murniati & Nurhayati, 2024; Nurhayati, 2021; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Sholihah & Nurhayati, 2024). Funk (2024) underscores the necessity of active parental engagement for effective language retention. Additionally, Quan (2017) highlights the importance of consistent parental involvement in fostering bilingual proficiency, which is evident in the positive outcomes observed in this program.

#### 5. Teacher Development and Challenges

Teachers played a central role in the program's success, showcasing creativity and dedication in designing and utilizing the Educational Pictured Game Board. One teacher remarked, "Creating the board was demanding but incredibly rewarding, especially seeing how much the children enjoyed it." Teachers frequently mentioned the excitement and curiosity displayed by children when they interacted with the board, which validated their efforts and inspired them to innovate further. Another teacher shared, "When children actively ask questions and engage with the story elements, it reinforces the value of our creative process." Despite these achievements, teachers faced challenges in mastering vocal techniques, sustaining character portrayals, and managing classroom dynamics. One educator explained, "Maintaining distinct voices for characters throughout the storytelling sessions was exhausting but necessary to keep the children engaged." Classroom management also posed difficulties, especially during high-energy activities, as one teacher noted, "Sometimes their

enthusiasm led to disruptions, and balancing that energy required constant effort.” Professional development is critical to addressing these challenges. Research findings highlight the importance of continuous training to equip educators with the skills needed for innovative teaching methods (Aisah et al., 2024; Musa et al., 2022, 2024; Musa & Nurhayati, 2024; Suwartono et al., 2024). Similarly, Andyani et al.’s (2020) emphasis on pedagogical content knowledge underscores the necessity of subject-specific strategies to enhance teaching efficacy. Additionally, integrating technology and adaptive teaching strategies into professional development programs could further strengthen the teachers’ capabilities in storytelling and classroom engagement (Ghofur & Nurhayati, 2023b; Nuraeni & Nurhayati, 2023).

## 6. Evidence of Success and Recognition

The program’s success was evident through qualitative observations and significant external recognition, underscoring its educational and cultural impact. The Educational Pictured Game Board earned first place in the Apresiasi Prestasi PTK PAUD Kabupaten Bandung 2023 competition, showcasing its innovative integration of cultural preservation and early childhood pedagogy. A competition judge highlighted, “This initiative exemplifies how creative tools can effectively bridge cultural education and early learning, offering a replicable model for other institutions.” Qualitative feedback from parents, teachers, and students consistently affirmed the program’s effectiveness. Teachers noted measurable improvements in children’s language skills and heightened engagement during storytelling sessions. One educator stated, “The children’s ability to narrate and recall vocabulary in Sundanese has improved dramatically, and their enthusiasm is a testament to the program’s success.” Similarly, parents observed positive changes in their children’s use of Sundanese at home, with one parent commenting, “Our child now confidently sings traditional Sundanese songs and recounts stories, deepening their connection to our heritage.” The recognition garnered by this program also sparked interest in broader applications. Regional educators expressed interest in adapting the Educational Pictured Game Board for other linguistic and cultural contexts, demonstrating its potential scalability. UNESCO’s (1999) guidelines on

preserving intangible cultural heritage align with these outcomes, emphasizing grassroots initiatives as pivotal for sustaining linguistic and cultural diversity (Grant, 2018). The program’s recognition not only validated its innovative approach but also positioned it as a model for integrating cultural preservation into formal education systems.

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the pedagogical and cultural significance of storytelling through APE Papan Bergambar, positioning it as an innovative method to enhance Sundanese language proficiency and cultural identity in early childhood education. The research findings reveal substantial improvements in vocabulary acquisition, narrative skills, and cultural comprehension among young learners. These outcomes were achieved through the strategic integration of interactive, multisensory, and culturally resonant materials that engaged learners deeply and meaningfully. Furthermore, the active participation of children, parents, and teachers underscored the program’s collaborative strength. The study also highlighted critical challenges, including parental fluency limitations, resource constraints, and broader sociolinguistic barriers. Despite these obstacles, the program’s measurable success and external recognition, such as its award-winning implementation, underscore its potential for scalability and adaptation to other regional languages and cultural contexts. This scalability aligns with the principles of sustainability and innovation in education, as highlighted in frameworks such as Hornberger’s (2008) continua of biliteracy. This research makes a valuable contribution to the academic discourse on language preservation and cultural identity formation. By demonstrating the efficacy of culturally relevant educational tools, it emphasizes the importance of embedding local heritage within early childhood pedagogy to counteract the marginalization of minority languages. Future research should investigate the longitudinal impacts of such interventions, particularly on sustained linguistic retention and intergenerational cultural transmission. Additionally, exploring the integration of digital storytelling technologies and fostering broader institutional and community collaborations could further enhance the reach and impact of similar

initiatives, ensuring the preservation and revitalization of linguistic and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalized world

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