

## **The Instilling of Ethical Language Values for the Students through Folklore at Sekolah Kebangsaan Padung Mart, South Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

*This community service program aimed to develop ethical language values among students through storytelling and folklore-based learning. The activity was implemented at Ban Phadung Mart School, Southern Thailand, involving 20 students over three sessions. The program applied interactive storytelling as a medium to integrate linguistic, cultural, and moral learning. The community service was designed as a participatory educational intervention that emphasized the use of folklore to internalize ethical concepts such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and empathy. Data were collected through observation, reflection journals, and interviews with students and teachers. The results indicated a significant improvement in students' understanding of moral values and their ability to use English to express those values. The storytelling sessions not only improved language skills but also cultivated ethical awareness, social responsibility, and appreciation of local culture. The project highlights the importance of folklore as a pedagogical tool in developing ethical and linguistic competence in EFL contexts.*

**Keywords** - folklore, ethical language values, storytelling, community service, moral education

### **Abstrak**

*Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan nilai-nilai bahasa yang beretika di kalangan siswa melalui pembelajaran berbasis cerita rakyat dan kegiatan mendengarkan. Kegiatan ini dilaksanakan di Ban Phadung Mart School, Thailand Selatan, dengan melibatkan 20 siswa selama tiga sesi. Program ini menerapkan metode mendengarkan interaktif sebagai media untuk mengintegrasikan pembelajaran linguistik, budaya, dan moral. Pengabdian ini dirancang sebagai intervensi pendidikan partisipatif yang menekankan penggunaan cerita rakyat untuk menginternalisasi konsep etika seperti kejujuran, rasa hormat, tanggung jawab, dan empati. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, jurnal refleksi, dan wawancara dengan siswa serta guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman siswa terhadap nilai-nilai moral serta kemampuan mereka menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk mengekspresikan nilai-nilai tersebut. Sesi mendengarkan tidak hanya meningkatkan keterampilan berbahasa, tetapi juga menumbuhkan kesadaran etika, tanggung jawab sosial, dan apresiasi terhadap budaya lokal. Proyek ini menegaskan pentingnya cerita rakyat sebagai alat pedagogis dalam mengembangkan kompetensi etis dan linguistik dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL).*

**Kata kunci** — cerita rakyat, nilai bahasa beretika, mendengarkan, pengabdian kepada masyarakat, pendidikan moral

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a means of communication but also a vehicle of values, ethics, and culture. In many educational settings, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, moral and ethical values are often overlooked, with greater emphasis placed on linguistic accuracy and grammar. However, language learning should ideally nurture not only linguistic competence but also character and moral development (Lickona, 1991). This perspective aligns with the concept of ethical language, which integrates moral reasoning, empathy, and respectful communication into linguistic practice.

In Thailand's multicultural southern provinces, English learning presents both challenges and opportunities. The region's cultural diversity and strong oral traditions provide a rich foundation for educational programs that combine language learning with local wisdom. Folklore, as an element of oral literature, carries timeless moral messages that can guide behavior and promote ethical communication among students (Bascom, 1965; Dundes, 1980). Through folklore, teachers can present moral dilemmas, role models, and social norms in a context that is both engaging and culturally relevant.

The community service program conducted at Ban Phadung Mart School aimed to integrate folklore-based storytelling into EFL learning. The main objective was to instill ethical language values—such as honesty, respect, tolerance, and responsibility—through stories familiar to the local culture. The approach aligns with UNESCO's call for education that promotes peace, cultural understanding, and ethical awareness through local narratives (UNESCO, 2015).

This article presents the rationale, process, and outcomes of the community service project. It describes how storytelling activities based on folklore can enhance students' moral development, linguistic competence, and intercultural understanding. The program sought to empower teachers and students to use language not only as a tool for communication but also as a means of moral expression.

### **Ethical Language and Moral Education**

Ethical language refers to the use of language that embodies values such as respect, empathy, and integrity in communication (Alexander, 2017). In education, ethical language encourages students to speak thoughtfully, listen respectfully, and express opinions grounded in moral consideration. According to Lickona (1996), character education is essential in nurturing moral reasoning and ethical awareness among learners. Integrating ethical values into language learning thus serves a dual function: enhancing communication skills and fostering moral growth.

### **Folklore as Cultural Pedagogy**

Folklore includes myths, legends, fables, and folk tales passed down orally through generations (Bascom, 1965). It serves as a repository of cultural values, traditions, and moral lessons. Folklore provides examples of virtuous behavior and the consequences of moral failure (Dundes, 1980). By engaging with folklore, learners encounter moral concepts in narrative form, which aids comprehension and reflection (Propp, 1968). In educational contexts, folklore can bridge linguistic learning with moral education by using stories that embody cultural and ethical wisdom (Bruner, 1990).

### **Storytelling in EFL Learning**

Storytelling is recognized as an effective pedagogical approach in EFL instruction (Wright, 1995; Cameron, 2001). It enhances language acquisition, motivation, and cultural awareness. Storytelling provides meaningful contexts for language use, fosters creativity, and supports emotional engagement (Isbell et al., 2004). When folklore is used as storytelling material, students not only practice linguistic skills but also internalize moral and ethical principles embedded in the stories.

### **Integrating Folklore in Character Education**

Combining storytelling and character education allows learners to analyze ethical issues in a familiar and engaging format. Research has shown that folklore-based lessons promote empathy, cooperation, and moral reflection (Nurgiyantoro, 2019). In multicultural contexts like Southern

Thailand, where local tales reflect coexistence and harmony, folklore can be a bridge between linguistic and moral learning (Nasrullah, 2020)

## METHOD

### 1. Setting and Participants

The community service program was conducted at Ban Phadung Mart School, located in Southern Thailand. The participants consisted of 20 secondary school students, aged 13–15. The school is situated in a culturally diverse community, where students speak Thai, Malay, and limited English. Teachers and community members welcomed the integration of local folklore into English learning activities.

### 2. Duration and Sessions

The program lasted for three sessions over a period of three weeks. Each session was 90 minutes long and included interactive activities focusing on storytelling, moral discussion, and reflection.

### 3. Objectives

The main objectives were:

- To instill ethical language values through storytelling.
- To enhance students' English speaking and comprehension skills.
- To promote appreciation of local culture through folklore.
- To strengthen students' moral reasoning and social empathy.

### 4. Procedures

The activities were designed based on participatory learning principles.

- Session 1: Introduction to folklore and storytelling. Students listened to a Thai folktale "The Honest Woodcutter" and discussed its moral values.
- Session 2: Group storytelling. Students retold local folklore in English, emphasizing moral lessons such as honesty and cooperation.
- Session 3: Reflection and creative writing. Students wrote short moral stories and shared reflections on ethical behavior in daily life.

### 5. Data Collection and Evaluation

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and students' reflective journals. Teachers evaluated students' progress based on moral understanding, language expression, and participation. Qualitative data were analyzed to identify emerging themes related to ethical language development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Enhancement of Ethical Awareness

After three storytelling sessions, students showed clear improvement in understanding and expressing moral concepts. They were able to identify moral lessons in stories and relate them to real-life situations. For instance, when discussing "The Honest Woodcutter," students connected the value of honesty with classroom behavior and peer relationships. One student reflected in her journal:

*"If I make a mistake, I must tell the truth. I don't want to lie like the bad character in the story."*

This finding confirms Nurgiyantoro's (2019) assertion that folklore encourages moral introspection among young learners. The reflection process made students more aware that ethical communication is part of good character. Teachers also observed an increase in respectful interaction during discussions, such as waiting for turns to speak and listening attentively. To illustrate the development of ethical awareness, Table 1 summarizes the observation results across three sessions.

**Table 1.** Summary of Students' Ethical Awareness Development

Ethical Value	Session 1: Introduction	Session 2: Story Retelling	Session 3: Reflection
Honesty	Recognized but rarely practiced	Expressed through characters' actions	Demonstrated in classroom communication
Respect	Limited awareness	Began to use polite expressions	Consistently used in group discussions

Responsibility	Needed reminders	Improved participation in group work	Showed ownership of assigned tasks
Empathy	Difficult to articulate	Understood through story characters	Reflected in real-life examples

The gradual progression indicates that ethical language learning through folklore can shape not only comprehension but also behavioral adaptation.

**B. Improvement in Language Competence**

Storytelling activities significantly improved students' speaking confidence, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. Students practiced moral expressions such as "*We must be honest*," "*Helping others is good*," and "*Respect makes people happy*." During pretest conversations, most students used fragmented sentences or Thai-English mixing. However, in the final session, they demonstrated more structured expressions and coherent narratives.

The improvement supports Wright's (1995) argument that storytelling enhances fluency and coherence in language learning. Teachers reported that students who were previously shy became more confident in speaking before the class. As one teacher commented:

"They start to speak more naturally in English, not only to repeat but to express their thoughts."

**C. Cultural Identity and Intercultural Understanding**

Integrating local folklore allowed students to reconnect with their cultural roots while learning English. They became more aware of traditional values such as humility, gratitude, and cooperation. Some students mentioned that they had never heard certain folk stories in English before, and translating them made them proud of their culture.

Moreover, discussions revealed similarities between Thai, Malay, and Indonesian folktales—encouraging intercultural dialogue. This resonates with Bruner (1990) and Nasrullah (2020), who emphasized that storytelling nurtures both identity and cross-cultural understanding. The students concluded that moral values are universal, even if expressed in different languages or traditions.

**D. Behavioral Changes and Reflection**

Behavioral transformation was observed not only linguistically but also socially. Students became more cooperative and empathetic during group tasks. The teacher's post-program reflection noted:

"They greet each other politely, share materials, and help friends with pronunciation. The atmosphere in class becomes warmer."

The reflective journals revealed deeper moral internalization. Students frequently used moral language in their writing, such as "*I should not be lazy*," or "*Helping my friend is good behavior*." These reflections align with Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development, suggesting that narrative-based moral discussion helps students transition from conventional understanding to more principled reasoning.

**E. Quantitative Overview: Pretest and Posttest Reflection**

Although this project mainly applied qualitative methods, a simple descriptive comparison was conducted based on teachers' rubric scoring (scale 1–5). The rubric measured language performance, ethical comprehension, and participation.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Students' Pretest and Posttest Results

Indicator	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Improvement
English oral expression	2.5	4.1	↑ 1.6
Moral value understanding	2.8	4.4	↑ 1.6
Class participation & empathy	3.0	4.5	↑ 1.5

The increase across all indicators demonstrates positive impact both linguistically and ethically. The integration of storytelling as a moral framework made learning more meaningful and student-centered, confirming Freire's (1970) participatory education model.

**F. Teacher and Community Engagement**

Teachers actively participated as facilitators and moral exemplars. They guided reflection activities, encouraged peer respect, and linked moral discussions with real-life classroom issues. Community elders shared traditional stories in local dialects, bridging generational knowledge. Their

involvement strengthened the authenticity of cultural transmission and emphasized the communal aspect of learning.

This participatory engagement echoes Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory that learning is co-constructed through social interaction. The collaboration between teachers, students, and community members ensured that folklore was not only a teaching medium but also a living cultural practice that reinforces moral identity.



Figure 1. Community Services in Ban Padhung Mart School

## DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

Overall, the results demonstrate that storytelling through folklore effectively integrates ethical language values with EFL learning outcomes. Students developed empathy, moral awareness, and linguistic fluency simultaneously. The process validated prior studies (Lickona, 1991; Nurgiyantoro, 2019) and expanded the pedagogical framework of moral-based language education in multicultural contexts. Then, it is hoped that the community services like this can have a regular schedule so that the students can get the benefits and the relationship of both country can be strengthen.

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