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Narrative and Aesthetic Values in Wayang Bocah Arjuna Wiwaha: A Strategy for Interactive Cultural Education

Suparti Suparti^{✉1}, Restu Lanjari^{✉2}

Visual Communication Design, Faculty of Computer and Design, Universitas Selamat Sri, Indonesia.

Department of Drama Dance and Music Arts Education, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia.

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Abstract

This study explores the narrative and aesthetic values embedded in the Wayang Bocah performance of Arjuna Wiwaha at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja, and examines its function as an interactive cultural education strategy for Generation Z. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and performance documentation. Findings reveal that the adaptation of the Arjuna Wiwaha story aligns effectively with the values, language, and visual expectations of younger audiences, enhancing both engagement and cultural relevance. Moreover, the incorporation of interactive learning strategies—where children actively participate in the performance—proves instrumental in fostering cultural appreciation and critical reflection. This research contributes to the discourse on arts-based pedagogy by offering a model for integrating traditional performance arts into contemporary educational practices.

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✉ Corresponding Author:

Email : 1.suparti@uniss.ac.id

2. restulanjari1961@mail.unnes.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Wayang is one of Indonesia's distinctive cultural heritages and a symbol of Javanese cultural identity. In addition to functioning as a medium of folk entertainment, wayang has an important role in conveying moral values, philosophy of life, and spiritual teachings that have been embedded in the traditions of the community. Endraswara (2013) asserts that wayang is an effective educational tool that is able to transmit virtues and social norms through interesting and easy-to-understand performances. Thus, wayang has a major contribution to the formation of national character as a source of local wisdom that teaches the

Values of kindness, respect, and social responsibility. The play *Arjuna Wiwaha* is one of the most philosophical and ethical puppet stories, telling the spiritual and mental journey of Arjuna in facing various tests to achieve inner perfection. Indriyani et al. (2020) emphasized that this story contains important values such as perseverance, patience, self-control, and commitment to noble life goals, so it is very potential to be used as a medium for character learning, especially for children and adolescents who are forming identity and morality. In the story, Arjuna performs asceticism on Mount Indrakila to ask for revelations from the gods, even changing his name to Begawan Mintaraga as a symbol of his spiritual transformation. At the same time, the *kahyangan* was in turmoil due to the actions of the giant king *Niwatakawaca* who wanted to marry *Bathari Supraba*. To overcome this threat, the gods then bestowed power to Arjuna and asked him to kill *Niwatakawaca*, in return Arjuna was promised *Dewi Supraba* as a gift.

However, in the era of globalization and rapid digitalization, the challenges in preserving traditional arts such as wayang are increasingly complex. Generation Z, as the digital native generation born and raised in a world of abundant technology and information, shows different learning characteristics, preferring interactive media and dynamic visuals (Prensky, 2001; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). This causes the

traditional way of presenting wayang, which is monotonous, to be less attractive to the younger generation. Therefore, innovations in wayang presentation and learning methods are needed to keep it relevant and interesting for Generation Z.

The development of digital technology and the advancement of social media have significantly changed Generation Z's cultural consumption patterns. Prensky (2001) calls this generation "digital natives" who access information quickly, visually and interactively. This phenomenon poses a serious challenge to the preservation of traditional arts such as wayang, which has relied on narrative and textual presentation methods. Sari and Putra (2022) assert that the younger generation's interest in local culture is declining due to the dominance of global pop culture and more accessible digital content.

In the context of cultural education, innovative and relevant approaches are needed to bridge the gap between tradition and the times. Culture-based interactive learning strategies that integrate hands-on experience and active participation are believed to be able to increase Generation Z's emotional and cognitive engagement with cultural heritage. This is in line with the opinion of Wilson et al. (2023) who state that learning methods that integrate technology and local culture can strengthen cultural identity and increase learning motivation.

One such innovation is the use of wayang *bocah*, where children are not only spectators, but also play an active role as players, puppeteers and musical accompanists. This approach increases their engagement and understanding of traditional arts while fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for cultural preservation (Ariani, 2014). *Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja* as a cultural institution has a strategic role in developing a structured and practice-based wayang *bocah* learning method. The experiential learning method applied is very effective in helping children's cognitive and social development (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978).

This interactive learning strategy is also in line with social constructivism theory which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and active involvement in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). Children not only learn performance techniques, but also build social skills such as cooperation, communication and responsibility. Rohidi (2017) asserts that local culture-based art learning can shape creative, disciplined and empathetic attitudes that are important for balanced character and personality development.

Furthermore, wayang bocah serves as an essential cultural regeneration tool. By involving children in the creative process and performances, the art of wayang, which is often considered an ancient heritage, can continue to live and develop according to the needs of the times. Permana (2024) states that the success of cultural preservation is highly dependent on the ability of cultural institutions to adapt learning methods to the interests of the younger generation, especially the Z generation.

At Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja, the development of wayang bocah as an interactive culture-based learning media is a concrete effort to answer the challenges of preserving traditional arts in the midst of changing times. Through training and performances, the younger generation is given space to interact directly with local values while contextually actualizing their creativity. Permana (2024) emphasized the importance of innovation in cultural institutions so that traditional arts remain relevant and acceptable to the Z generation. Therefore, this research is very relevant to examine how the adaptation of the narrative and aesthetics of the Arjuna Wiwaha play in wayang bocah can be an effective and interesting cultural learning medium for the younger generation. This research aims not only to strengthen the theory of cultural learning that is responsive to the needs of the times, but also to identify its contribution in increasing understanding and appreciation of local culture in order to support sustainable cultural preservation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, focusing on the training and performance activities of *wayang bocah* at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja. Data were collected through participatory observation of the story adaptation process and performances, in-depth interviews with puppeteers, trainers, and young participants, as well as documentation in the form of recordings and photographs. The data analysis was conducted qualitatively using a thematic analysis approach. Following the Miles and Huberman model (1994), the analysis involved three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing with verification. In the data reduction stage, information from observations, interviews, and documentation was selected, categorized, and simplified by focusing on themes related to narrative adaptation, aesthetic elements, and Generation Z's response to *wayang bocah*. The reduced data were then organized into descriptive narratives, supported by tables and interview excerpts, to clarify the adaptation form of *Arjuna Wiwaha*, the applied learning strategies, and their impact on cultural understanding. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through triangulation between data sources and cross-referencing with relevant theories in cultural learning and performing arts aesthetics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Adaptation of Arjuna Wiwaha Narrative in Wayang Bocah Performance at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja

In the process of participatory observation that took place at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja, as well as through in-depth interviews with trainers, it was revealed that the narrative of the play Arjuna Wiwaha underwent significant adaptation to suit the character and needs of generation Z. The complex original narrative, with its many episodes and rich philosophical symbolism, cannot be directly presented to the younger generation. The complex original

narrative, with many episodes and rich philosophical symbolism, cannot be directly presented to the younger generation in its entirety. Therefore, the story is simplified to focus on the main core, namely Arjuna's struggle to face various obstacles, as well as moral messages that contain the values of courage, honesty, devotion, and spirituality. This simplification of the narrative is not just cutting the story, but through scene selection designed to be more communicative and easy to understand. This approach aims to bridge the gap between the complexity of classic stories and Generation Z's learning style, which prefers fast, clear and relevant information.

Aesthetic adaptations were also made through the use of brighter colors, expressive character designs, and the combination of traditional music with a touch of modern music that is more familiar to the younger generation. These changes add to the appeal of the show and create a more lively and fun atmosphere, so that generation Z feels more connected and emotionally involved with wayang bocah performances.



Figure 1: of Wayang Bocah Performance of Arjuna Wiwaha Play
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The Wayang Bocah performance with the play Arjuna Wiwaha in the 15th Tlatah Bocah Festival, which took place in Malang Hamlet, Soronalan Village, Sawangan Subdistrict, was captivating and managed to steal the attention of the audience, especially children. Dressed in simple yet meaningful puppet costumes, the children enthusiastically and passionately performed the story of Arjuna's heroism, creating a warm,

educative, and culturally valuable performance atmosphere. This performance is not only a medium of entertainment, but also a shared learning space, where the younger generation can get to know the characters of the puppet characters through fellow children who appear on stage. Overall, the process of adapting the narrative and aesthetics of the Arjuna Wiwaha play successfully combines classical cultural values with the interactive learning needs of Generation Z. This approach not only makes Wayang Bocah relevant as a medium for cultural preservation, but also increases the younger generation's interest, understanding and appreciation of the archipelago's rich cultural heritage.

Aesthetic Adaptation in Wayang Bocah Performance

The application of a simpler yet innovative aesthetic approach was clearly realized in the Wayang Bocah performance with the play Arjuna Wiwaha, which was performed for approximately 45 minutes in the 15th Tlatah Bocah Festival in Malang Hamlet, Soronalan Village, Sawangan District. This performance is a concrete example of how the transformation of the form and style of puppet shows can be done without losing the cultural spirit it contains. The performers, all children, performed with great enthusiasm to bring the epic story of Arjuna Wiwaha through narration and movements adapted to the abilities and perceptions of the audience at their age.

Not only in terms of visuals, innovation can also be seen in the musical and sound aspects. The traditional gamelan accompaniment, which is usually dominated by a slow and repetitive tempo, is creatively combined with contemporary musical elements that are more dynamic, fast-paced and rich in rhythmic accents. The combination not only enriches the audio experience, but also retains the attention of a young audience accustomed to the fast pace and high sensory stimulation of digital media. Music becomes an important tool in building atmosphere, marking scene changes, and

adding an emotional dimension to the narrative.

Furthermore, the lighting and visual effects used also demonstrate an aesthetic approach that is carefully designed to target the visual interests of Generation Z. Bright and alternating colors, flashing light effects during climactic or conflict scenes, and the use of colorful spotlights give the show a more vibrant and cinematic feel. Although the use of lighting technology is quite simple, the effect produced is quite significant in bringing the stage to life and emphasizing the emotional nuances of each scene. In this context, lighting is not just a technical tool, but part of a visual narrative strategy that supports the story.

The presence of Wayang Bocah performances in this festival not only provides a space for children to actively participate in cultural preservation, but also proves that tradition can be transformed into a dialogic and participatory medium. This performance creates a bridge between oral tradition and modern forms of cultural expression, between the heritage of the ancestors and the expression needs of the younger generation. The aesthetic and narrative transformations applied in this performance prove that traditional art does not have to be rigidly maintained in its original form, but can continue to grow, adapt, and remain relevant without losing its original meaning.

Thus, the Wayang Bocah performance of the Arjuna Wiwaha play in the 15th Tlatah Bocah Festival is not only a fun spectacle, but also a representation of the spirit of renewal in cultural preservation. It becomes part of a fun, inclusive, and inspiring cultural education process for children as the inheritors of the archipelago's culture. This approach opens up a great opportunity to present traditional arts as part of an active and creative learning space, in accordance with the characteristics of generation Z who grew up in the midst of a fast, visual and changing world.



Figure 2: Children performing in bright and expressive colorful costumes.

(Source: Suparti, 2025)

The aesthetic transformation of Wayang Bocah performance plays an important role in strengthening its appeal as an interactive culture-based learning medium. With a more modern visual design and varied music, the younger generation is not only a passive audience, but also more easily engaged emotionally and cognitively. This approach supports learning objectives in a way that is both fun and relevant to their daily lives. Overall, the aesthetic innovations in Wayang Bocah performances at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja reflect a serious attempt to combine tradition and modernity, addressing the challenges of learning and cultural preservation in the digital age. This adaptive visual and audio transformation not only makes Wayang Bocah more accessible to Generation Z, but also emphasizes the important role of traditional arts in building a living cultural identity that continues to evolve according to the dynamics of the times.

Interactive Learning Strategies and Generation Z Engagement

Observation and documentation of performances at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja reveal that the learning process applied is not limited to passively watching performances, but rather emphasizes an interactive learning approach that involves participants directly. Trainers deliberately design learning sessions that invite generation Z to not only be spectators, but also play an active role in the learning process. This is realized through various methods of imitation, interactive dialogue, and the

involvement of participants as supporting actors in the wayang bocah performance.



Figure 3: Dance learning activities with
(Source: Suparti, 2025)

This interactive method provides opportunities for learners to ask questions, express opinions, and discuss directly with the trainer. This approach is very effective considering that Generation Z is known as digital natives who are accustomed to interactive media and technology that allows them to actively participate. Thus, the learning method applied at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja is able to bridge Generation Z's way of learning that prioritizes direct involvement and practical experience in understanding the material.

This interactive learning method also encourages a sense of belonging to local culture. By being directly involved, generation Z can understand more deeply the philosophical and moral values contained in the play Arjuna Wiwaha through real experience, not just theory or information conveyed verbally. This active engagement builds stronger emotional and cognitive connections, which in turn fosters awareness of the importance of cultural preservation.

Overall, the interactive learning strategy implemented at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja is highly relevant and effective in addressing Generation Z's learning needs. This approach not only makes the learning process more fun and interesting, but also strengthens the function of wayang bocah as a living and dynamic medium of cultural preservation. Through this inclusive and participatory learning method, the younger generation can more easily absorb cultural values, while feeling involved and responsible in maintaining the nation's cultural heritage.

Impact of Culture-Based Interactive Learning Strategy on Generation Z's Understanding, Appreciation, and Engagement

The interview results show that the culture-based interactive learning strategy implemented is very effective in improving their understanding of the narrative and values contained in the Arjuna Wiwaha play. As many as 87% of respondents stated that after attending the wayang bocah performance combined with interactive question and answer sessions and discussions, they felt they understood the storyline and moral messages better. This indicates that simplifying the narrative and learning methods that actively involve the audience can bridge the understanding gap that often occurs in traditional art learning.

In addition, appreciation for traditional culture has also increased significantly. Before participating in this activity, many participants admitted to having the perception that wayang is an old-fashioned, formal art, and less attractive to the younger generation. However, after being directly involved in performances and interactive learning at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja, their views began to change. They now see wayang bocah as a medium that is interesting, relevant, and able to connect cultural values with their daily lives. This positive attitude change is an important asset in building greater interest and motivation to learn and preserve cultural heritage.

The emotional and cognitive engagement of participants during the learning process also had a profound impact. Active participation, both in the form of being a supporting actor and participating in discussion sessions, made Generation Z feel more valued and directly involved in the process of cultural preservation. They are no longer just passive spectators, but feel part of the effort to maintain and develop existing cultural traditions. This sense of belonging is a strong social capital to foster awareness of the importance of maintaining cultural identity in the midst of globalization.

This awareness is very important considering the challenges faced by traditional culture today, especially due to the influence of globalization and digitalization which tends to erode the younger generation's interest in local cultural heritage. With interactive learning strategies that prioritize hands-on experience and active engagement, generation Z not only understands stories and cultural values, but is also encouraged to take part in cultural preservation. This makes wayang bocah not just entertainment, but an effective medium for education and cultural regeneration.

Overall, the results show that the culture-based interactive learning approach conducted at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja has a significant positive impact on changing Generation Z's understanding, appreciation and engagement with wayang bocah and cultural heritage in general. This strategy proves that with the right methods, traditional arts can continue to be alive and relevant, as well as an educational tool that inspires the younger generation to love and preserve the nation's culture.

Narrative and Aesthetic Adaptation as a Strategy to Strengthen Cultural Preservation

The simplified and more communicative transformation of the Arjuna Wiwaha narrative is clear evidence of the application of social constructivism theory in the process of cultural learning. This theory asserts that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals through experience and social interaction, not just passively received. By simplifying the language and content of the stories, trainers at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja provide space for generation Z to understand and internalize cultural values through a context close to their daily experiences. This allows the younger generation to not only memorize stories, but also construct their own meanings and interpretations in an interactive learning process.

This adaptation of the narrative also bridges the gap between the cultural

heritage that has been considered "classic" and sometimes difficult to understand by the younger generation and their unique cognitive and psychological needs. Generation Z, who grew up in the digital era, has a different learning style, preferring information that is fast, clear and relevant. Therefore, the approach of simplifying stories that contain essential moral messages without losing philosophical value is an effective strategy for cultural heritage to be optimally received and appreciated. This adaptation also accommodates their need to be actively involved and interact, not just receive information in a one-way manner.

In addition to narrative, the transformation of performance aesthetics is also a very important form of adaptation. The wayang bocah characters are designed with bright colors and more lively expressions, as well as the incorporation of traditional music with modern music elements, which is very suitable for the characteristics of Generation Z's learning style. This learning style is known to require rich multi-sensory stimulation and content that can be easily received visually and audibly. The use of striking colors and varied music not only adds to the aesthetic appeal, but also helps improve participants' focus and memory during the learning process.

This approach is in line with the multimedia learning theory proposed by Mayer (2001), which emphasizes the importance of integration between visual and audio information to improve learning effectiveness. Mayer explains that multimodal presentation of material can strengthen cognitive processes by activating different information processing channels in the brain, resulting in better understanding and retention of the material. In the context of wayang bocah, the combination of interesting visual elements and dynamic music not only enriches the aesthetic experience, but also strengthens the process of internalizing cultural values by generation Z.

Thus, the adaptation of narrative and aesthetics in wayang bocah performances at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja is not only an artistic innovation, but also the implementation of modern learning theory that is able to answer the challenges of cultural regeneration in the digital era. This approach ensures that traditional arts remain alive, relevant, and able to reach the younger generation in an engaging and meaningful way, while supporting sustainable cultural preservation.

Effectiveness of Interactive Learning Strategies in Increasing Cultural Engagement and Appreciation

The implementation of culture-based interactive learning strategies at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja has shown significant success in attracting interest and increasing the engagement of Generation Z. By prioritizing experiential learning, students are not only passive spectators, but also have the opportunity to directly experience the process of performing wayang bocah. This concrete experience allows them to learn through more intense physical, emotional and social engagement, which is crucial in the context of cultural learning. This is in accordance with the principles put forward by Kolb (1984), who asserts that an effective learning cycle involves four stages: concrete experience, reflection on the experience, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation in new situations.

In the context of wayang bocah performances, participants are invited to interact directly with the trainer, either through question and answer sessions, interactive dialogue, or active roles as supporting actors. This approach strengthens the learning process as participants not only receive information verbally, but also process it through real experiences and critical discussions. The reflection process that occurs during and after the performance allows them to understand the moral messages and cultural values conveyed more deeply, while building personal meanings that are relevant to their daily lives.

In addition to strengthening cognitive understanding, interactive learning also deepens participants' emotional attachment to local culture. When generation Z feels involved and valued in the learning process, they tend to develop a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the preservation of the culture. This emotional attachment becomes an important asset in building a long-term commitment to maintain and pass on cultural traditions. This finding supports Mason's (2013) research which shows that learning methods that involve active participation are far more effective in fostering appreciation and love for culture than passive learning approaches.

Furthermore, the hands-on experience gained through this strategy not only makes learning more meaningful but also changes the way young people view wayang bocah and cultural heritage in general. Those who may have initially viewed wayang as an irrelevant ancient art, after being directly involved, began to see it as an interesting and important part of life to be preserved. This change in attitude is an important indicator of the success of the learning strategy in answering the challenges of cultural regeneration in the modern fast-paced and digital era.

Overall, the implementation of a culture-based interactive learning strategy that prioritizes experiential learning at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja not only increases Generation Z's understanding and appreciation of Arjuna Wiwaha and wayang bocah, but also builds their emotional attachment and commitment to preserving culture. This approach proves that experiential learning and active participation are effective methods to connect cultural values with the needs and learning styles of the digital generation, keeping traditional arts alive and relevant.

Challenges and Implications for the Development of Education-Based Cultural Preservation

Although the results of this study show the positive impact of implementing culture-based interactive learning

strategies at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja, a number of challenges and limitations were identified in its implementation. One of the main obstacles is that training trainers who are able to integrate interactive methods into wayang bocah performances is also a challenge. Not all trainers have sufficient pedagogical skills and technological knowledge to fully implement interactive learning. This necessitates a special training program that focuses not only on performing arts, but also on modern learning techniques and the use of technology as a medium for cultural education. Without adequate training support, the effectiveness of this learning strategy may be reduced.

In addition to resource and competency issues, this study also has limitations in terms of scope and research methods. The study is limited to one location, Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja, so the results cannot be widely generalized to the context of cultural learning in other regions or communities. To strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings, further research is needed with a wider scope and using mixed methods that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of culture-based interactive learning strategies.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study provide an important illustration that effective cultural preservation must be able to combine traditional approaches with pedagogical and technological innovations. This hybrid approach allows traditional arts to remain alive and relevant amidst the times and the changing characteristics of the younger generation. Learning strategies that prioritize hands-on experience and active engagement can bridge the gap between classical cultural values and the learning needs of the digital native generation.

Overall, interactive and experiential cultural education is key to maintaining the sustainability of cultural heritage in the modern era. Through innovation in teaching methods and proper utilization of technology, traditional culture such as

wayang bocah can not only be preserved, but also developed to continue to inspire and educate the younger generation. Therefore, resource support, adequate training, and continued research are important aspects that need to be considered to improve the quality and reach of interactive-based cultural learning.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the adaptation of the Arjuna Wiwaha narrative and aesthetic elements in the wayang bocah performance at Padhepokan Tjipta Boedaja effectively aligns with the cultural literacy needs of Generation Z. The narrative was simplified without losing its moral essence, while visual elements—such as the use of vibrant colors—and the musical arrangement that blended gamelan with contemporary rhythms, succeeded in attracting attention and enhancing comprehension among young participants. Interview data reveal that children felt “senang karena ceritanya gampang dimengerti dan musiknya rame kayak di game,” reflecting not only emotional resonance but also cognitive engagement with the material.

Furthermore, the culture-based interactive learning strategy, which integrates hands-on rehearsal and dialogic reflection, fostered a sense of ownership and pride among participants. Several parents reported changes in behavior, such as increased interest in traditional arts and greater curiosity about Javanese mythology. This suggests that interactive performance-based learning does not merely preserve tradition but revitalizes it within the framework of contemporary youth culture. However, the sustainability of this approach hinges on consistent support for resources, the pedagogical readiness of arts practitioners, and institutional commitment to innovation in cultural education.

Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that the development of interactive learning media and methods continue to be carried out by integrating

digital technology and traditional cultural elements in order to increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of cultural preservation and make it easily accessible to generation Z. In addition, it is important to provide training and support to the digital native generation. In addition, it is important to provide training and mentoring for trainers and teachers of traditional arts to be able to adopt interactive learning methods and modern technology without losing the original cultural values, so that the quality of delivery and relevance of performances can be improved. Expanding the scope of research and programs is also highly recommended to test the effectiveness of these strategies in different communities and regions, and encourage collaboration across educational institutions, arts communities and government in cultural preservation. Finally, to strengthen the engagement of Generation Z, the development of productive participatory activities such as wayang bocah making workshops, creative competitions and digital platforms that allow young people to actively share their cultural works and experiences is needed.

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