



FUN WITH JAVANESE SCRIPT: EASY AND ENJOYABLE LEARNING FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study examines the application of the learning by drawing strategy as an innovative, student-centered approach to teaching Javanese script in elementary schools. Conducted at SDN Sepuh Gembol I, East Java, the research used a qualitative descriptive method involving third-grade students. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation of students' drawing-based work. The findings show that early in the process, students exhibited low engagement, hesitation, and limited confidence in writing Javanese script. After drawing activities were integrated, students showed clear improvements in emotional involvement, enthusiasm, and participation. The study recorded a 25% increase in attention to explanations, a 40% rise in enthusiasm, a 45% increase in willingness to express opinions, and a 35% improvement in punctuality when submitting assignments. Through drawing, students creatively interpreted and personalized the script, strengthening both cognitive understanding and emotional connection. This approach also supported cultural appreciation by allowing students to engage with local heritage in a meaningful way. Overall, the study concludes that learning by drawing enhances academic outcomes while fostering cultural values, making it a relevant pedagogical model for modern education rooted in local wisdom.

Keywords: Javanese script; learning by drawing; fun learning; Student engagement; elementary education

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INTRODUCTION

Javanese script, known as *Aksara Jawa*, constitutes a vital component of Indonesia's cultural heritage, embodying the nation's historical development, aesthetic traditions, and regional identity. Its graceful characters and symbolic meanings represent centuries of local wisdom and artistic expression (Insani & Kholiq, 2025). Despite its rich cultural significance, the script has experienced a steady decline in practical usage, especially among the younger generation (Kholiq, Nurhayati, et al., 2024). Research consistently shows that elementary school students tend to perceive learning Javanese script as difficult, rigid, and disengaging, which ultimately hampers efforts

to preserve and transmit this cultural legacy across generations (Fardani et al., 2023; Ichsani & Hizbullah, 2024). In addition, the findings of Kholifaturohmah & Insani (2025); Rinata et al., (2023) also revealed that most students consider Javanese script to be less relevant to current conditions and less useful. This challenge has become even more complex due to the growing dominance of digital literacy and global competencies in educational priorities, which often overshadow local cultural content. In response to this issue, the Indonesian government has introduced various regulations to reaffirm the importance of regional cultural education. One notable example is Probolinggo Regency

Regulation No. 14 of 2023, which mandates that schools incorporate local content—including the teaching of Javanese script—into their curricula. This policy not only aims to maintain cultural identity but also encourages students to appreciate and actively engage with their local heritage from an early age (Bupati Probolinggo, 2023). Alongside policy frameworks, recent scholarly discourse has witnessed increasing attention to technological innovations designed to support Javanese script learning. Over the past decade, numerous studies have explored the use of mobile applications, augmented reality, interactive cards, and gamified digital platforms to enhance learning motivation and accessibility (Hartiyani et al., 2023; Istianah & Setyasto, 2023; Mardhatillah et al., 2019). These developments align with broader educational movements toward digital transformation and culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly in addressing inequalities in access to quality learning materials (Anita & Astuti, 2022; Sinambela et al., 2024). However, despite the promise offered by digital tools, current literature underscores that emotional engagement and active student participation remain the most influential elements in fostering meaningful learning experiences.

Fun, interactive, and student-centered strategies—such as storytelling, contextual drawing, and game-based methods—have been shown to significantly enhance students' motivation, creativity, and self-expression in elementary learning contexts (Jannah & Ghazali, 2023; Kartikasari & Rahmawati, 2022). Among these approaches, the learning by drawing strategy holds particular potential, as it enables students to interact with abstract symbols through creative and personalized interpretations. This process often elicits emotional responses such as joy,

curiosity, pride, and a sense of ownership over their learning (Damariswara, 2020; Hasanah et al., 2023). Such emotional connections are especially relevant in 21st-century education, where learning is expected to cultivate not only cognitive skills but also creativity, empathy, cultural awareness, and personal identity formation (Hermawan & Hadi, 2024; Kure et al., 2025; Dewi & Insani, 2024). Through drawing, students can visualize, reconstruct, and reinterpret the shapes and meanings of Javanese characters, transforming what is traditionally perceived as a rigid writing system into an imaginative and enjoyable learning experience. This shift aligns with constructivist learning principles, which emphasize that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and personal meaning-making shaped by their social and cultural contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By allowing students to contribute their interpretations and express themselves creatively, drawing-based learning promotes confidence, independence, and deeper emotional involvement.

Although existing research highlights the benefits of creative and fun learning strategies, a clear gap remains in the literature concerning the use of non-digital, emotion-based approaches—particularly learning by drawing—in the context of Javanese script education. Most instructional models for teaching the script remain teacher-centered, relying heavily on memorization and repetitive copying, which limits opportunities for students to engage actively, think critically, or express their creativity (Insani et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024). Furthermore, previous studies have not sufficiently explored how drawing activities specifically influence students' emotional states, enthusiasm, willingness to participate, and overall classroom engagement during Javanese script lessons. This gap is noteworthy because emotional

involvement and active participation are key indicators of meaningful learning, especially for younger learners. Without addressing these aspects, efforts to preserve and promote Javanese script are likely to remain less effective, even with strong policy support and technological advancements. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on examining learning by drawing as a culturally embedded, emotionally resonant, and student-driven strategy, offering an alternative to predominantly digital or teacher-centered approaches that currently dominate Javanese script instruction.

Based on these considerations, this research aims to analyze how the learning by drawing method can enhance students' emotional engagement and active participation in learning Javanese script at the elementary level. Specifically, the study investigates how drawing activities stimulate students to ask questions, share ideas, present their work, show curiosity, and express their interpretations of the script in a creative manner. By observing classroom dynamics and analyzing students' responses, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how creative visual activities contribute to both cognitive comprehension and emotional connection with local cultural content. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method to capture authentic learning experiences and examine how students respond behaviorally and emotionally when drawing is integrated into Javanese script lessons.

Through this focus on student-centered engagement, the study aspires to develop a pedagogical model that is not only effective for teaching Javanese script but also enjoyable, culturally relevant, and aligned with modern educational paradigms. The findings are expected

to contribute to current efforts to revitalize local language learning by demonstrating how creative, low-cost, and accessible strategies can support cognitive development while simultaneously nurturing emotional bonds with cultural identity. Ultimately, the research positions learning by drawing as a promising approach for fostering meaningful and sustainable Javanese script learning in elementary schools and offers new insights that extend the existing body of knowledge in culturally responsive and emotionally grounded pedagogy.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The research was conducted at SDN Sepuh Gembol I, a public elementary school in Probolinggo Regency, East Java, which has implemented local content curriculum focusing on Javanese script, in accordance with Regulation of the Regent of Probolinggo No. 14 of 2023. The study was carried out over a period of two months, from January to February 2025.

The research subjects were third-grade students who were directly involved in the Javanese script learning process. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling, considering both the teacher's active use of creative learning approaches and the students' diverse abilities in reading and writing the script. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews with students, and documentation such as photographs, field notes, and students' creative work.

In accordance with qualitative research procedures, data analysis was conducted through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved

filtering and simplifying raw data into a more structured and meaningful form. The reduced data were then presented narratively and visually to help reveal relationships and emerging themes. Finally, conclusions were drawn through repeated interpretation, allowing the researcher to uncover patterns and insights. The validity of findings was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, along with validation from the classroom teacher as a collaborator. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Frederick J. Wertz et al., 2011)

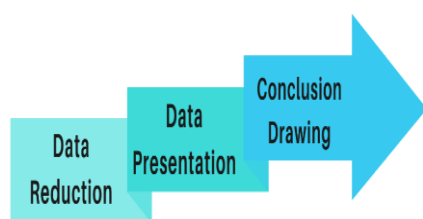


Figure 1. Data Analysis Technique

The entire data collection process was carried out naturally, following the authentic classroom setting. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, using a narrative and reflective approach to understand the meaning of students' learning experiences with Javanese script. The researcher aimed to capture the personal, social, and cultural meanings embedded in students' interactions throughout the learning process. The validity of the data was maintained through source and method triangulation, as well as validation by the teacher as a collaborator. This approach allowed for a deep understanding of how enjoyable learning can foster student engagement and appreciation toward the Javanese script.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Observations and interviews revealed that the implementation of the learning by drawing strategy in Javanese script lessons brought a notable positive shift in students' emotional engagement. Initially, many students showed signs of hesitation and a lack of self-confidence, particularly when asked to write Javanese characters directly on the board. This response indicated a sense of fear or discomfort, possibly due to the unfamiliar shapes of the script or concern over making mistakes in front of their peers. Their passive demeanor reflected a limited emotional connection with the learning material and a reluctance to actively participate in the classroom.

However, as the drawing-based activities were introduced, students were given the creative freedom to draw and color Javanese characters using visual aids and personalized designs. This new approach provided a sense of ownership and enjoyment in the learning process. Over time, students began to show greater willingness to engage, expressing themselves more openly through their artwork. The visual and artistic nature of the activity helped lower emotional barriers, allowing students to connect more deeply with the script. They became more expressive, enthusiastic, and confident in sharing their work, indicating a significant increase in both emotional involvement and motivation to learn.

Student Engagement in Javanese Script Introduction

Student Engagement in Javanese Script Introduction refers to the level of active participation, interest, and emotional involvement of students in the process of learning and recognizing Javanese script. This includes how attentive they are during lessons, their enthusiasm

in completing related tasks, their willingness to express opinions or ideas, and their commitment to finishing assignments on time. High engagement in this context reflects not only cognitive understanding but also a deeper cultural appreciation, especially when supported by creative and student-centered approaches such as learning by drawing.

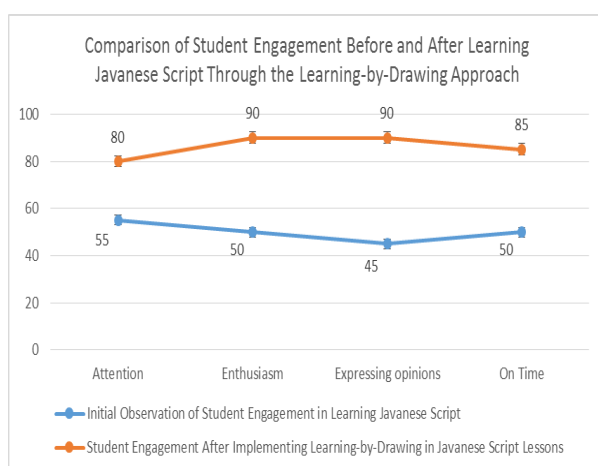


Figure 2. Graph of Comparison of Student Engagement Before and After Learning Javanese Script Through the Learning by Drawing Approach

The graph above illustrates a comparative analysis of student engagement during the learning process, based on observations conducted before and after the implementation of Javanese script instruction using the learning by drawing approach. The data reveal a notable increase in overall student activeness, measured through four key indicators: students' attention to the teacher's explanation, enthusiasm in participating in class activities, willingness to express opinions, and punctuality in submitting assignments. Prior to the intervention, these aspects were observed at relatively moderate levels, with limited student involvement and passive classroom behavior.

However, following the application of the drawing-based learning strategy, students demonstrated improved concentration during instructional delivery, greater enthusiasm in completing tasks, increased confidence in sharing their thoughts, and a more responsible attitude toward task completion. These findings suggest that the integration of visual and creative methods not only enriches the learning experience but also positively influences students' behavioral engagement and active participation in culturally contextualized language learning. These findings are in line with Kholiq et al., (2024) research which also proves that the integration of visual methods can increase students' interest and learning achievement.

There was a 25% increase in students' attention to the teacher's explanation, rising from 55% before the intervention to 80% after the implementation of the learning by drawing approach in Javanese script instruction. This improvement was supported by several observed indicators, such as students showing greater focus during the teacher's explanation of the shapes and meanings of Javanese characters, becoming less easily distracted by their surroundings, and following the teacher's directions more quickly and accurately. Additionally, students were observed to actively observe character examples presented on the board and in visual media, and they displayed heightened interest when the teacher provided illustrations that connected the script to familiar objects. The drawing-based approach enabled students to associate script symbols with concrete images, thereby enhancing their visual engagement and increasing their concentration throughout the learning process (Mardhatillah, Masliana, et al., 2024).

There was a significant increase of 40% in students' enthusiasm for learning, rising from 50% prior to the intervention to 90% following the implementation of the learning by drawing approach in Javanese script instruction. This improvement was evident through various supporting indicators, such as students showing visible excitement at the beginning of each lesson, actively requesting to participate in drawing activities, and eagerly volunteering to present their creative work to the class. Moreover, students displayed a positive emotional response during the learning process, such as smiling, laughing, and expressing joy when engaging with Javanese characters through drawing. The opportunity to personalize the script by incorporating imaginative elements like animals, plants, or symbolic decorations allowed students to form a deeper emotional connection with the content (Insani et al., 2022, 2024). This creative freedom not only made the learning process more enjoyable but also fostered a classroom atmosphere that encouraged expression, curiosity, and a sustained interest in exploring the cultural richness of Javanese script (Mardhatillah, Sari, et al., 2024).

There was a 45% increase in students' willingness to express their opinions during the learning process, rising from 45% before the intervention to 90% after the implementation of the learning by drawing approach in Javanese script instruction. This significant improvement was supported by observable indicators such as students initiating discussions about the shapes and meanings of the Javanese characters, confidently sharing their interpretations of their drawings, and actively responding to questions posed by the teacher. In classroom interactions, students also began to offer suggestions to their peers, express preferences regarding character

design, and explain the ideas behind their visual creations. The learning by drawing method provided a safe and stimulating environment where students felt valued and encouraged to voice their thoughts, thereby fostering not only cognitive engagement but also communicative confidence. This approach allowed students to develop a sense of ownership over their learning and contributed to a more dialogic and participatory classroom culture centered around the exploration of local language and culture (Lestari et al., 2024; Mardhatillah, Sari, et al., 2024).

There was a 35% increase in students' punctuality in submitting assignments, rising from 50% before the intervention to 85% following the implementation of the learning by drawing approach in Javanese script learning. This improvement was supported by several observable indicators, such as students completing their drawing tasks within the allotted time, demonstrating a greater sense of responsibility, and showing initiative in submitting their work without being reminded by the teacher. The engaging nature of the drawing activities, which allowed students to express their creativity while learning the Javanese script, contributed to a higher level of task commitment and time awareness. Students appeared more motivated to complete their work promptly, as they were eager to share their artwork with peers and receive feedback. The structured yet flexible format of the learning by drawing method encouraged students to manage their time more effectively, reinforcing positive learning habits and a greater sense of accountability in accomplishing learning goals (Muzakkir, 2021).

Learning Activities on Javanese Script Introduction through the Learning by Drawing Approach



Figure 3. Students' expressions at first learning of Javanese script

Drawing the Javanese script served not only as a medium for introducing the basic forms of the characters but also as a catalyst for stimulating students' imagination and creativity. During the activity, several students spontaneously enhanced their work by integrating the script with imaginative visual elements such as flowers, animals, or personally meaningful symbols. These creative expressions reflected a high level of engagement and personal connection to the learning content. The freedom to personalize their drawings allowed students to interact with the script in a way that was both expressive and enjoyable. This visual and imaginative engagement evoked positive emotional responses, including joy, pride, and a sense of satisfaction in their own creations, highlighting the potential of drawing-based strategies to enrich the emotional quality of the learning experience (Labibah et al., 2025).



Figure 4. Student drawing activities

Students' enthusiasm increased steadily over time. Observation notes recorded that students became more active in asking questions, volunteering to present, and eagerly showing their work to the teacher and classmates. The learning by drawing activity created a space for personal expression that was previously unseen in conventional learning methods that relied solely on copying from the board.



Figure 5. Students actively ask questions and offer to present

Interview responses from students showed a clear change in attitude toward learning Javanese script. Some admitted that they initially found it difficult and unappealing. However, after being allowed to draw and color the characters according to their imagination, they began to enjoy the process. For them, the Javanese script was no longer rigid or intimidating, but rather a form of

creative exploration. This change sparked a sense of confidence and made the learning process more enjoyable, which also encouraged improvements in reading and writing skills.



Figure 6. Students paste their works on the board

The documentation of students' work revealed a range of original ideas that demonstrated their emotional engagement. Notably, some students incorporated Javanese script in their compositions, employing letters as characters in their narratives. This finding suggests that this approach not only enhances writing skills but also fosters imagination and confidence in conceptualizing ideas.

In the context of enjoyable learning, positive emotions have been shown to play a significant role in fostering interest in learning (Hasanah et al., 2023). This finding aligns with the assertion by Hartiyani et al. (2023) that the incorporation of interactive visual media can effectively activate students' affective areas, thereby enhancing class participation. Drawing activities are also consistent with the fundamental tenets of enjoyable learning, which is a critical component of the 21st-century learning approach.

From a theoretical standpoint, the learning by drawing approach aligns with the constructivist paradigm, which posits that students' personal experiences serve as the fundamental drivers of the

learning process. Through drawing activities, students do not merely replicate the form of the Javanese script; rather, they actively construct their own interpretations and comprehension through engagement with visual media. This approach aligns with the perspective put forth by Creswell & Creswell (2018), who argue that in qualitative research and learning, meaning is constructed by individuals through their engagement with the social and cultural context they experience. This process also reflects the principles of narrative and phenomenological analysis, which emphasize the importance of subjective experience as the primary source of understanding (Frederick, 2011). Consequently, the applied learning design not only fosters cognitive development but also addresses students' emotional aspects in a comprehensive manner.

In the local educational context, the learning by drawing strategy also plays a significant role in strengthening students' cultural values. Through the process of drawing Javanese script in personalized and imaginative forms, students are not only acquiring academic knowledge but are also building an emotional connection with their cultural roots. This creative engagement enables learners to appreciate the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the script, fostering a sense of identity and pride in their heritage. The strategy aligns closely with the objectives outlined in the Probolinggo Regent Regulation No. 14 of 2023, which mandates the integration of local content into school curricula to preserve regional wisdom. By embedding cultural elements into learning activities, this approach supports the broader goal of cultivating cultural awareness and appreciation among young learners in a way that is both meaningful and enjoyable (Bupati Probolinggo, 2023).

Despite a modest initial level of social discomfort exhibited by a few students, the pedagogical approach in question was found to be effective in mitigating these barriers over time. The presence of peer support and the positive responses of the teacher were also found to be significant factors in fostering a learning atmosphere that was both comfortable and enjoyable. This process underscores the notion that the emotional improvement of students is not a spontaneous occurrence, but rather, it is cultivated through the experience of memorable learning events.

The learning by drawing strategy has shown to be an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing students' enthusiasm and emotional engagement in learning Javanese script. By allowing students to actively participate in the creative process of illustrating the characters, the strategy transforms the learning experience into a more interactive and enjoyable activity. This method not only facilitates the delivery of instructional content in a way that is accessible and student-friendly, but also cultivates positive emotional responses such as joy, increased self-confidence, and a sense of pride in their own creative abilities. Students begin to perceive the Javanese script not as a rigid academic requirement, but as an expressive and culturally rich form of communication. These outcomes highlight the potential of integrating culturally grounded and emotionally resonant strategies into local language instruction, ensuring that learning remains meaningful while maintaining the preservation of traditional values.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the learning-by-drawing approach significantly enhances student engagement in the introduction of Javanese script,

particularly in terms of emotional involvement, motivation, and active classroom participation. Initially, many students exhibited low confidence and minimal interest in the subject. However, after the implementation of drawing-based learning activities, students became more expressive, enthusiastic, and confident. These changes were evident through increased attention to the teacher's explanations, active participation in discussions, and the emergence of creative work that reflected both cognitive understanding and emotional investment in the learning material.

The data revealed substantial improvements across several engagement indicators: a 25% increase in attention to instruction, a 40% rise in enthusiasm, a 45% improvement in students' willingness to express their ideas, and a 35% boost in punctuality for task completion. These outcomes indicate that the integration of visual, imaginative, and student-centered methods such as learning by drawing creates a more enjoyable and effective learning environment. It also fosters key 21st-century competencies, including creativity, self-confidence, and communication skills. The approach not only supports literacy development but also facilitates emotional and cultural connection with local heritage.

Furthermore, the learning-by-drawing strategy aligns with the goals of local content integration as mandated in Probolinggo Regent Regulation No. 14 of 2023. By enabling students to engage with Javanese script in a culturally meaningful and personalized way, this method contributes to the preservation of regional identity through education. The findings support the broader pedagogical vision that culturally responsive and emotionally resonant instruction is essential for revitalizing local language learning. Future research may explore the scalability of this

approach in other regional language contexts and its long-term impact on students' identity formation and intercultural competence.

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