

# Contextualizing Local Values of Children's Games in the Perspective of Ecopragmatics to Enhance Culture-Specific Based Communication



R. Kunjana Rahardi, Yuliana Setyaningsih

**Abstract:** This research focuses on the contextualization and preservation of the diminishing local values which are slowly abandoned by the young generation. The data consists of texts containing local values or presumed to contain values collected by the researchers. The data was gathered by observing the texts describing traditional children's games during the timeline of research. The technique to implement the observation method was recording and note-taking. Besides, interview or speaking method was employed to gather the data. Interview was conducted to experts who understood the values of local wisdom contained in the traditional children's games. The data analysis was done using the distributional and content analysis methods. The result of the analysis shows that the values of local wisdom contained in the traditional children's games are values of: (1) Affection; (2) Agility and Fighting Spirit; (3) Creativity and Adaptability; (4) Creative Imagination; (5) Acceptance of the Facts of Life; (6) Fulfilling the Destiny; (7) Obedience and Discipline; (8) Intelligence Test; (9) Synergy and Collaboration. These values and wisdoms were found in the following games: (a) Dedek-Dedekan, (b) Rerodaan, (c) Bentik, (d) Topeng-Topengan, (e) Boneka Kodokan, (f) Kitiran Umbul, (g) Masak-Masakan, (h) Polisi-Polisian, (i) Mekrok, (j) Dingklik Oglak-Aglik.

**Keywords:** contextualization, local wisdom, traditional children's games, ecopragmatics

## I. INTRODUCTION

The discussion of local wisdom gained momentum not only because of the industrial revolution 4.0 that is happening right now [1], but it was also discussed fervently when the world was slowly entering the globalization era in the recent past [2]. In that time, the buzz word related to local wisdom was glocalization. It means that it is more important and urgent to embed local wisdom values in the society to prevent the negative impacts of globalization from taking place (Ritzer, 2003; Roudometof, 2016). As computer-based technology and other digital technology develops according to the demands of time, it does not mean that local wisdom

should be abandoned and allowed to diminish [4]. Contextualization of the local wisdom values is urgent to be implemented because of the diminishing trend of the values. Today's young people and teenagers are no longer familiar with the values of local wisdom. To make matters worse, even well-established adults may not always understand and be aware of local wisdom values [5]. This research aims to preserve local wisdom values which are diminishing and being slowly from generation to generation, especially the values contained in the traditional children's games [6]. The main purpose is to preserve and cultivate the traditional children's games containing local wisdom values. In addition to describing the manifestation of the local wisdom, this research aims to reveal the values of life contained in each of the traditional children's games (Wibowo et al., 2012). Education in all levels may take the benefit from this research, especially the educational institutions strongly concerned with the local wisdom values and character education.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The major theory underlying the research is the theory of ecology and linguistics. Linguistics cannot stand on its own or flourish without synergizing with other disciplines in inter-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and trans-disciplinary research [8]. Ecolinguistics is included as interdisciplinary, by combining linguistics and ecology (Rahardi, et al., 2016). Linguistics and ecology emphasize on the dimensions of ecology [10]. Thus, the linguistic dimensions are not the only one being highlighted in the ecolinguistic study [11]. In its further development, ecological linguistics shifted its focus on the linguistic domain. Therefore, the ecological dimension no longer becomes the main focal point of the discussion, hence the term ecolinguistics is coined (Do Couto, 2014; Chen, 2016).

Ecolinguistics is divided into two: first, ecolinguistics concerning the nature or physical environment; and second, ecolinguistics concerning the society or humanities. Ecolinguistics concerning the nature is called physical ecolinguistics, while ecolinguistics concerning society is called metaphorical ecolinguistics (Gerbig, 2003; Kravchenko, 2016). Both physical ecolinguistics and metaphorical /societal ecolinguistics interact with pragmatics as the newest branch of linguistics. When Ecolinguistics, which is interdisciplinary in nature, is combined with pragmatics, they will be coined into a new term 'ecopragmatics' (Wimberley, 2017; Stibbe, 2010).

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That being said, ecopragmatics is an interdisciplinary field because it covers three disciplines altogether, namely ecology, linguistics, and pragmatics (Rahardi, et al., 2016; Do Couto, 2014). The perspective used in this research is ecopragmatics as mentioned earlier in this article. The existence of context in ecopragmatics is absolute as a consequence of the choice of perspective. Contexts are classified into two major groups, namely internal context or commonly known as intralinguistic contexts or co-text, and external contexts, known as extralinguistic context or just context [17].

Internal contexts are dyadic. Dyadic contexts refer to the linguistic meaning which is semantically unrelated with the external contexts, or commonly known as semantic meaning (Rahardi, 2018; Ray, 2004). Certain experts call it linguistic meaning, instead of semantic meaning or dyadic meaning. Understanding meaning internally is relatively easy, because essentially each linguistic entity has meanings and each meaning is different from the other. Even though the meanings look the same, actually they are different because no word has the same absolute meaning [20].

Consequently, the study of synonyms was already carried out and spread widely to the general public. For this reason, there should be an in-depth study or review to generate new understanding of research to revise the old widespread misconception of the semantic meaning. Furthermore, the external contexts are extralinguistic in nature. External contexts determine the pragmatic meaning or intention, in spite of its correlation with both physical and metaphorical ecolinguistics [21]. External contexts are classified into at least three areas, namely social and societal, cultural, and situational contexts [22]. Social contexts are not the same as the societal contexts in terms of types of communal relations. Social context is horizontal, while societal context is vertical [23]. The characteristics of horizontal relationship can be seen in the relationship among students, the sellers, farmers, fishermen, etc. The relationship they establish does not involve social status, rank, level, and class because it is horizontal. The characteristics of a vertical relationship can be seen in the relations between a student and a lecturer, an employee and an employer, a subordinate and a superordinate, a labor and a master, a servant and a royal patron, etc. It should be affirmed, therefore, that the discussion of local wisdom cannot be separated from the culture and society where the values are embedded (Senanayake, 2016; Teasdale & Ma Rhea, 2000). Local wisdom is commonly understood as the values of life shared in the community, passed on, and preserved from generation to generation. The values of local wisdom are long-lasting because the values are extracted from the real-life customs of the community. The society who has heterogeneous and numerous values of local wisdom is categorized as a cultivated culture. In contrast, a society without established cultural construction and uncultivated and uncared for culture may not inherit significant local wisdom. As a part of cultural activities of the community, traditional children's games contain local wisdom values. Local wisdom found in the traditional children's games must be preserved and cultivated properly. Local wisdom is a growing potential asset nowadays because of the influence of the development of science and technology, both in the context of the globalization and in the framework of the industrial revolution 4.0.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The ecopragmatic research dealing with local wisdom values contained in the traditional children's games is of a descriptive qualitative type [25]. The research data source was divided into two, namely locational and substantive data sources. The locational data source of this research was the children in the Javanese culture and community, especially those living in Yogyakarta. The substantive data source was the local wisdom values contained in the traditional children's games deeply rooted in the society [27].

Interviews were conducted to several figures who understood local wisdom values in the Javanese culture and society, particularly in Yogyakarta. Researchers generated substantive data source intuitively in the research considering the fact that the researchers have a close linguistic and cultural distance with the object of the research. All the texts presented in this research contain local wisdom values or presumed to contain values of local wisdom. The object of the research was the local wisdom values contained in the traditional children's games [28]. The research data was gathered using the observation method by observing the texts describing the traditional children's games obtainable during the timeline of the research. The techniques employed in the observation method were recording and note-taking [29]. The transcription and transliteration process was carried out accurately in the research implementation. In addition to the observation method, a speaking or interview technique was also employed to gather ecolinguistic research data related to local wisdom values. Interviews were conducted to the figures who understood the local wisdom values in the Javanese community and culture, particularly in Yogyakarta and its vicinity. Additionally, interviews were conducted to the children who demonstrated and acted out the traditional children's games. The gathered data were then classified and typified to see their categories and types. The next step involved analysis and interpretation of the classified and typified data. The analysis was conducted using distributional and content analysis methods [30]. The result of data analysis was then triangulated to the experts of local wisdom values or some competent cultural experts to ensure that the analysis and interpretation conducted by the researchers were appropriate, correct, and had fulfilled the validity measures.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, each type of traditional children's games in the Javanese community and culture, particularly in Yogyakarta, will be described. Illustrations was provided to clarify the description of the traditional children's games. The researchers also contextualized the values found in the traditional children's games in today's contexts to see the extent to which the local wisdom values are preserved in the widespread popular culture nowadays. In the next section, the traditional children's games which preserve the local wisdom values will be described one by one.

#### 1. The Local Wisdom Value of Affection

The essence of life is affection. People care about fellow human beings because they have a sense of affection.



People are willing to collaborate with others because the local wisdom value of affection resides in each of the people. Affection is a very important element in the individual life of the people as community members.

**Dedek-dedekan Traditional Game**

This game is commonly played by several girls in a rural area. Each of the players carry a doll as a baby she cares for. They play mothers or sisters of the baby by imitating the gestures of loving mothers and sisters such as patting, rocking, caressing, kissing, baby-talking, buying things, serenading, baby-feeding, putting them to sleep, etc. The role play is done to exercise their skills so they could give the same affection to their own children or siblings that God bestows on them.



**Figure 1. Children are playing dedek-dedekan in the garden**

The character of affection is the significant characteristic of humanity. People having great affection has a high value of humanity. The value must be fostered since early childhood. In rural areas, especially villages, the ‘dedekan’ game is played in the wide open front yard of a house or in the spacious garden serving as children’s playground. The word ‘dedek-dedekan’ is an iconic term derived from the diminutive vocative address ‘dik’ or its variant ‘dek.’ It comes from the word ‘adik’ which means ‘little brother or little sister. Through the instilment and development of children’s character of affection through traditional children’s game ‘dedekan’, there were no cases of babies being abandoned, killed, neglected, sold, and abused [31]. Thus, it can be confirmed again that the game ‘dedek-dedekan’ trains children to respect life [32].

**2. The Local Wisdom Value of Agility and Fighting Spirit**

Professional success is determined by how far someone has a fighting spirit. Weak fighting spirit causes someone to complain easily, to dodge problems, and finally to fail to participate in the community life. The importance of the local wisdom value of fighting spirit is shown in the traditional children’s game since the ancient times.

**Rerodaan Traditional Game**

The ‘rerodaan’ game is played by both boys and girls. The instrument to play the game is used car tires, bicycle wheel rim, or motorbike wheel rim. The tire or the rim is rolled around in a specific speed using a twig or a wooden stick to direct, adjust the speed, and to maintain balance. The player’s fighting spirit and agility is tested as to how far each player can maintain balance and adjust direction and speed of the tire or rim precisely.



**Figure 2. Children are playing rerodaan in the village street**

The value of fighting spirit and agility is an important character to be instilled and developed in the minds of the children since early age. The success of the value implant can greatly impact on the children’s success in their adult life. The game ‘rerodaan’ is played by village children because the game is cheap and the material is available anywhere. In addition, there are still vacant lots where children can play the game freely without having to endanger themselves and other people. It is revealed that some people who are successful today used to play the traditional game ‘rerodaan’ when they were children because this game taught them to have relentless fighting spirit and agility which have shaped their character to be resilient [33].

**Benthik Traditional Game**

The traditional children’s game ‘benthik’ trains children’s fighting spirit. The game ‘benthik’ is played using two sticks of a certain branch of a tree. The first stick is long and used as a lever; while the other one is a shorter stick to be hurled. The success of the game is determined by the distance the short ejected stick lands on the ground and by the failure of the opposing team to catch the stick.





Figure 3. Children are trying to lever the stick in the *bentik* game



Figure 4. Children are playing *topeng-topengan* in the garden

The value of local wisdom contained in the '*bentik*' game is fighting spirit and agility. The fighting spirit is trained by accustoming children to levering the stick as hard as he could to reach the distance as far as possible. The value of agility is trained by their ability to catch the ejected stick dexterously. The local values were intended by our ancestors to get children used to work hard instead of complaining, focusing on difficulties, and feeling helpless when they grow up [34]. Moreover, the exercise on agility during childhood will make them agile, smart, dexterous, and quick-witted adults.

## 2. The Local Wisdom Value of Creativity and Adaptability

Being able to adapt in the community life is very crucial. Someone who cannot adapt to the environment may face many challenges in life with other people. They may face confrontation with other people. The value of creativity is very important to instill and development.

### *Topeng-topengan* Traditional Game

Playing masks is actually not a typical cultural art form from Yogyakarta and Central Java. It is a typical Sundanese art. One of the areas in West Java which has a strong cultural influence on the Javanese culture is Cirebon. Cirebon is well-known for the traditional mask arts. Therefore, the children in Central Java and Yogyakarta imitate this traditional art by making paper masks. Masks made of wide leaves are tied with rubbers and worn to cover children's faces by attaching the rubber bands around the ears. The cultural values of the masks game is a role play of certain characters. A child may wear a giant face to portray a hard, fierce, greedy, rude character. On the contrary, a child may wear the mask of Arjuna, a polite, soft-hearted, graceful knight in the shadow puppet show or *wayang*. The mask game can be used to portray any characters, both good and evil characters as a role play exercise.

Someone who can juggle several roles, characters, and figures is said as someone who can "*ajur-ajer*" in the Javanese culture. Being '*ajur-ajer*' means that the person is multitasking, adaptable, and versatile because he/she can do any tasks assigned to him/her. Such person tends to thrive successfully because he/she is adaptable and malleable to adapt to any environments and any type of tasks. In contrast, people who are picky in doing tasks are usually less flexible in living in the communal life [35].

## 3. The Local Wisdom Value of Creative Imagination

The development of creative imagination is very crucial to develop a nation. The community members who have creative imagination will be able to develop the nation where he lives and seeks livelihood. The local wisdom value of creative imagination must be developed so that the community may thrive and succeed in welcoming the challenge of the times.

### *Boneka Kodokan* Traditional Game

*Boneka Kodokan* or a frog doll is usually made by boys by folding used papers according to a frog-shaped model. Then, the frogs are played to portray specific imaginary characters. Children narrate the story of the frog dolls to form the whole story. Through the game, children train themselves to be leaders. They use their imagination to portray a character and then narrate the attitude, behavior, and the trait of the character.



Figure 5. Children are playing boneka kodok



Figure 6. Children are playing kitiran umbul in the garden

Essentially, human beings as *homo ludens* (or players) [36] who could play several roles in the community start to emerge since childhood when they play drama. In playing the frog doll, a character is narrated and portrayed according to one's imagination. It indicates that the ability to manage, organize, and portray characters has been trained since early age. It is expected that children are smart in playing the different types of roles so that they are good at organizing people and events when they are adults.

#### 4. The Local Wisdom Value of Acceptance of the Facts of Life

Awareness of life, both the natural and social life, is very basic in the development of an individual, a community, and a nation. Living in peace will happen to the people who realize the importance of life. The local wisdom value must be developed so that it will not be eroded by time.

##### *Kitiran Umbul* Traditional Game

The '*kitiran umbul*' game is played using hard leaves of a certain tree so that when it is tossed up, the leaves can reach a certain height and land in a zigzag movement like a windmill. When the dry leaf touches the ground, the players approach to see whether it lands upward or facedown to determine the winners and the losers. Some winners get another chance to fly up their leaves to determine a single winner. The cultural note contained in the game is the value of reality. From early age, children are faced with the reality of life. Life may bring luck or misfortune. However, joy and togetherness must be maintained in any situations.

Luck and misfortune in life are inevitable facts of life. A person's readiness to face the inevitable is the value that parents want to teach their children through the game '*kitiran umbul*'. Life is like a spinning wheel. Sometimes you are on top of the wheel, sometimes you are at the bottom. You win some, you lose some. Any hardship and obstacles in life must be faced with happiness, enthusiasm, joy, and togetherness [37].

#### 5. The Local Wisdom Value of Fulfilling the Destiny

God creates human beings according to their own destiny, which cannot be manipulated. Social welfare will be realized when each member of the community realizes their own destiny. Female destiny is different from the male destiny, which must be accepted without arguments.

##### *Masak-masakan* Traditional Game

The traditional children's game '*masak-masakan*' or cooking game is played mostly by girls. However, boys can also play their part in the game. Some children may synergize to play the roles of a father and a mother in the game to prepare meals for the family. Using simple cooking utensils and rudimentary ingredients such as leaves and twigs from the surrounding garden, children can act out the role play as a father and a mother in a household. Culturally, preparing meals for the family is usually done by the females. The role of seeking food and firewood becomes male responsibility. This confirms that in the game '*masak-masakan*', boys and girls learn about their gender roles to fulfill their destiny.



Figure 7. Children are playing a role as cooking housewives

The woman's gender role as housewives is to prepare meals for the family and the male gender role is to look for food and all other ingredients. This destiny is implanted among children since early age. Some families still maintain the roles. However, some families cannot maintain the gender-based labor division due to several conditions and reasons. Even though the development of times allows the destiny-based gender roles to be modified, in reality some gender roles are very essential and irreplaceable (Lieberman, 2009).

#### 6. The Local Wisdom Value of Obedience and Discipline

Obedience and discipline are requirements to create harmony in life. Harmonious life will happen when each of the community members does not violate regulations. To respect laws and order, one must always strive to obey and uphold the law. Only through obedience to laws, harmonious community will be materialized.

##### *Polisi-polisian* Traditional Game

Playing roles in the traditional game '*polisi-polisian*' must involve several boys and girls. The game starts by determining the role of policemen / policewomen and the role of 'thieves'. The decision is made by counting and singing '*ling ling ling maling dan si si si polisi*'. Then, they divide themselves into a 'policemen' group and a 'thieves' group. The policemen group discuss a strategy to catch the thieves, while the group of thieves finds the way to avoid being caught by the policemen. However, when the policemen could catch the thieves, discipline and obedience must be maintained.



Figure 8. Children are playing a role as 'policemen' and 'thieves'

The local wisdom value of the '*polisi-polisian*' game deals with discipline and obedience in life. In the society, social harmony can be maintained when everyone realizes the essence of discipline and obedience to norms. Criminal cases occur because community members disobey norms [39]. Television reports widespread violation of discipline and obedience to the law and this indicates that the values of discipline and obedience are not deeply-ingrained in the minds of the people since they were young. Nowadays, it is rare to see children playing roles, such as in the '*polisi-polisian*' game, which in turn can aggravate the future children's sense of discipline and obedience.

#### 7. The Local Wisdom Value of Intelligence Test

Living in the modern era like today, people must be free from ignorance and stupidity. Each person must strive for intellectual endeavors both for oneself and for others in order to develop the community. The value of intelligent test is the basic requirement because it frees human beings from their misery.

##### *Mekrok* Traditional Game

The traditional children's game '*mekrok*' uses the papers drawn with pictures of mathematical figures, fruits, and certain questions. The papers are folded in a certain pattern to form a blooming flower or in the Javanese language '*mekrok*.' Using a specific song created by the players, one of the children chooses the paper by calling out a specific mathematical figure or specific name of fruits. The number of fruit being called out is related to the questions written inside the folded papers. The questions deal with random stuff and must be answered correctly. Therefore, the trivia quiz game can be used to train children to think and figure something out.



Figure 9. Children are playing mekrok using papers



Figure 10. Children are playing dingklik oglak aglik in the garden

Training children's intelligence is not merely done through formal learning at school, but it can also be done through playing with peers outside of classroom. By testing their intelligence using a trivia quiz game, the children are trained to be smart, capable, resilient, and knowledgeable individuals when they grow up [40]; [41]. In the traditional children's game 'mekrok', the intelligence test is done through a fun and exciting trivia quiz game.

### 8. The Local Wisdom Value of Synergy and Collaboration

Without synergy and collaboration, no human beings can succeed in the highly competitive era like today. Great and outstanding achievement will only be reached when synergy and collaboration are deeply ingrained. Since childhood, children are trained to live collaboratively through children's games they play.

#### Dingklik Oglak-aglik Traditional Game

The cultural value of the traditional children's game 'dingklik oglak-aglik' is synergy and collaboration. These two values are realized in the process of synergizing the players' feet which are locked behind their bodies. The game is played by four people at the most. Thus, there are four legs being bent backwards and locked with each other's legs. The resilience to synergize and collaborate with each other is tested and trained by way of circling and tiptoeing. When the synergy and collaboration are not strong, the players will collapse on the ground shortly after they stand.

The values of synergy and collaboration are not new concepts in the Indonesian life, especially the Javanese communal life. In Java, the values of synergy and collaboration are manifested in the practice of 'gotong royong' or mutual cooperation. As a typical value, the predecessors train their young in the traditional game called 'dingklik oglak-aglik' or 'totter-teeter stool'. As we can see, it is easy to mobilize Indonesian people to collaborate and cooperate for the common goal. This value or spirit has been deeply ingrained by our ancestors who trained the young generation to synergize and collaborate through traditional children's games [37].

### V. CONCLUSIONS

The research found at least 9 manifestations of local wisdom in the Javanese cultural traditional children's games, particularly found in the area of Yogyakarta. The local values are urgent and important to be re-actualized and utilized to develop the Indonesian children's characters through education. The values are described as follows: (1) The Local Wisdom Value of Affection; (2) The Local Wisdom Value of Agility and Fighting Spirit; (3) The Local Wisdom Value of Creativity and Adaptability; (4) The Local Wisdom Value of Creative Imagination; (5) The Local Wisdom Value of Acceptance of the Facts of Life; (6) The Local Wisdom Value of Fulfilling the Destiny; (7) The Local Wisdom Value of Obedience and Discipline; (8) The Local Wisdom Value of Intelligence Test; (9) The Local Wisdom Value of Synergy and Collaboration. The local wisdom values can be found in the names of the following traditional children's games: (a) Dedek-Dedekan, (b) Rerodaan, (c) Bentik, (d) Topeng-Topengan, (e) Boneka Kodokan, (f) Kitiran Umbul, (g) Masak-Masakan, (h) Polisi-Polisian, (i) Mekrok, (j) Dingklik Oglak-Aglik.

## Contextualizing Local Values of Children's Games in the Perspective of Ecopragmatics to Enhance Culture-Specific Based Communication

The benefits of the research on local wisdom values in the ecopragmatic perspective are integral in the educational endeavor to rehabilitate, assist, and educate children who are highly exposed to the digital game materials which are not based on local culture by embedding the values of relevant good characters contained in the traditional children's games.

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