

Transforming Javanese Culture-Based Character Values Through Language Literacy Practices in Elementary School

Niken Larasati, Sriyanto*^{ORCID}, Anang Widhi Nirwansyah^{ORCID}, Ana Andriani^{ORCID}

Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, KH. Ahmad Dahlan St., Banyumas, Central Java, 53182, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, email: sriyanto1907@ump.ac.id

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Abstract

Regional culture-based character education is important for students but is weakening amidst the shifting currents of globalization. This study aims to analyze the process of transformation of Javanese cultural values through language literacy practices in elementary schools. The research method is qualitative with an ethnographic design. Participants consisted of four teachers (T1–T4) and six students (S1–S6), selected purposively who were involved in Javanese language literacy activities at an elementary school in Cilacap area. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis was carried out according to Spradley's ethnographic steps, namely domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. Data were validated through triangulation of techniques and sources. The results of the study show that Javanese language literacy practices in elementary schools can transform Javanese culture-based character values. Teachers use children's stories, habituation songs, counting with a variety of languages, discussions, drama, and experience-sharing activities to shape students' characters. As a result, Javanese culture-based character values can be understood cognitively and developed into concrete actions in everyday life, such as (1) an attitude of *andhap asor* (humility) in interactions; (2) *guyup rukun* (cooperation) emerges during literacy activities and other learning activities; (3) *tepa selira* (empathy) is manifested in caring for friends; (4) politeness in language becomes a consistent habit; (5) *ewuh pakewuh* (tolerance) develops into the ability to accept differences in a real way; and (6) *grapyak semanak* (social intimacy) is increasingly visible through more open and confident relationships. Literacy acts as an initial trigger, and the school social environment becomes a space for actualizing values. The role of teachers, schools, and all parties is needed to support character transformation through creative, holistic, and contextual literacy.

1. Introduction

Cultural values serve as guiding principles for individual behavior, communication, and decision-making (Cummins, 2021; Sagiv & Roccas, 2021; Zulkarnaen, 2022; Hindaryatiningsih et al., 2025). Without contextualized education rooted in local culture, cultural homogenization has the potential to weaken students' character (UNESCO, 2023; Zvereva, 2023; Ridho, 2024; Nirwansyah & Sriyanto, 2025). Character education is more effective when integrated with students' cultural context and life experiences (Andriani & Aulia, 2023; Berlian & Huda, 2022; Hersiyani & Sriyanto, 2025; Hutchison & McAlister-Shields, 2020; Yusnan et al., 2025). Culture-based character education not only fosters pride in local heritage but also fosters social awareness, communication skills, and the ability to interact harmoniously in a multicultural society (Li & Shein, 2023; Järvelä, 2023; Sakti et al., 2024).

Culture-based character values shape social morality, but their practice is declining amid the influence of popular culture and digital communication (Siregar et al., 2023; Widiana et al., 2024). Many students have limited reading skills and a poor understanding of cultural values, while teachers often have not implemented systematic strategies to connect literacy with character education (Nurya & Saputra, 2023; Sudrajat & Wijaya, 2023). Although policies to strengthen character education and school literacy movements emphasize schools as strategic spaces for rebuilding the meaning of cultural values through reflective learning, the reality is that students often imitate global norms that are inconsistent with local politeness (Berlian & Huda, 2022; Andriani & Aulia, 2023). Schools have emphasized the importance of cultural integration in character education, but most still focus on the content of values rather than the mechanisms for their transformation (Suri & Chandra, 2021; Widiati et al., 2021).

Initial observations at an elementary school in *Cilacap* area revealed that the use of polite language (*unggah-ungguh basa*) is increasingly rare in daily interactions. Students are more inclined to imitate foreign popular culture, which does not always align with local norms of politeness, while communication patterns with teachers and parents often resemble interactions with peers. This situation underscores the weakening internalization of Javanese cultural values in students' real lives. Therefore, teachers need to transform Javanese-based character values through language literacy practices in elementary schools.

A language literacy approach helps students understand character values contextually while developing reading, writing, and communication skills in local and national languages (Maimun et al., 2020; Hendriana et al., 2025). Its implementation is evident in the habit of reading traditional texts, retelling folktales, and linking cultural practices to everyday learning experiences (Widiati et al., 2021; Suwandi et al., 2025). This process aligns with the adaptive transformation of cultural values through contextual reinterpretation so that meaning remains continuous (Järvelä, 2023; Sakti et al., 2024; Hindaryatiningsih et al., 2025; Syamsudin et al., 2025). In practice, language literacy serves as a social space for negotiating meaning between texts, experiences, and cultural identities, while Javanese folktales and cultural texts provide concrete spaces for moral reflection for students (Hornberger, 2021; Medina et al., 2021).

Several previous studies are relevant to the transformation of character values based on culture and literacy. Siregar et al. (2023) emphasized that interaction with cultural texts can instill the values of politeness, respect, and Javanese politeness in students' daily lives. Nurya & Saputra (2023) and Sudrajat & Wijaya (2023) demonstrated that the School Literacy Movement, which links literacy to the local cultural context, increases students' responsibility, empathy, and positive behavior, although it requires systematic teacher strategies. Furthermore, Hindaryatiningsih et al. (2025) emphasize that cultural literacy not only develops reading skills but also serves as a means of transforming values, fostering social awareness, and strengthening character based on local wisdom, thus ensuring literacy plays a dual role as both an academic and social practice.

Although several previous studies have emphasized the importance of literacy and local culture in character education, most have focused on developing reading skills or general value recognition without deeply examining how language literacy can serve as a medium for transforming Javanese culturally based character values in practice in elementary schools. The novelty of this research lies in its ethnographic approach, which integrates language literacy with the transformation of character values, specifically six values relevant for elementary school students according to Siregar et al. (2023), namely *andhap asor* (humility), *guyup rukun* (cooperation), *tepa selira* (empathy), *ewuh pakewuh* (politeness), *pangerten* (tolerance), and *grapyak semanak* (friendliness and social closeness). This approach, combined with the practice of Javanese language literacy, connects reading experiences, retelling traditional stories, and cultural interactions with the internalization of character values.

Based on this background, this study was designed to answer the research question, "How does the process of transforming Javanese cultural character values take place through language literacy practices in elementary schools?" The purpose of this study is to analyze in depth the mechanisms of Javanese cultural value transformation through language literacy in elementary schools. The research results are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of culture-based character education from a global perspective, as well as practical contributions to strengthening educational policies and practices at the elementary school level.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach, as proposed by Moleong (2018), which aims to understand phenomena holistically within a natural context, specifically regarding the process of transforming Javanese culture-based character values through literacy practices. The research design used was ethnography because it is appropriate for examining social practices, interactions, and cultural meanings that emerge naturally in the participants' daily lives (Hamzah, 2020).

This research was conducted at an elementary school in Cilacap Regency, Central Java. The location was selected based on the regular practice of Javanese language literacy, the school's support for strengthening local culture-based character education, and the continued use of Javanese values and culture in daily interactions, making it relevant to the research focus on character value transformation. Participants consisted of four teachers (T1–T4) and six students (S1–S6) in grades four through six, selected purposively based on their active involvement in literacy activities. The students' characteristics included an age range of nine to twelve, diverse literacy skills, active participation in reading and storytelling, and familiarity with Javanese cultural values in both the school environment and their daily lives. This study also adhered to research ethics by seeking permission from the school, explaining the purpose to participants, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that data was used solely for academic purposes.

Data collection techniques in this study included interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Hosseini & Haukås, 2025; Knott et al., 2022). Data collection was conducted over two months (February to

March 2026) at one of the elementary schools in the study area. Interviews were conducted with teachers and students to explore their experiences and perspectives regarding language literacy practices and the internalization of character values, while adhering to ethical research principles such as openness, participant consent, and the protection of individual rights. Participatory observations were conducted periodically every Tuesday during Javanese language literacy activities and every Thursday to observe the application of character values in students' daily lives in the school environment, both inside and outside the classroom, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the character value transformation process. Documentation was used to support the research data through reading texts, activity notes, photographs, and school archives relevant to the implementation of language literacy and strengthening character values.

Data analysis in this study was applied interactively and cyclically using James P. Spradley's ethnographic analysis model (Hamzah, 2020). This model was chosen because it is able to deeply reveal cultural meanings within the context of social and linguistic practices. The analysis stages included: (1) domain analysis to identify general categories of cultural values in literacy practices, (2) taxonomic analysis to group relationships between value categories, (3) componential analysis to identify differences in the meaning and characteristics of each Javanese cultural value, and (4) cultural theme analysis to formulate broad patterns of character value transformation in students' lives. All these stages were applied to data from observations, interviews, and documentation to comprehensively reveal the mechanisms of Javanese cultural value transformation through language literacy practices in elementary schools.

Data validity was maintained through technical triangulation and source triangulation. Technical triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation, while source triangulation was conducted by verifying information from various participants, namely teachers and students. This step was carried out to increase the credibility and consistency of the research findings (Knott et al., 2022).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The results of this study indicate that Javanese literacy practices serve not only as learning activities but also as a gradual and ongoing process of transforming elementary school students' character values. Teachers implement literacy through children's stories, discussions, dramas, and experience-sharing activities as a medium to foster character values based on Javanese culture. This research analysis refers to six character indicators according to Siregar et al. (2023), namely *andhap asor* (humility), *guyup rukun* (cooperation), *tepa selira* (empathy), *ewuh pakewuh* (politeness), *pangerten* (tolerance), and *grapyak semanak* (friendliness and social closeness).

Research data was obtained through observation, documentation, and interviews. Observations and documentation studies were conducted not only on Tuesdays during literacy activities but also on Thursdays to observe how these values are applied in students' daily lives, both during classroom learning and in social interactions outside of class. This approach was used so that the research not only describes the process of instilling values but also demonstrates how these values develop in more natural settings.

Observations and documentation indicate that on Tuesday, literacy practice became the initial stage of value instillation, with students reading stories, reflecting, discussing, and role-playing. At this stage, character values began to be understood and imitated by students. However, the transformation of values did not stop there. Observations on other days showed that the values learned were reinforced and began to emerge in students' actual behavior (value transformation). To clarify the relationship between literacy activities and the application of values in students' daily lives, the results of observations and documentation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Observations and Documentation Study of Language Literacy Practices for Character Value Transformation Based on Javanese Culture

Character Value	Observation of Student Activities (Tuesday – Literacy)	Thursday Observation (Daily Student Behavior)	Teacher Observation (T1-T4)	Documentation	Meaning / Impact of Transformation
<i>Andhap Asor</i> (Humility)	Students read <i>Juara Sing Ora Sombong</i> and wrote reflections on humility	Students do not show off when praised and continue to appreciate their peers' achievements	Teachers provided reflective questions related to the character's attitude and	Reflection notes, class journals, activity photos	The value develops from understanding into a habitual humble attitude in daily interactions

Character Value	Observation of Student Activities (Tuesday – Literacy)	Thursday Observation (Daily Student Behavior)	Teacher Observation (T1–T4)	Documentation	Meaning / Impact of Transformation
			students' experiences		
<i>Guyup Rukun</i> (Cooperation)	Discussion and drama <i>Gotong Royong Mbendung Kali</i> , building a “mini dam”	Students demonstrate cooperation in group tasks in other subjects without being instructed	Teachers facilitated group work and role distribution	Activity photos, discussion recordings	Cooperation extends beyond literacy activities into everyday learning interactions
<i>Tepa Selira</i> (Empathy)	Discussing the feelings of the character Roni and relating them to personal experiences	Students show empathy, such as helping struggling peers and correcting those who mock others	Teachers posed reflective and empathetic questions	Discussion notes, student writings	Empathy develops from discussion into spontaneous real-life social actions
<i>Ewuh Pakewuh</i> (Politeness)	Practicing greetings, singing polite songs, and speaking politely	Students consistently use polite language when interacting with teachers and peers outside lessons	Teachers guided tone and habituation of politeness	Activity videos, evaluation sheets	Politeness becomes a consistent habit in daily communication
<i>Pangerten</i> (Tolerance)	Comparing characters' experiences with personal experiences	Students are able to accept differing opinions and do not easily get upset during discussions	Teachers asked open-ended questions to understand students' perspectives	Teacher notes, discussion results	Tolerance develops into the ability to understand and accept differences in real situations
<i>Grapyak Semanak</i> (Friendliness and Social Closeness)	Students share experiences, engage in role play, and participate in small group interactions to build social closeness.	Students communicate more easily, play, and interact without awkwardness.	The teacher facilitates experience-sharing activities and group interactions	Documentation includes activity photos, interview recordings, and observation notes	friendliness and social closeness develop from guided interactions into warmer, more open, and natural relationships among students.

The findings in Table 1 demonstrate a consistent relationship between Tuesday's learning experiences and the application of values in students' activities on Thursday. Structured literacy activities served as a starting point for developing an understanding of values, while everyday situations provided space for students to demonstrate the application of these values more naturally in various interactions at school.

Observations indicate that literacy learning, conducted every Tuesday through children's stories, discussions, drama, and experience-sharing activities, served as the primary means of instilling character values. At this stage, students actively engaged in reading, writing reflections, discussions, and role-playing, allowing them to understand and apply character values in the learning context.

Expanded observations on Thursday revealed that the values learned did not stop with structured activities but began to emerge in students' spontaneous behavior, both in the learning process of other subjects and in social interactions outside the classroom. Behaviors such as helping each other, speaking politely, and respecting friends emerged without direct instruction from the teacher. This demonstrates that the literacy process does not stop at understanding but continues to develop habits that are becoming ingrained in students' daily lives.

Documentation in the form of photographs, journal entries, and videos reinforces the evidence that this process is ongoing. Thus, Javanese literacy practice can be understood as a gradual process encompassing the instillation, reinforcement, and transformation of values into students' actual behavior.

Furthermore, to deepen our understanding of the value transformation process, interviews were conducted with teachers and students based on the six characters indicators used in this study. The interviews focused on how students understood, perceived, and applied the Javanese literacy learning experience in their daily lives at school. Each character indicator describes a different form of internalization of values, ranging from humility, cooperation, empathy, politeness, and tolerance to familiarity in social interactions.

3.1.1. Andhap Asor (Humility)

The value of *andhap asor* (humility) is instilled through the reading of "*Juara Sing Ora Sombong*," where the character Dika demonstrates humility despite winning a story reading competition. This activity was held on Tuesday (03/02/2026) as part of a Javanese language literacy program. Teacher T1 explained,

"We asked students to write a reflection on how Dika restrained himself from arrogance. After that, students were given reflective questions about the appropriate attitude when receiving praise or awards" (interview T1, 03/02/2026).

During this activity, students began to show initial responses to the values presented, although some remained hesitant to express their opinions. One S2 student stated,

"I learned to restrain myself when praised and still respect friends who also excel" (interview S2, 03/02/2026).

This indicates that in the early stages of literacy activities, students begin to understand the meaning of "*andhap asor*" through stories and reflections.

Furthermore, the continuation of the literacy habit, the value of *andhap asor* (humility), began to be evident in students' daily lives at school, both in learning and outside of class, such as not being excessive when receiving praise and maintaining respect for their peers who excel. Teacher T1 also explained,

"I see some students have become more polite when receiving praise and are not showing arrogance" (interview T1, 10/02/2026).

S2 also revealed,

"Now when I'm praised, I don't immediately become overly happy, but I remain calm and respectful of my friends" (interview S2, 10/02/2026).

3.1.2. Guyup Rukun (Cooperation)

The value of *guyup rukun* (cooperation) was developed through discussion activities and the Gotong Royong Mbendung Kali drama, where students worked together to build a mini dam. This activity was held on Tuesday (10/02/2026) as part of the Javanese language literacy habit. Teacher T4 stated,

"In this game, each child has a role. They learn to solve problems together, help friends who are struggling, and discuss strategies together. This real-life experience makes the concept of cooperation easier to understand" (interview T4, 10/02/2026).

S4 expressed,

"I enjoy working together with my friends to complete the mini dam. Everyone has to help each other to succeed" (interview S4, 10/02/2026).

During this activity, some students tended to be passive and wait for their peers' direction, so the teacher assigned roles so that all students were actively involved in group work.

The following day, the value of cooperation began to emerge during group assignments and other learning activities. Teacher T4 explained,

"During the learning activities, I saw that students were becoming more united, helping each other, and not just relying on one friend" (interview T4, 12/02/2026).

S4 also stated,

"Now, when I work in a group, I help my friends, not just wait for direction" (interview S4, 12/02/2026).

3.1.3. Tapa Selira (Empathy)

The value of *tepa selira* (empathy) can be seen in the reading "*Sepatu Anyar kanggo Roni*." This story depicts Sari's concern when Roni feels embarrassed because his shoes are damaged and he is being teased by his friends. This activity was held on Tuesday (17/02/2026) as part of a Javanese language literacy program. Teacher T3 explained,

"We asked students to imagine Roni's position and then describe how they should behave. This way, empathy is not only discussed but also practiced through discussion and role-playing" (interview T3, 17/02/2026).

S5 stated,

"I learned to calm down a sad friend and not tease him, just as Sari calmed Roni." Now I am more sensitive to my friends' feelings" (interview S5, 17/02/2026).

During this activity, some students still had difficulty expressing emotions and sharing personal experiences, so the teacher provided guidance through concrete examples and reflective questions.

Further observations showed that students were beginning to show concern for friends experiencing difficulties, such as helping friends who didn't understand assignments and not teasing them about their shortcomings. Teacher T3 explained,

"During learning activities, I see students starting to care more and not leaving friends who are having difficulty learning alone" (interview T3, 19/02/2026).

S5 also stated,

"Now I help friends who are having difficulties more often and don't tease them anymore" (interview S5, 19/02/2026).

3.1.4. Ewuh Pakewuh (Politeness)

The value of *ewuh pakewuh* (politeness) is fostered through literacy activities that include greetings, polite songs, and practicing the use of polite language in various situations, including calculating numbers in Javanese and English. This activity was held on Tuesday (24/02/2026) as part of the Javanese language literacy program. Teacher T4 explained,

"Students are not only taught polite words but also practiced through direct practice, such as greeting friends, speaking with intonation, and acting in drama" (interview T4, 24/02/2026).

S1 said,

"I've become more careful in speaking, learning to respect my friends, and not saying things that might offend them" (interview S1, 24/02/2026).

During the activity, students were still found to be inconsistent in maintaining politeness, such as forgetting to greet or speaking too quickly. Therefore, the teacher reinforced the concept through repetition and direct examples.

Furthermore, adjustments in student behavior were observed in daily interactions at school. The use of more polite language began to emerge, both when communicating with teachers and peers, including in classroom learning situations and activities outside of class. Teacher T4 stated,

"Students have become accustomed to greeting and speaking more politely than before" (interview T4, 26/02/2026).

S1 also added,

"Now I say hello more often and don't talk carelessly to friends" (interview S1, 26/02/2026).

3.1.5. Pangerten (Tolerance)

The value of *pangerten* (tolerance) is developed through the story-based literacy activity "*Rembugan Kelompok Sing Beda Pikiran*," which depicts a situation where characters have differing opinions in completing a group assignment but still strive to reach a common understanding through dialogue. This activity was held on Tuesday (03/03/2026) as part of a Javanese language literacy program. Teacher T2 explained,

"Students are encouraged to share their experiences when they have differing opinions, then relate them to the attitudes of the characters in the story so they understand that differences need to be respected" (interview T2, 03/03/2026).

S3 stated,

"I understand better when my friends have different opinions, so I don't immediately get angry or judge only one side" (interview S3, 03/03/2026).

During this process, students' understanding begins to develop, although some still need guidance to accept different perspectives.

In subsequent learning activities, changes in how students respond to differences of opinion in class began to emerge. Group discussions were no longer dominated by quick rejection of peers' ideas but instead began to be characterized by mutual listening. Teacher T2 stated,

"Students are starting to be more open and don't immediately reject their peers' opinions" (interview T2, 05/03/2026).

S3 also added,

"Now I try to listen to my peers' opinions before responding" (interview S3, 05/03/2026).

3.1.6. Grapyak Semanak (Friendliness and Social Closeness)

Grapyak Semanak (friendliness and social closeness) among students began to be built through experience-sharing activities and role-playing designed to foster more open social interactions in the classroom. On Tuesday (03/10/2026), Javanese literacy activities focused on students sharing personal experiences, engaging in role-playing, and interacting in small groups.

During the implementation, Teacher T1 stated,

"Students were given the opportunity to share experiences and practice interacting through group activities to further develop their social relationships" (interview T1, 03/10/2026).

S6 said,

"I feel closer to my friends because we share stories and listen to each other" (interview S6, 10/03/2026).

However, at the beginning of the activity, some students still lacked the confidence to open up to their classmates.

Changes began to emerge the following day, as student interactions became more fluid and less rigid. Students found it easier to communicate, both during group discussions and in activities outside of class, without having to wait for teacher direction. Teacher T1 stated,

"The relationships between students seem to have gotten closer; they are more active in communicating and are no longer awkward when working together" (interview T1, 12/03/2026).

S6 also added,

"Now I feel more comfortable talking and playing with my friends in class" (interview S6, 12/03/2026).

Although the activity went well, in the initial stages, some students still lacked the confidence to interact and share experiences with their classmates. Some students tended to be passive and waited for more active peers to initiate conversations, resulting in uneven participation in the experience-sharing activity. This condition is then addressed through teacher encouragement and guidance so that all students can be actively involved in group interactions.

3.2. Discussion

Javanese literacy in elementary schools serves not only as a learning activity but also as a mechanism for character formation and social habits through culture-based learning experiences. This finding supports Maimun et al. (2020), who asserted that cultural literacy can be a means of internalizing character values. This finding also aligns with Hornberger (2021), who views literacy as an ongoing process related to social and cultural practices as a means of character formation. However, this study is novel in that the literacy process does not stop at understanding values but rather develops gradually to become an appreciation and habituation in students' daily behavior. This is evident in the changes in students who initially only understood the values in stories, then were able to reflect and apply them in daily interactions such as working together, being polite, showing empathy, and accepting differences without direct teacher guidance. Thus, this study expands the practice of culture-based character literacy from simply reading and reflection to activities involving active social interaction, resulting in observable changes in social behavior in the elementary school environment.

This value transformation process is evident in literacy activities every Tuesday through story reading, discussion, reflection, role-playing, and sharing experiences embodying the values of *andhap asor* (humility), *guyup rukun* (cooperation), *tepa selira* (empathy), *ewuh pakewuh* (politeness), *pangerten* (tolerance), and *grapyak semanak* (Friendliness and Social Closeness). These findings align with those of Siregar et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of stories and literacy activities as a medium for character development based on local culture. The similarity lies in the use of literacy as a means of internalizing character values. However, this study demonstrates a more participatory approach, as students not only read and listen to stories but also actively engage in discussions, drama, reflection, and social interactions. Through this process, Javanese cultural values are not only cognitively understood but also begin to become part of students' social behavior in their daily lives.

Character transformation is also evident in each indicator studied. The value of *andhap asor* (humility) develops from understanding stories into a concrete attitude in everyday life, where students are not excessive in accepting praise and remain respectful of their peers. This aligns with findings that humility can be developed through social experiences and role-playing activities in learning (Nopitasari et al., 2025). This also aligns with (Liswati & Fitasari, 2024), who emphasized the importance of social interaction in fostering students' humility. In the current study, this value emerged not only during literacy activities but also appeared to be embedded in students' daily behavior.

The value of *guyup rukun* (cooperation) also experienced a transformation from collaborative activities in literacy to spontaneous cooperation in other learning activities. These findings align with findings that student cooperation can be built through group activities based on local values (Isnanto et al., 2024). Similarly, Yudianto & Sriyanto (2026) stated that collaboration is formed through directed social activities. The difference in this study is that cooperation no longer emerged solely during group assignments but developed naturally in various learning situations without teacher direction.

Furthermore, the value of *tepa selira* (empathy) develops from the ability to understand the feelings of characters in stories into concrete acts of empathy towards friends. Students begin to help friends in difficulty and refrain from mocking others' shortcomings. This aligns with Farida et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of *tepa selira* in fostering social awareness. The difference in this study is that empathy develops not only through a theoretical approach but also through story- and drama-based literacy experiences that directly relate to students' real-life social situations.

The value of *ewuh pakewuh* (politeness) develops from practicing polite language in literacy activities into students' daily communication habits. Students begin to use greetings, polite language, and respect consistently in interactions with teachers and friends. This finding is relevant to Noerharyanti et al. (2025) and Wijayanti (2024), who emphasized that habituation to Javanese krama is effective in developing politeness and strengthening students' character. The similarity lies in the importance of habituation or familiarization in character formation. However, this study shows the novelty that habituation becomes more meaningful when combined with reflective, participatory, and interactive literacy so that students are not only accustomed to

using polite language mechanically but also understand, realize, and internalize the values of politeness practiced in everyday life.

The value of *pangerten* (tolerance) developed from understanding differences in stories to the ability to accept differing opinions in class discussions. Students began to be more open and did not immediately reject their peers' ideas. This finding aligns with Sayekti et al. (2022) and Ridho (2024), who emphasized that tolerance can be built through internalizing local cultural values. The difference is that the Javanese culture-based literacy in this study allowed the tolerance process to develop naturally through reflective and interactive experiences.

Furthermore, the value of *grapyak semanak* (friendliness and social closeness) developed from sharing experiences and role-playing activities to more open, confident, and intimate social relationships. Students found it easier to interact without feeling awkward. This is in line with Mawardi et al. (2022), who stated that *grapyak semanak* (friendly social interaction) strengthens students' social relationships. The difference is that this study shows that familiarity is formed not only through general familiarity but also through literacy based on participatory social experiences.

Overall, all indicators show a consistent pattern of transformation: understanding, appreciation, habituation, and actual social behavior. This pattern indicates that Javanese literacy functions not only as an academic activity but also as a transformation through a character-building mechanism based on repeated and meaningful social experiences. Teachers act as facilitators who not only convey values but also create social situations that enable students to directly practice those values. This study not only reinforces previous findings but also provides a clearer picture that character development in elementary school students can occur gradually through Javanese culture-based literacy. Literacy not only increases knowledge but also serves as a link between understanding values, appreciation, and behavioral change in students' daily lives. Through activities such as reading stories, discussions, reflections, role-playing, and social interactions, Javanese cultural values are not merely understood but develop into concrete habits and actions seen in daily school life. Thus, Javanese literacy is not merely a learning activity but also a way to shape students' overall character. This process involves the simultaneous development of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior through culturally and real-life learning experiences.

3.3. Implications

This research reinforces the understanding that Javanese culture-based language literacy functions not only as an activity of reading and comprehending texts but also as a means of gradually transforming character values through a process of understanding, appreciation, habituation, and actual social behavior. This process demonstrates that the internalization of values such as "*andhap asor*," "*guyup rukun*," "*tepa selira*," "*ewuh pakewuh*," "*pangerten*," and "*grapyak semanak*" can occur simultaneously with participatory and contextual literacy activities. These findings expand theoretical studies of character education, suggesting that character formation occurs not only through direct moral learning but also through repeated, meaningful, and culturally based learning experiences integrated into social interactions in elementary schools.

Practically, the results of this study demonstrate that literacy activities such as reading stories, discussions, reflections, role-playing, and social interactions can be utilized as learning strategies to instill and internalize character values in students' daily lives. Javanese culture-based literacy can be integrated into classroom learning and school programs, thus not only improving literacy skills but also shaping students' social attitudes and behaviors in a tangible and sustainable manner.

Teachers are advised to develop varied and interactive literacy activities and provide consistent support so that students can understand and practice character values in their daily lives. Students are expected to be more active in literacy activities, express their opinions, and cultivate positive attitudes in social interactions. Schools need to support the implementation of culture-based literacy through the provision of facilities, strengthening policies, and developing sustainable programs to ensure optimal and consistent character development in students.

3.4. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its results. First, the study was conducted at a single school location with a limited number of participants, so the findings cannot be broadly generalized to all elementary school contexts, which have diverse social and cultural characteristics. Second, the study's focus, which employed a qualitative ethnographic approach, emphasized data depth, and therefore did not quantitatively measure the level of change in students' character. Third, the relatively limited research timeframe meant that the observed character value transformation process did not fully reflect students' long-term development. Furthermore, the observed literacy practices were still within the context of programmed activities at school, thus not fully exploring the influence of the family or community environment on strengthening the internalization of character values.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to expand the scope of the study by involving more schools from diverse backgrounds to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Future research could also use a mixed methods approach to combine qualitative and quantitative data to more measurably measure the effectiveness of character transformation. Furthermore, longitudinal research is needed to observe the sustainability of long-term changes in student behavior. Future researchers are also advised to examine the involvement of the family and community environment in strengthening culture-based literacy practices to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the ecosystem of student character formation.

4. Conclusion

The transformation of Javanese cultural character values in elementary school students takes place through contextual and participatory language literacy practices. The transformation pattern is consistent from understanding, appreciation, and habituation to real social behavior in daily interactions. Teachers develop this process through various activities such as children's stories, habituation songs, counting with a variety of languages, discussions, drama, and sharing experiences designed to instill character values. As a result, Javanese culture-based character values are not only understood cognitively but also develop into real actions in real life in everyday life, such as (1) *andhap asor* (humility) in interacting or communicating, not being excessive when receiving praise and still respecting friends; (2) *guyup rukun* (cooperation) collaboration during literacy activities and other learning activities; (3) *tepa selira* (empathy), which is manifested in acts of caring for others; (4) *ewuh pakewuh* (politeness), which develops from polite language exercises in literacy into daily communication habits; (5) *pengerten* (tolerance), being open and respecting differences; and (6) *grapyak semanak* (friendliness and social closeness), which is increasingly visible through more open, confident, and intimate relationships. Thus, language literacy acts as an initial spark, while the school's social environment becomes a space for the actualization of Javanese cultural character values in students' daily lives.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to every stage of the research, from the formulation of the research design through the data collection and analysis process to the preparation and refinement of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript before submission for publication.

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Data Availability

The data used in this research can be accessed through the corresponding author upon request, provided the purpose is clear and accountable.

Declaration on AI Use

The entire writing process for this article was conducted independently by the authors without the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in the preparation of the manuscript.

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