



Ecomusicology as a Framework for Decolonizing Music Learning: Insights from Tembang Bocah Banyumasan

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Article Info

Article History:

Received:
March 2026

Accepted:
April 2026

Published:
April 2026

Keywords:

Ecomusicology;
Decolonizing
Music Education;

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This conceptual study aims to explore ecomusicology as a framework for decolonizing music learning, with Tembang Bocah Banyumasan serving as a case to demonstrate how local musical practices can inform culturally and ecologically grounded pedagogy. **Method:** The study employs a theoretical-analytical approach, reviewing literature on ecomusicology, decolonial music education, and Indonesian children's songs, and synthesizing insights from Tembang Bocah to identify links between musical, cultural, and ecological values. **Result and Discussion:** Analysis shows that integrating Tembang Bocah into music learning promotes multidimensional learning, including musical skill development, local cultural understanding, and ecological awareness. This approach challenges Western-centric pedagogical norms and supports

Tembang Bocah Banyumasan; Cultural Heritage; Ecological Awareness	the internalization of moral, social, and environmental values in learners. Implication: The findings suggest that educators can use local songs to preserve cultural heritage, foster ecologically conscious learning, and implement contextually relevant, decolonized music education. This model offers potential adaptation for other local contexts globally. © 2026 Institut Seni Indonesia Bali
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PENDAHULUAN

In contemporary music education, many curricula continue to emphasize Western-centric models, often overlooking local musical traditions and their educational potential. In Banyumas, Indonesia, Tembang Bocah Banyumasan a traditional repertoire of children's songs by Fadjar Sopsan is frequently underutilized in formal music instruction, despite its role in transmitting local values, language, and cultural identity. This mismatch between curriculum and local culture has resulted in students' limited engagement with their own musical heritage, reducing opportunities to internalize social, moral, and ecological knowledge embedded in local songs (Rahmawati, 2020).

Ideally, music learning in Banyumas should integrate Tembang Bocah as a core component of instruction, promoting both musical competence and cultural literacy. Classroom activities could include singing sessions, lyric analysis, and simple instrumental accompaniment, allowing students to experience the songs holistically. Such practices would help students connect musical technique with cultural context, reinforce local dialect comprehension, and cultivate appreciation for community norms and environmental awareness (S. S. Sinaga et al., 2025).

To bridge the gap between existing practice and this ideal, ecomusicology offers a theoretical framework linking music, culture, and ecology, while simultaneously supporting decolonization of pedagogical approaches. Applying ecomusicology in Banyumas encourages educators to critically examine imported Western models and reposition local repertoire like Tembang Bocah as central to curriculum design. The framework emphasizes Identification–De-linking–Re-linking (IDLR): students identify musical and cultural elements, detach from external norms, and re-integrate knowledge through local, value-driven musical practice (F. S. S. Sinaga et al., 2025).

Several studies have highlighted the potential of Tembang Bocah as both a cultural and pedagogical resource. For example, Winangsit (2025) documented workshops where PGMI pre-service teachers composed Tembang Bocah arrangements, embedding social values and environmental awareness into classroom practice. (Winangsit, Utomo, et al., 2025) reported that integrating Tembang Bocah into after-school music activities improved students' cultural identity and language skills, while simultaneously fostering empathy and cooperation (Rahmawati, 2020; Winangsit, Sinaga, et al., 2025). These findings suggest that Tembang Bocah can function as a living curriculum, combining aesthetic, ethical, and ecological learning objectives.

Based on this context, the central research question of this study is: How can ecomusicology serve as a framework for decolonizing music learning, using Tembang Bocah Banyumasan as a pedagogical resource? The question guides a conceptual exploration of strategies for integrating local musical practices into classroom instruction while challenging Western-dominated norms.

Aligned with this research question, the purpose of this article is to propose a conceptual model in which ecomusicology informs decolonial music pedagogy, illustrating practical ways for educators to embed Tembang Bocah into music instruction. This approach aims to enhance students' musical skills, cultural understanding, and ecological awareness, providing a replicable framework for culturally responsive and contextually meaningful music education.

METHOD

This study employed a conceptual research design using a theoretical-analytical approach (Ganesha & Aithal, 2022). Since the article does not aim to measure empirical variables or test statistical relationships, the method focuses on developing a conceptual argument by synthesizing relevant theories, previous studies, and contextual insights related to ecomusicology, decolonial music education, and Tembang Bocah Banyumasan (Rahmawati, 2020; F. S. haan S. Sinaga et al., 2025; Winangsit, Utomo, et al., 2025). Conceptual articles are appropriate for clarifying theoretical relationships, proposing new frameworks, and offering alternative perspectives for understanding educational phenomena.

The data sources of this study consisted of scholarly literature on three main areas: ecomusicology, decolonial theory in education and music learning, and local children's songs or Banyumasan musical traditions. The literature was selected purposively based on its relevance to the research question: How can ecomusicology serve as a framework for decolonizing music learning, using Tembang Bocah Banyumasan as a pedagogical resource? This selection strategy follows the logic of literature-based research, where literature review can be used as a research methodology to synthesize existing knowledge and develop conceptual contributions. Snyder explains that literature review can function as a research method when it is conducted systematically to map, analyze, and synthesize prior studies (Park et al., 2022).

The literature selection process was conducted through three stages. First, studies related to ecomusicology were reviewed to identify how music is connected with ecology, place, environment, and cultural sustainability (Allen, 2012; Allen & Dawe, 2016; Størvold, 2020). Second, literature on decolonial pedagogy and decolonizing music education was examined to understand how dominant Western-centered educational models may be challenged through local epistemologies and cultural resources (McLachlan, 2021; F. S. haan S. Sinaga et al., 2025; Yuda et al., 2020). Third, studies and contextual materials related to Tembang Bocah Banyumasan were analyzed to identify its potential as a local pedagogical resource in music learning (Azis, 2018; Hadiati, 2011; Winangsit, Utomo, et al., 2025). This procedure is aligned with the broader logic of review-based inquiry, where different forms of literature review may be used to organize evidence, compare concepts, and generate interpretive synthesis. Grant and Booth's typology of reviews also shows that review methods can vary depending on the purpose of synthesis and conceptual development.

The analysis was carried out using conceptual synthesis (Choudhury et al., 2023). The selected literature was not treated merely as background information, but as the basis for constructing an analytical framework. The synthesis focused on identifying relationships among three conceptual domains: music–ecology, music–culture, and music–decolonization. Through this process, Tembang Bocah Banyumasan was interpreted as a cultural-musical text that contains local identity,

children's worldview, social values, and ecological awareness. The analysis then formulated how these elements can be translated into music learning practices.

To ensure analytical clarity, the study used four guiding analytical categories: musical dimension, cultural dimension, ecological dimension, and decolonial dimension (Chang et al., 2024). The musical dimension refers to melody, rhythm, vocal practice, song structure, and performance. The cultural dimension refers to Banyumasan language, local identity, social values, and community memory. The ecological dimension refers to the relationship between songs, place, nature, and environmental awareness. The decolonial dimension refers to the effort to reposition local musical knowledge as a legitimate source of music learning, rather than as supplementary material.

The result of this method is a conceptual model of ecomusicological-decolonial music learning through Tembang Bocah Banyumasan. The model was developed by linking theoretical insights from ecomusicology and decolonial pedagogy with the pedagogical potential of local children's songs. Therefore, the validity of this study lies not in statistical generalization, but in the coherence of its conceptual argument, the relevance of its theoretical synthesis, and its contribution to the development of culturally responsive, ecologically conscious, and decolonized music education

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ecomusicology as a Conceptual Lens for Reading Tembang Bocah Banyumasan

The first conceptual finding of this study shows that ecomusicology provides a relevant framework for interpreting Tembang Bocah Banyumasan beyond its function as children's entertainment. In conventional music learning, children's songs are often treated merely as simple melodic materials for singing practice. However, through an ecomusicological perspective, Tembang Bocah Banyumasan can be understood as a cultural text that connects children, sound, place, language, and ecological imagination. The songs are not only musical compositions but also repositories of local knowledge, social values, and environmental consciousness embedded in Banyumas society.

In this sense, ecomusicology allows music educators to reposition Tembang Bocah Banyumasan as a medium for understanding the relationship between human beings and their surroundings. The use of Banyumasan language, local expressions, everyday imagery, and community-based narratives reflects the ecological and cultural world in which the songs were created. This perspective broadens music learning from technical mastery—such as melody, rhythm, pitch, and vocal accuracy—toward the exploration of meaning, identity, place, and environmental awareness.

Thus, Tembang Bocah Banyumasan becomes a pedagogical bridge between music education and ecological literacy. Students do not only learn how to sing local songs; they also learn how the songs represent local life, social interaction, cultural memory, and human responsibility toward the environment.

Decolonizing Music Learning through Local Musical Knowledge

The second conceptual finding indicates that integrating Tembang Bocah Banyumasan into music learning is a form of decolonizing musical knowledge. Decolonization in this context does not mean rejecting all Western music theories or pedagogical systems. Rather, it refers to critically rebalancing the dominance of Western-centered musical standards by giving legitimate space to local musical knowledge, local language, and community-based artistic practices.

In many formal music classrooms, musical learning is often dominated by notation, scale systems, vocal techniques, and repertoires derived from Western traditions. While these elements are pedagogically useful, they may become problematic when treated as the only valid standard of musical knowledge. Such dominance can marginalize local repertoires and make students unfamiliar with their own cultural soundscape.

By placing Tembang Bocah Banyumasan at the center of music learning, teachers can develop a more inclusive pedagogical orientation. Students are encouraged to recognize that local songs also contain musical structure, aesthetic logic, ethical values, and cultural knowledge. This approach shifts the position of local music from being merely supplementary material to becoming a legitimate source of learning. Therefore, decolonizing music learning through Tembang Bocah

Banyumasan means restoring local songs as meaningful pedagogical resources within formal education.

Pedagogical Integration of Tembang Bocah Banyumasan in Music Learning

The third conceptual finding concerns the practical strategy for integrating Tembang Bocah Banyumasan into classroom instruction. The integration can be designed through three interconnected stages: identification, interpretation, and creative recontextualization.

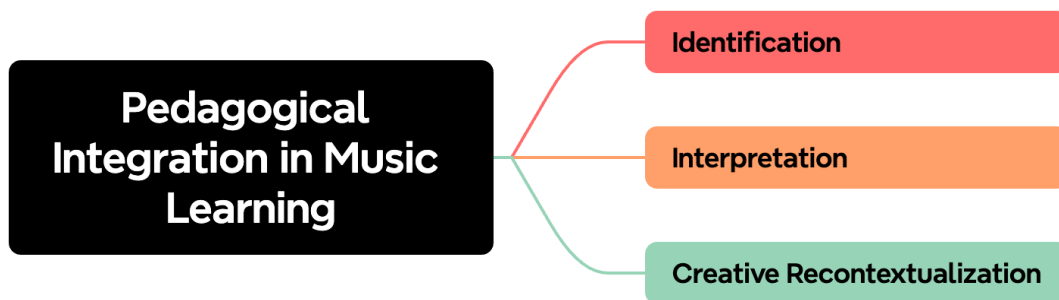


Figure 1. Pedagogical Integration in Music Learning

(Source: Sinaga, 2026)

First, in the identification stage, students are introduced to selected Tembang Bocah Banyumasan repertoires. They identify musical elements such as melody, rhythm, tempo, repetition, vocal character, and song form. At the same time, they also identify linguistic and cultural elements, including Banyumasan expressions, local vocabulary, social messages, and references to everyday life.

Second, in the interpretation stage, students discuss the meanings contained in the songs. This includes moral values, social values, ecological messages, and cultural identity. For example, a song may contain messages about togetherness, simplicity, respect for others, closeness to nature, or appreciation of local life. In this stage, music learning becomes dialogical because students do not only reproduce songs but also interpret their meaning.

Third, in the creative recontextualization stage, students are encouraged to rearrange, perform, or create new musical works inspired by Tembang Bocah

Banyumasan. They may create simple vocal arrangements, add body percussion, use local instruments, or compose new lyrics with ecological themes. This stage is important because decolonial learning should not stop at preservation; it should also allow students to creatively continue local traditions in ways that are relevant to contemporary educational contexts.

Tembang Bocah Banyumasan as a Medium for Ecological Awareness

The fourth conceptual finding shows that Tembang Bocah Banyumasan can function as a medium for ecological awareness in music learning. Through an ecomusicological framework, ecological awareness is not taught as abstract environmental theory, but through musical experience, local language, and cultural imagination.

In classroom practice, teachers can invite students to examine how local songs represent nature, rural life, animals, plants, water, seasons, landscapes, or everyday interactions with the environment. Even when a song does not explicitly discuss environmental protection, it may still contain ecological sensibility through its representation of local life and human relationships with place. This is where ecomusicology becomes important: it helps educators read ecological meanings that are embedded in cultural and musical practices.

For example, students may be asked to analyze how a song reflects local wisdom, community values, or children's relationship with their surroundings. They may then connect these meanings with contemporary environmental issues, such as waste management, river cleanliness, food sustainability, or care for local ecosystems. In this way, Tembang Bocah Banyumasan becomes a contextual entry point for developing ecological literacy through music.

A Conceptual Model of Ecomusicological-Decolonial Music Learning

Based on the analysis above, this study proposes a conceptual model called Ecomusicological-Decolonial Music Learning through Tembang Bocah Banyumasan. The model consists of four main components:

Table 1. Component of Pedagogical Practice

Component	Focus	Pedagogical Practice
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Musical Dimension	Melody, rhythm, tempo, form, vocal practice	Singing, listening, clapping rhythm, simple arrangement
Cultural Dimension	Banyumasan language, values, identity, local stories	Lyric analysis, discussion of local meaning, storytelling
Ecological Dimension	Relationship between music, place, and environment	Identifying ecological messages, connecting songs with environmental issues
Decolonial Dimension	Repositioning local music as valid knowledge	Using Tembang Bocah as core material, not merely supplementary repertoire

Source: Singa, 2026

This model shows that Tembang Bocah Banyumasan can be used to develop music learning that is not only artistic but also cultural, ecological, and critical. The model also challenges the assumption that quality music learning must always be based on external or Western musical references. Instead, it argues that local songs can become a strong foundation for meaningful music education.

Toward Contextual and Transformative Music Pedagogy

The integration of ecomusicology and decolonial thought offers a transformative direction for music education. Music learning should not only train students to perform correctly, but also help them understand who they are, where they come from, and how they relate to their cultural and ecological environment. In this regard, Tembang Bocah Banyumasan provides a rich pedagogical resource because it carries local language, cultural memory, communal values, and ecological imagination.

This approach also expands the role of the music teacher. The teacher is not merely a trainer of musical technique, but also a cultural mediator, ecological facilitator, and curriculum interpreter. Teachers can guide students to connect musical practice with broader questions of identity, environment, and social responsibility. Therefore, music classrooms become spaces where students learn sound, meaning, culture, and ethical awareness simultaneously.

The discussion also suggests that the decolonization of music learning must be understood as a constructive process. It does not simply oppose Western music

education, but seeks to create a more balanced and plural pedagogical space. Western musical concepts may still be used, but they should not erase local musical epistemologies. *Tembang Bocah Banyumasan*, in this case, becomes an example of how local repertoire can enrich music learning and offer alternative ways of knowing, feeling, and relating to the world.

Overall, the findings of this conceptual study demonstrate that ecomusicology can serve as an effective framework for decolonizing music learning by repositioning *Tembang Bocah Banyumasan* as a local pedagogical resource. Through this framework, music learning can move beyond technical instruction toward culturally responsive, ecologically conscious, and critically reflective pedagogy. The integration of *Tembang Bocah Banyumasan* enables students to develop musical skills while also strengthening local identity, cultural appreciation, and environmental awareness. Therefore, this study argues that local children's songs should not be treated as marginal or supplementary materials, but as central resources for developing meaningful and decolonized music education.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual study concludes that ecomusicology can serve as a relevant framework for decolonizing music learning by repositioning *Tembang Bocah Banyumasan* as a legitimate and meaningful pedagogical resource. Ecomusicology allows music learning to move beyond technical instruction, such as singing accuracy, rhythm, melody, and notation, toward a broader understanding of music as a cultural and ecological practice. Through this framework, *Tembang Bocah Banyumasan* is not treated merely as children's repertoire, but as a local musical text that contains Banyumasan identity, community values, linguistic heritage, social memory, and ecological awareness.

In response to the research question, this study shows that the decolonization of music learning through *Tembang Bocah Banyumasan* can be carried out by shifting the orientation of music education from a Western-dominated model to a more contextual, plural, and locally grounded pedagogy. This does not mean rejecting Western musical knowledge, but rather creating a more balanced learning space where local musical traditions are recognized as valid sources of knowledge. By integrating *Tembang Bocah Banyumasan* into classroom instruction, educators can

challenge the marginal position of local music and place it at the center of learning activities.

The study also demonstrates that Tembang Bocah Banyumasan can support music learning through four interconnected dimensions: musical, cultural, ecological, and decolonial. Musically, it provides material for singing, rhythm, melody, vocal expression, and simple arrangement. Culturally, it introduces learners to Banyumasan language, local identity, social values, and community narratives. Ecologically, it opens space for discussing the relationship between children, place, nature, and environmental awareness. Decolonially, it restores local songs as core learning resources rather than supplementary cultural materials.

Therefore, the main contribution of this article lies in its proposal of an ecomusicological-decolonial framework for music learning. This framework enables educators to design music instruction that is culturally responsive, ecologically conscious, and pedagogically transformative. The integration of Tembang Bocah Banyumasan can strengthen students' musical competence while also nurturing cultural rootedness, ethical sensitivity, and environmental responsibility.

Overall, this study affirms that Tembang Bocah Banyumasan offers important insights for developing decolonized music learning. Its pedagogical value lies not only in preserving local musical heritage, but also in transforming music classrooms into spaces where students learn sound, meaning, identity, culture, and ecology simultaneously. Thus, ecomusicology provides a strong conceptual foundation for reimagining music education as a locally rooted and globally relevant practice

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