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Epic Ramayana As A Medium for Teaching Indonesian Culture and Language: A Perspective of Darmasiswa Students

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This paper discusses the epic Ramayana as a medium for teaching Indonesian culture and Indonesian language for the students of Darmasiswa RI / DRI (Darmasiswa of Republic of Indonesia). The epic Ramayana story contains adjective phrases as a media for teaching Indonesian culture which is full of the value of character education. This paper can be a reference for students and teachers who study and teach Indonesian culture and also Indonesian language for foreign speakers. Besides, it can also be beneficial for those who want to learn more about the structure of Indonesian language and character education of with the values of Indonesian culture in accordance with Ramayana text in which good character and personality become the main goal of national education in Indonesia. The research methodology statement is missing in this abstract. Considering that the Darmasiswa RI program is also part of education in Indonesia, the education of Indonesian character values cannot be separated from the education followed by Darmasiswa RI program participants. For this reason, there are two main points discussed in this paper, (1) the Ramayana text as a medium for teaching Indonesian culture and enhancing the mastery of Indonesian language and (2) the adjective phrase in the Ramayana text as a medium for the education of Indonesian character values. Theoretically and practically, this paper can contribute to the world of education both in terms of Indonesian culture and language and the noble values of Indonesian characters for foreign speakers, so that it can help in improving the success of national education, and also to improve the competitiveness of the nation.

Keywords: Ramayana Text, teaching Indonesian culture, character education.

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INTRODUCTION

Many thousand of years before Shakespeare, the poetry of the Ramayana was sung in every royal court and around village fires throughout India. Even two hundred years ago, British missionaries were astonished to find Hindus discussing and quoting from the Ramayana in everyday conversation

In Indonesai and Thailand also the story of Ramayana is central to traditional art, literature, music and dance. For its romance, heroism, moral instruction and pathos, the Ramayana certainly qualifies among the world's great epics. But the story line is not the only cause of its undying popularity: even more essential is the attractiveness and power of Lord Rama Himself (Swami, 2000:3). Therefore, the story of Ramayana is always interesting to be used as a medium for teaching Indonesian culture and language.

The program of Darmasiswa RI (DRI) is intended to enhance bilateral relations between Indonesia and bilateral partners and to contribute to the formation of world peace and safety. The DRI program is a one-year non-degree scholarship program given by the Indonesian government to foreign students from bilateral partners to study Indonesian and Indonesian arts and culture at public / private universities / training institutions in Indonesia. The DRI program has also been a reciprocal relationship between scholarships between Indonesia and partner countries, and has become a diplomacy program in education and culture. The Indonesian Institute of Art (ISI) Denpasar is one of the institutions in Indonesia which has been an institution accepting students participating in the DRI program since 1998. There are 29 participants in the DRI program in the 2018/2019 school year who has studied about art in each study program they chose at one of the two faculties at ISI Denpasar. In addition to learning about art, they are also required to learn Indonesian, social ethics, and cultural science.

For Indonesian language subject, DRI program participants are required to attend lectures of 4 credits in one week in one semester. The teaching of Indonesian implemented the curriculum provided by PPSDK (Center for Development of Strategy and Language Diplomacy) and adapted to the needs of students participating in the DRI program. In semester 1, at the end of the semester, they were given the subject about the epic Ramayana which is part of the Indonesian culture, that's to say a drama or theater. The story of Ramayana which tells about the main character, Sri Rama who was very wise and kind was very interesting for the students. Besides, the students could learn also about the science of self-realization from Sri Rama's character (cf. Dewi Yulianti, 2019).

The Indian epic poem, the Ramayana has become widespread throughout many regions of Southeast Asia, being

adopted as the main theme in various performing art forms such as theatre, dance drama, and mask dance up to the present day. In Indonesia, the art forms include *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets), *wayang golek* (rod puppets) and *sendratari* (dance drama) (Fukuoka, 2015). In this study, the art form of dance drama which was performed by the students used as a medium for teaching Indonesian culture and language.

Considering that the Darmasiswa program is also part of education in Indonesia, the education of Indonesian character values cannot be separated from the education followed by Darmasiswa RI program participants. For this reason, there are two main points discussed in this paper, namely (1) the Ramayana Text as a medium for teaching Indonesian culture and enhancing the mastery of Indonesian language and (2) the adjective phrase in the Ramayana text as a medium for educating the values of the Indonesian characters.

The discussion of the two topics above aims at increasing the understanding of Indonesian culture and Indonesian language mastery of DRI program participants through the Ramayana text and providing education on the character values of the Indonesian through adjective phrases found in the Ramayana text.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is written based on a study on first semester students participating in the Darmasiswa RI Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI) Denpasar program in the 2018/2019 academic year. They were chosen because they were required to take Indonesian language courses with 4 credits in one week in one semester.

From the cultural and language teaching perspective, the Ramayana story can be taken as the medium of improving students' ability since it is a famous text. Using the story of Ramayana as a medium in teaching Indonesian culture and language for the students of Darmasiswa is a qualitative field research. The choice of qualitative approach in this paper is based on theoretical and technical consideration.

In qualitative research, a researcher uses most of the time in collecting data directly and the data collection is really based on subject perspective being researched (Sutopo, 2002). This characteristic is in accordance with the nature of culture and language teaching study which is field research with natural phenomenon as it is in the field toward the object of teaching research in Indonesian Language class for Darmasiswa students at ISI Denpasar.

The Ramayana story is taken as data source because it is a source of inspiration for some performances at ISI Denpasar and it is an epic story that is well known throughout the world. Taking this story as a source of discussion in

class produces significant results, so the students understood about Indonesian culture and are able to improve Indonesian language skills through learning about adjectives and adjective phrases to explain someone or something with simple sentences. The example for adjective is: Sri Rama *bijaksana* (Sri Rama is wise) and the example for adjective phrase is: Sri Rama *sangat tampan* (Sri Rama is very handsome), etc.

The activities which were carried out in the class are brainstorming, simulations, and role playing activities. As a final result, the students performed the Ramayana dance drama in Indonesian. This activity was aimed at proving the result of the study in which the students were able to talk in Indonesian language, talk as performance which refers to public talk, that is, talk which transmits information before an audience (Richards, 2009:31).



Figure 1. Students of DRI 2018/2019

DISCUSSION

Ramayana text as a medium for Teaching Indonesian Culture and Improving the mastery of Indonesian Language.

According to Richman, hundreds of telling Rama's story exist in India ranging from Valmiki's as the oldest full literary telling of the story to the most familiar telling at this moment (2008: 3). Ramayana has been used as a medium for teaching Indonesian culture and improving the mastery of Indonesian language of Darmasiswa students of ISI Denpasar. The activities have been carried out in the class before brainstorming, simulation, and role playing activities are as follows.

Teaching Topics and Tasks.

1. The lecturer helped the students to understand the theme and purpose of the assignment in this case exchanging ideas about the Ramayana story.
2. Students work on the initial assignment by highlighting words that contain the culture of Indonesia and also the character of each characterization in the Ramayana story.

This task was done by students individually. They explored the use of adjectives in simple sentences by using positive, negative, and interrogative sentences. Then they practiced speaking by doing part of the Ramayana story. At this stage, the lecturer walked around and monitored and encouraged students to speak fluently.

In the next stage, the students are asked to report briefly to the whole class how they are doing the assignment and what the results are. At this stage, students often ask questions about their difficulties when they practice speaking and all students can compare their findings. Next, the lecturer assigns several tasks based on the text read by the students.

Students find adjectives and adjective phrases in simple sentences, as follows.

Some adjectives are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Sri Rama <i>tampan</i> | Sri Rama is handsome |
| 2. Sri Rama <i>bijaksana</i> | Sri Rama is wise |
| 3. Sita <i>cantik</i> | Sita is beautiful |
| 4. Sita <i>lemah lembut</i> | Sita is gentle |
| 5. Rahwana <i>jahat</i> | Rahwana is cruel |
| 6. Rahwana <i>kalah</i> | Rahwana is defeated |
| 7. Kekayi <i>sangat egois</i> | Kekayi is very selfish |
| 8. Barata <i>sangat baik</i> | Barata is very gentle |
| 9. Satrugna <i>tegas</i> | Satrugna is assertive |
| 10. Subali <i>kuat</i> | Subali is strong. |

Some adjectives phrases are:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Kosalya <i>sangat rendah hati</i> | Kosalya is very humble |
| 2. Hanuman <i>sangat energik</i> | Hanuman is very energetic. |
| 3. Raja Dasarata <i>dapat dipercaya</i> | King Dasarata is reliable |
| 4. Sugriwa <i>sangat tulus</i> | Sugriwa is very sincere |
| 5. Urmila <i>rendah hati</i> | Urmila is very humble. |
| 6. Laksamana <i>sangat gagah</i> | Laksamana is very manly. |
| 7. Hanuman <i>sejati pemberani</i> | Hanuman is really brave |

From these simple sentences, students are given an understanding of Indonesian culture for example, (1) Indonesian people are friendly, (2) Indonesian people are honest, (3) Most of Indonesian people are humble, (4) The houses are simple and beautiful, (5) Indonesia has beautiful dances, (6) There are various delicious cuisine in Indonesia, (7) Indonesia has many beautiful traditional houses, (8) There are many interesting traditional ceremonies in Indonesia, (9) Indonesia has got many splendid performing arts, (10) There are many fantastic music in Indonesia, etc.

In addition to traditional houses, traditional ceremonies,

music, performing arts, traditional clothing, scripts, dances, songs, drawing and painting, sculpture, literature, cuisine, film, religion, philosophy and public celebrations, theater and drama are the shows that are performed for public is also a form of regional culture in Indonesia. There are many kinds of theaters, *sendratari* (ballet) Ramayana is one of the examples. This *sendratari* (ballet) of Ramayana is known in the regions of Bali and Yogyakarta.

Adjective Phrases in Ramayana Text as A Medium for Indonesian Characters Value Education.

Literature is a result of human creation, taste, and initiative that can represent people's lives in the real world. In this sense, literature is a miniature of the world we live in enriched with the imagination of the author. Through literature, individuals are able to capture a picture of the social, cultural, and environmental conditions in their stories. Images of life in literary works seek to teach people about various things (Sulaksono, 2019:2).

Character education is the process of learning common attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that are important for people to have as responsible citizens. In Indonesia, there are 18 characteristics which should be taught to the students. The characters are: 1) religious, 2) honest, 3) tolerance, 4) discipline, 5) hard work, 6) creative, 7) independent, 8) democratic, 9) curiosity, 10) national spirit, 11) love of the motherland, 12) respect for achievement, 13) friendly / communicative, 14) love peace, 15) love reading, 16) care for the environment, 17) care for social, 18) responsibility Kemendiknas (2011). These 18 characteristics have been introduced to the students through the story of Ramayana and the students said they have been able to compare between good and evil from the characters of Ramayana story and as human beings, everyone should practice the good character in life.

As mentioned above, the story of Ramayana has been used for teaching Indonesian character values in this study by collecting the adjectives and adjective phrase found in the text.

Adjective is a word that describes a noun; a word that informs about someone or something, for instance, about shapes, sizes, colors, conditions, or other characters. Adjective phrase is a phrase that has central adjective elements. The element in adjective phrase can be given a most-word prefix. Commonly, it functions as a predicate in a sentence (Sneddon, 1966:176). The adjectives and adjective phrases found in Ramayana text can be used as a medium in character values education by describing the character values that worth following from each character in Ramayana text. The students were given a lecture about character values that can increase their self-realization in life so they can interact well with others.

Harrel (2004:1) explains that a positive attitude is the

foundation of a successful life. The positive attitude that students must have was explained by demonstrating each character in Ramayana text. Since they had performed the story of Ramayana with each character they have learnt, they were be able to understand the value of the characters which reflect the culture of Indonesia.

Becoming a person with good character, have faith, and religious is the most basic needs for a student (Dewi Yulianti, 2016:38). Teaching the story of Ramayana in learning Indonesian language with the focus on the adjectives and adjective phrase has become an interesting and valuable way in encouraging students to do good deeds in life. Besides, they also have been able to give the expression of the character and have found what the results of any characters in the end of the story.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description in the discussion section above, some conclusions can be presented as follows. Literature is a result of human creation, taste, and initiative that can represent people's lives in the real world. In this sense, literature is a miniature of the world we live in enriched with the imagination of the author. Through literature, individuals are able to capture a picture of the social, cultural, and environmental conditions in their stories. Images of life in literary works seek to teach people about various things.

Ramayana text is exceptionally interesting to be used as a medium for teaching Indonesian culture and enhancing the mastery of Indonesian language for DRI participants and giving a greatly significant result because they are already familiar with it and they are able to understand the adjective to describe someone or something using a simple sentence

There are 18 characteristics which should be taught to the students. The characters are: 1) religious, 2) honest, 3) tolerance, 4) discipline, 5) hard work, 6) creative, 7) independent, 8) democratic, 9) curiosity, 10) national spirit, 11) love of the motherland, 12) respect for achievement, 13) friendly / communicative, 14) love peace, 15) love reading, 16) care for the environment, 17) care for social, 18) responsibility The understanding of Ramayana text gives the knowledge of Indonesian culture to enhance the disciple's character. The activities carried out in the class includes brainstorming, simulation, and role-playing.

In addition to it, the adjective phrases found in Ramayana text can be used as a medium in character values education by describing the character values that worth following from each character in Ramayana story. The students were given a lecture about character values that can increase their self-realization in life so they can interact well with others.

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