



PROBLEMATICS OF TEACHING DRAMA IN RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM MADURA

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji pembelajaran sastra berbasis drama di tingkat sekolah dasar di sekolah-sekolah pedesaan di Madura, dengan fokus pada perspektif guru. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, dengan mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam bersama guru-guru sekolah dasar yang mengintegrasikan drama ke dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Data dianalisis secara tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola yang berkaitan dengan proses pembelajaran dan hambatan yang dihadapi guru. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran drama dilaksanakan secara tidak konsisten dan kurang memiliki perencanaan yang sistematis. Guru terutama menggunakan metode seperti membaca dan menganalisis naskah, bermain peran, dan improvisasi terbatas. Namun, beberapa tantangan yang saling terkait menghambat implementasi yang efektif, termasuk keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran, fasilitas dan sumber belajar yang tidak memadai, rendahnya kepercayaan diri dan kompetensi guru dalam pedagogi drama, serta motivasi siswa yang rendah dan kecemasan dalam melakukan aktivitas pertunjukan. Tantangan-tantangan ini menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara potensi pedagogis drama dan realisasi praktisnya di sekolah dasar pedesaan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis drama yang efektif memerlukan strategi pembelajaran kontekstual dan adaptif, program pengembangan profesional yang berfokus pada pedagogi drama, serta lingkungan belajar yang mendukung dan mempromosikan keamanan psikologis bagi siswa. Penelitian selanjutnya direkomendasikan untuk mengembangkan model pembelajaran drama praktis dan program pelatihan yang disesuaikan dengan konteks sekolah pedalaman.

Kata-kata Kunci: Madura, pembelajaran berbasis drama, perspektif guru, sekolah dasar, sekolah pedalaman

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Abstract. This study examines drama-based literary learning at the elementary school level in rural schools in Madura, focusing on teachers' perspectives. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews with elementary school teachers who integrate drama into English language learning. The data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to instructional processes and obstacles faced by teachers. The findings reveal that drama learning is implemented inconsistently and lacks systematic planning. Teachers mainly use methods such as reading and analyzing scripts, role-playing, and limited improvisation. However, several interrelated challenges hinder effective implementation, including limited instructional time, inadequate facilities and learning resources, low teacher confidence and competence in drama pedagogy, and students' low motivation and anxiety about performing activities. These challenges indicate a gap between the pedagogical potential of drama and its practical realization in rural elementary schools. The study concludes that effective drama-based learning requires contextual and adaptive instructional strategies, professional development programs focused on drama pedagogy, and supportive learning environments that promote psychological safety for students. Future research is recommended to develop practical drama learning models and training programs tailored to rural school contexts.

Keywords: drama-based learning, elementary school, Madura, rural schools, teachers' perspectives

Introduction

Education in elementary school (SD) lays an important foundation for the holistic development of students. In addition to cognitive abilities, the development of affective and psychomotor skills also plays a crucial role. One way to stimulate this development is through the teaching of drama. Drama as a form of artistic and cultural expression, Drama pedagogy training has been proven to improve children's creative thinking skills and theory-of-mind by teaching perspective taking, which helps children understand the emotions and motivations of others and produce innovative solutions (Celume et al., 2020; Celume & Zenasni, 2022). Through drama, students can learn to develop communication, empathy, and cooperation skills through collaboration and structured emotional expression, which also improves students' critical thinking abilities (Hu & Shu, 2025)

Drama education not only develops artistic abilities but also forms social and emotional skills that are essential for students' holistic development. (Jefferies et al., 2020; Sušić & Brebrić, 2025). However, the teaching of drama in primary schools often faces complex challenges, such as in China or in the teaching of First Nations content, facing challenges related to concept definition, ethical sensitivity, and the need to integrate drama as a stand-alone subject, not just as a learning method. (Hradsky & Forgasz, 2022; Zheng, 2021)

Madura, as a region with unique cultural and social distinctions, has a different educational context from other regions in Indonesia. The school researched by the researcher here is one of the schools in the countryside. Elementary schools in rural areas are often small in size with limited class sizes and students, so investment in arts education becomes minimal, and it is not easy to integrate the arts curriculum effectively. (Han & Xie, 2025). An approach that involves local culture and community participation can be a solution to increase the appreciation and effectiveness of art teaching in the region. (Rusydiyah & Rohman, 2020)

The Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) in Indonesia, although it does not explicitly make drama an independent subject at all elementary levels, integrates it into other subjects such as Indonesian and Cultural and Craft Arts (SBdP), as well as intersecting subjects, showing the creativity of teachers. (Hendriani et al., 2022). Research by Okta & Putra (2025) Shows that the adaptation of the Merdeka Curriculum in border areas and 3T areas shows the need for a flexible and contextual approach, by utilizing local content such as folklore and traditional games to support learning. This shows a recognition of the importance of drama in the broader context of education. However, the implementation of drama teaching at the elementary level is often not optimal and faces various challenges.

The teacher's perspective is an important focus in understanding the problems of teaching drama. Teacher readiness, including an understanding of the value of art, teaching ability, and creativity in adapting the curriculum, greatly determines the quality of art learning in schools. (L. Chen, 2024; MacDonald et al., 2016). The complexity of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching drama covers various aspects, ranging from limited infrastructure to conceptual understanding and pedagogical strategies that are in accordance with the characteristics of elementary school students.

These problems require more in-depth research to comprehensively identify the problems of teaching drama in elementary schools from the perspective of teachers. One of the Islamic-based elementary schools in Sampang, Madura, is one of the interesting educational institutions to study in this context. The location of the school in the rural area of Madura with specific socio-cultural characteristics makes research on drama teaching problems have high academic and practical significance. Teachers, as the spearhead of curriculum implementation in the classroom, have a central role in the success of drama teaching. Therefore, it is important to explore the views, experiences, and challenges that teachers face in implementing drama teaching in the school environment.

Several studies and observations in the field show that the teaching of drama in elementary schools still does not receive adequate attention. One of the main problems is the lack of teacher training and understanding of drama methods and techniques, so many teachers feel incompetent in managing the classroom and implementing drama effectively. (Demirhan, 2024; Kartal & Arslan, 2024). In addition, obstacles such as class sizes that are too large, limited learning time, and a lack of facilities or supporting resources are also significant obstacles. (Demirhan, 2024; Tran & Le, 2025). Differences in students' ability levels in the classroom, as well as students' anxiety when participating in dramas, are also challenges that need to be overcome. (Tran & Le, 2025). The lack of proper assessment and policy support at the school and district levels also affects the quality of drama teaching in elementary schools. (Omasta et al., 2021). However, drama has been shown to provide

important benefits such as increasing creativity, confidence, communication skills, and student engagement in learning. (Demirhan, 2024; Feng, 2022; Mykhailova et al., 2021).

Although various studies have examined the benefits and constraints of teaching drama in elementary schools, research that specifically explores the challenges of teaching drama from teachers' perspectives in rural elementary schools remains limited, especially in Madura. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by analyzing the problems of teaching drama in rural elementary schools in Madura, drawing on teachers' experiences. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of more effective and higher-quality drama teaching in elementary schools and to provide input for policymakers, educational institutions, and educators in efforts to improve the overall quality of education.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. (Creswell & Cheryl N., 2018) to explore the problems of teaching drama in elementary school from the perspective of teachers. The participants of this study are elementary school teachers who have experience teaching and integrating drama in learning. Participant selection was carried out by a purposive sampling technique to ensure participants had information relevant to the research topic.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with interview guidelines that had been prepared based on a literature review. The interview questions focus on the teacher's experience integrating drama, the challenges faced, the strategies used, and perceptions of the benefits of teaching drama. Interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques. (Braun, V. and Clarke, 2006). The collected data is analyzed through several stages, as illustrated in Figure 1.

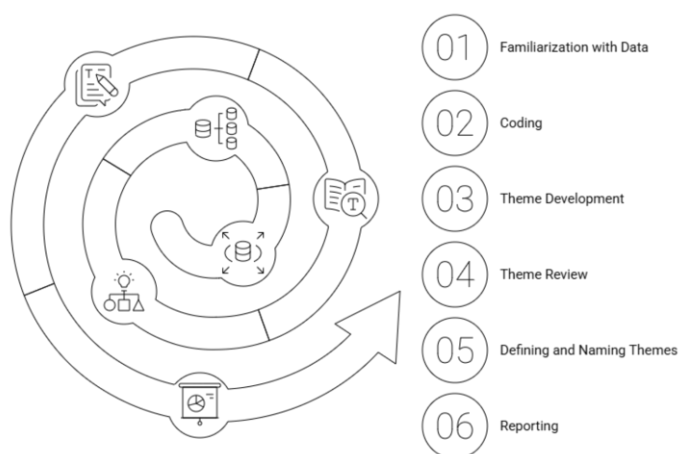


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

The validity of the data was tested through source triangulation. Research ethical principles, such as informed consent and data confidentiality, were also considered.

Result and Discussion

The Learning Process of Drama Literature in Elementary School

The results of the interviews revealed that although most teachers recognize the importance of teaching drama literature in elementary schools, it is still not implemented systematically and sustainably. Its integration occurs in English classes, with varying frequency and intensity across classes and teachers. Commonly used methods include:

Reading and Analyzing Manuscripts

This method is often used as a first step, focusing on understanding the content of the story, including characters, conflicts, and moral messages. However, the teacher expressed difficulty in choosing a script that was appropriate for the level of cognitive and emotional development of elementary school students, relevant to the cultural context and values the school upholds, and suitable for the classroom.

"Finding the right script is difficult. Sometimes it is too long, the language is difficult for the children to understand, or the theme is not in line with the religious values in our school." (Interview, June 5, 2025).

This is in line with research that states that dramas that use authentic context and texts that are close to students' daily lives have been shown to improve learning achievement and language skills, as shown in English learning with the Collaborative Contextual Drama (CCD) method, which utilizes real context to reinforce learning (Manabe et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2019). Teachers can provide directions to read and write simple drama scripts related to students' daily lives so that they are easier for students to understand. Research by Bryer, (2024) and Medina et al. (2021). It shows that a drama approach that connects the text with the reader's experience also supports the development of literacy and interpretive skills in depth.

Role Play

This method is considered effective for improving character understanding, practicing empathy, and building students' courage to perform in public. However, some teachers observed reluctance among some students to participate actively, especially among shy or less confident students.

"There are some children who are very enthusiastic, but there are also those who are too shy to perform. I try to give them motivation and support, but it's still difficult to get them fully involved." (Interview, June 5, 2025).

In the interview, it can be said that some students experience anxiety in carrying out the methods applied by the teacher. This indicates that the school environment still lacks a sense of comfort to express more. An environment that provides a sense of psychological security allows

students to feel comfortable taking interpersonal risks, such as asking questions and arguing without fear of being judged, which positively impacts collaboration and the learning experience (Hardie et al., 2022; McClintock & Fainstad, 2022)

With the right additional approach, teachers can maximize the role-playing methods applied. The positive psychology approach in education, which emphasizes strengthening students' confidence and emotional well-being, has proven to be effective in creating a conducive learning atmosphere and improving students' critical thinking skills (Wang, 2024)

Improvisation

This method is rarely used in elementary school because it is considered to require special preparation and skills from teachers to facilitate and direct improvised activities. Some teachers admit to lacking the confidence to implement this method effectively.

"I myself am not trained to guide improvisation. To be honest, I'm scared that I'm going to get distracted and out of control. So, we rarely do." (Interview, June 5, 2025).

These findings underscore the importance of professional training programs that focus on teacher competency development in drama pedagogy. Intensive training, such as creative drama workshops, has been shown to increase creativity, spontaneous decision-making skills, and the use of teachers' body language in teaching, which ultimately enriches their learning approach (Horasan-Doğan & Cephe, 2020). This training not only strengthens technical teaching skills but also builds teachers' confidence and ethical awareness, which supports inclusive and supportive learning (Hadjipanteli, 2020; Liwen et al., 2023).

Drama Literature Learning Problems in Madura Elementary School

The results of the interviews reveal some of the main problems faced by teachers in teaching drama literature:

Time Limitations

A dense curriculum, the need to complete other learning materials, and limited time allocated to subjects that integrate drama are major obstacles.

"The time is very narrow. We have to pursue other subject matter that has been set in the curriculum." (Interview, June 5, 2025).

These findings align with research on the curriculum pressures and administrative demands faced by teachers in the current educational context. Implementing the Merdeka curriculum offers pedagogical freedom, but it also imposes heavy administrative burdens, including module preparation, formative assessment reporting, and managing student character projects, which are often not supported by adequate training and resources. (Sukatin et al., 2025). Excessive administrative demands, including reporting oriented towards school management

accountability, can distract teachers' focus from classroom learning practices and create stress that interferes with their performance (Beyessa & Kenea, 2025; Sharma & Chand, 2025).

Resource Limitations

The lack of dedicated spaces for drama activities, the lack of props and costumes, and limited access to digital learning resources, such as video performances or audio recordings, are significant obstacles.

"There is no special room for drama rehearsals. Sometimes we have to use empty classrooms, or even outside the classroom if the weather is favorable." (Interview, June 5, 2025).

This lack of facilities and resources can hinder the creative and interactive learning process and limit students' exploration of drama. Irugalbandara (2023 and Munk et al. (2024) emphasizes that the provision of adequate facilities and supportive resources is essential to create an interactive and creative drama learning environment, which can ultimately improve students' creative thinking abilities and social skills.

Teacher Competence

Teachers feel less confident and less equipped to manage drama instruction effectively, especially in improvisation techniques, simple directing, and authentic assessment.

"I don't have a background in theater or drama. So, it is a bit difficult to direct students in improvising or making simple performances." (Interview, June 5, 2025).

This underscores the importance of teacher professional development programs that focus on drama pedagogy. Training is also needed for teachers. Intensive creative drama-based training, such as a 30-hour workshop, has been shown to increase creativity, spontaneous decision-making, and the use of teachers' body language, while strengthening their awareness of shaping personal and professional identities (Horasan-Doğan & Cephe, 2020)

Student Interests and Motivation

Some students show a lack of interest and motivation for drama activities, especially those related to public performance. Factors such as shyness, fear of being wrong, and a lack of appreciation for the art of drama can be the cause.

"Some children feel embarrassed and afraid of making mistakes when they appear in front of their friends. They prefer to do only written tasks." (Interview, June 5, 2025).

To overcome this, it is necessary to find specific strategies to increase students' intrinsic motivation. For example, by associating the theme of drama with students' interests and experiences, it can also be that using interactive theater in an educational environment can transform students from passive participants to active participants, allowing them to change the direction of the story and improvise according to the situation, which strengthens the ability to think critically and creatively express. (Deenerwan, 2024).

Research by Chang (2023) and Z. Chen & Chen (2025) suggest that this interactive and contextual drama learning method supports more fun, collaborative, and effective learning, improving student motivation and learning outcomes. This can be an input for teachers to apply similar approaches.

Conclusion

This study shows that teaching drama literature in rural elementary schools in Sampang, Madura, has great potential to support the development of drama, creativity, and student confidence, but its implementation has not been carried out optimally or sustainably. The hope of making drama an integral part of language learning has not been fully realized because there is a gap between pedagogical goals and real conditions in the field.

The problems faced by teachers are interrelated, including limited time, a lack of resources, low pedagogical competence in drama, and a lack of interest and confidence among some students. These findings confirm that the challenges of teaching drama are not only technical but also influenced by structural and contextual factors in rural schools.

This research underscores that developing drama learning in rural elementary schools requires a contextual approach, teacher capacity building, and support for a safe and supportive learning environment. This research has many limitations, so it requires further research. In the future, further research is needed that focuses on developing adaptive drama learning models and pedagogy-based teacher training programs so that the potential of drama can be used more optimally in basic education. In addition, further research is also recommended to explore the effectiveness of various intervention strategies to address the problems identified in this study, as well as to engage the perspectives of students and parents in the study to get a more holistic picture.

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