

Surabaya Dialect in Animation: Digital Communication Strategies for Preserving Local Culture

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the use of digital communication strategies in animated films as a significant step toward sustaining the Surabaya dialect, *boso suroboyoan*. It focuses on three main aspects: (1) how animated films portray *boso suroboyoan*, (2) how visual elements in animation reflect cultural values, and (3) how animated films serve as an effective tool for preserving the local language and culture of *boso suroboyoan*. A case study approach was applied, examining animated films that feature *boso suroboyoan* as the primary language and emphasize Surabaya's cultural content. Data collection and analysis were conducted through content analysis, interviews, and public opinion surveys. The findings indicate that animated films using *boso suroboyoan* effectively convey cultural messages in an engaging and educational way. The vocabulary in Jowo Suroboyoan dialogues not only introduces regional language lexicon but also embodies the outspoken, assertive, and spirited character of the Surabaya people. Symbolism and visual elements in animation convey cultural values through narratives, settings, and 3D techniques. The strategic application of digital communication in dialogue and storylines successfully introduces and fosters pride in Surabaya's cultural heritage.

Keywords: Javanese Language, *boso suroboyoan*, Animated Films

INTRODUCTION

The preservation of regional languages has become a crucial issue amidst the forces of globalization and the dominance of international languages. Increased cross-national interactions, migration flows, and technological advancements have intensified the use of international languages as global communication tools (Crystal, 2003; Park, 2009; Blommaert, 2010). Languages such as English, Mandarin, and Spanish widely dominate various sectors, including business, trade, technology, and entertainment. As a result, local or regional languages are often marginalized, and some are even at risk of extinction due to minimal usage and lack of preservation efforts (May, 2001; Sumarsono, 2003; Maffi, 2005; Rihan, 2023). Yet, regional languages play a crucial role in passing down cultural identity, traditional knowledge, and local wisdom from generation to generation. This situation calls for concrete actions to strengthen efforts in preserving regional languages, preventing them from being lost amid the accelerating pace of globalization. Language preservation efforts are also essential for maintaining

cultural diversity and preventing the loss of unique and valuable local identities.

As society and technology evolve, initiatives to preserve regional languages must align with digital trends. Employing suitable digital communication strategies enables younger generations and the broader public to access, appreciate, and engage with regional languages in contemporary, relevant contexts (Lee, 2013; Arismadhani et al., 2013; Bursan & Fitriyah, 2015). Through digital channels, such as online platforms, mobile apps, and social media, these languages can be reintroduced to a wider audience, allowing youth to stay connected with their cultural roots. Digital strategies also support the creation of educational, creative, and interactive content that can draw public interest toward language preservation (Santoso, 2004; Godwin, 2014). One regional language that deserves particular attention is *boso suroboyoan*. This Surabaya dialect, a variant of Javanese spoken in Surabaya, East Java, is more than just a medium for daily communication; it is a core reflection of the city's identity (Dedayev, 2015). *boso suroboyoan* holds deep cultural significance, symbolizing Surabaya's identity and encompassing values and traditions that have been passed down through generations (Gunarwan, 2003; Sihabudin, 2011; Maslichah, 2018).

Through digital media, especially animated films, *boso suroboyoan* has a greater opportunity to be introduced and promoted widely. Digital animation holds significant potential as an effective tool for cultural preservation, as it can create engaging narratives accessible to a broad audience, particularly the younger generation growing up in the digital era (Hartley, 2010; Pratiwi, 2018; Haryanto, 2020). Animated content can present *boso suroboyoan* in an educational linguistic context, teaching vocabulary, sentence structures, and phonetics in a more interactive way. Characters in animation that use distinctive expressions and phrases from *boso suroboyoan* provide a natural and enriched understanding of the Surabaya dialect (Adipitoyo, 1996; Kisyani, 2004; Djupri, 2008). Animated films can also showcase Surabaya's unique cultural aspects—such as traditions, celebrations, and everyday customs—in a captivating manner. This not only educates but also raises public awareness of the cultural diversity within their surroundings. Additionally, animated films visually depict Surabaya's physical environment, introducing iconic landmarks like the Tugu Pahlawan monument, Suro and Boyo statues, Pasar Atom, historic buildings, and other significant locations. By integrating language and cultural elements into digital animation, the preservation of *boso suroboyoan* can achieve a higher level of community engagement, especially among young people.

Digital animation is not just a form of entertainment; it also serves as an effective medium for conveying educational messages and introducing the cultural values inherent in *boso suroboyoan* (Mulyana, 2008; Kusumo, 2019; Pradita, 2020). Animated films have a unique ability to present cultural phenomena and grammatical elements of language implicitly through the use of visuals, characters, dialogue, and storytelling. By incorporating character voices and dialogue, animated films can showcase the distinctive *boso suroboyoan* dialect that characterizes the accent of Surabaya's youth. The use of stop-motion or 3D animation allows characters to express emotions, attitudes, and messages through facial expressions and body language (Beane & Walmsley, 2015). The traits of Surabaya's

people, known for their bravery, honesty, and sense of humor, can be reflected in the emotional expressions of animated characters. These expressions enrich cultural representation and foster a strong identification with the audience. Moreover, the environments and costumes of the characters indirectly depict the everyday life of Surabaya's residents (Dedayev, 2015). Animated films utilize metaphor and symbolism to convey cultural messages implicitly, illustrating local wisdom and deep meanings that refer to Surabaya's cultural and social values. By leveraging the richness of expression and symbolism in animation, the portrayal of *boso suroboyoan* and the characteristics of Surabaya's community can become deeper, more authentic, and resonate with viewers while preserving local cultural and linguistic wisdom.

This research is significant in investigating how digital media, particularly animation, can serve as an effective tool for preserving local language and culture, specifically *boso suroboyoan*. The analysis of dialogue, narratives, and visual elements acts as a medium for expressing characters, cultural values, and effective digital communication strategies aimed at cultural preservation. Consequently, the research problem focuses on: 1) how local language and culture are represented in animation, 2) how visual elements such as characters, backgrounds, and symbols in animation reflect Javanese cultural values, and 3) the role of animated films as effective tools in maintaining the sustainability of local language and culture, especially *boso suroboyoan* in Surabaya city.

METHOD

This study employs a case study approach to investigate the use of **boso suroboyoan** in animated films, focusing on digital communication strategies for the preservation of local culture in Surabaya. The data sources for this research consist of animated films that use **boso suroboyoan** as the primary language and emphasize Surabaya's cultural content. The research data includes vocabulary, storylines, settings, and characters that utilize **boso suroboyoan** or focus on cultural themes relevant to Surabaya. Data collection methods employed in this study include content analysis, interviews, and public opinion surveys (Moleong, 2006; Cresswell, 2013). Data collection was carried out by carefully reviewing the animated films that are the focus of the research. This process involved recording dialogues, observing relevant scenes, and identifying cultural elements presented in the animation. Data collection through interviews involved sources competent in the fields of language, animation, and local culture in Surabaya. These interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy and provide deeper insights. Public opinion survey data was collected online to facilitate accessibility for respondents. The survey included structured questions that reflect the research objectives, such as their understanding of **boso suroboyoan** in animation and its impact on the preservation of local culture. The collected data were then identified and analyzed to uncover patterns in dialogue, themes, and cultural symbolism in animated films that utilize **boso suroboyoan**. An in-depth interpretation of the animation content offers insights into how language and local cultural elements are conveyed through digital media. Furthermore, qualitative findings from in-depth interviews contribute to understanding digital

communication strategies in animation featuring **boso suroboyoan**. The results of this analysis provide perspectives from practitioners and experts on the effectiveness of using regional language in digital mediums. Analysis of public opinion survey data measures community responses and perceptions regarding the use of **boso suroboyoan** in animation as a cultural preservation effort. Through the analysis of survey results, general trends or patterns in public responses were identified, offering a broader picture of how the use of local language is perceived by potential audiences. Finally, results verification was conducted by cross-checking survey results with findings from content analysis and interviews to ensure consistency and data integrity (Koentjaraningrat, 1979; Arikunto, 2010).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, it was discovered that the representation of local language and culture in animation involves several elements, including dialogue, narration, characters, backgrounds, color choices, metaphors, icons, and symbolism. In the animation, characters communicate using the local language, *Jowo Suroboyoan*, which includes everyday words, distinctive expressions, humor, and phrases commonly used by the people of Surabaya. The use of local language not only serves as a means of communication but also highlights local identity (Geertz, 1992; Adipitoyo, 1996). This adds authenticity to the characters and creates an emotional connection with viewers from Surabaya. The use of local language encompasses not only words but also unique dialect variants and accents, fostering a sense of closeness between the animated characters and viewers who speak the same dialect. By utilizing dialogue as a medium of expression, the Jowo Suroboyoan language becomes an effective tool for introducing elements of Surabaya's culture to audiences who may not have in-depth knowledge of daily life and social norms in the city. In this animation segment, various distinctive Surabaya Javanese vocabulary words can be observed, such as "rek," "cak," "mekitik," "gocik," and "jancok," which are commonly heard among the people of Surabaya.



Figure 1. Distinctive Vocabulary of Surabaya

The use of vocabulary in *Jowo Suroboyoan* dialogues not only introduce the lexicon of the local language (*boso suroboyoan*) but also reflects the characteristics of the people of Surabaya, who are known for being straightforward, assertive, and enthusiastic. The detailed facial expressions and body movements when speaking the Surabaya dialect illustrate the traits of the Surabaya community, recognized for their bravery, honesty, and sense of humor. The choice of green and red colors is also synonymous with Surabaya and 'Persebaya,' which symbolizes togetherness and courage. The use of dialogue and character expressions not only presents the narrative of the language but also highlights the uniqueness of local cultural elements.

Animation in *boso suroboyoan* weaves stories or scenarios that encompass local tales or legends about the origins of Surabaya, as depicted in series like *Suro Boyo*, *Grammar SuroBoyo*, and *Battle of Surabaya*. This narration serves not only as an introduction to the story but also conveys messages and cultural values. The incorporation of traditional story elements or local mythology as part of the plot allows viewers to engage with cultural heritage without lengthy explanations. The narration in the animation also provides context and depth to the story by detailing backgrounds, character motivations, and conflicts. This creates a strong foundation for delivering cultural messages. These values involve ethics, morality, social norms, or cultural teachings upheld by the people of Surabaya, emphasized through the character's journey or conflicts in the story. Below is an excerpt from the series *Suro Boyo* titled "Suro and Boyo: The Search for the Archipelago".

"In the city of Surabaya, there lived two close friends, Suro and Boyo, who had high aspirations to explore the beauty of the archipelago. The background of the story is rooted in legendary tales that embody the essence of courage and the spirit of adventure in Surabaya's community. Suro, the son of a fisherman growing up on the city's coast, dreams of uncovering the secrets of the natural beauty of the archipelago. Meanwhile, Boyo, hailing from a family immersed in arts and culture, wishes to explore the diverse arts and traditions of every ethnic group in Indonesia. The depth of the story emerges when Suro and Boyo face conflict. They are confronted with significant challenges in preserving local culture when they encounter an antagonistic character who aims to seize control and disrupt the cultural diversity of the archipelago. This conflict reflects the values of cultural resilience and the spirit of unity held by the people of Surabaya. Throughout their journey, the narration details each character's motivations, illustrating how their backgrounds influence their decisions and actions. For instance, Suro uses his courage and local knowledge to overcome obstacles, while Boyo spreads art and cultural beauty to strengthen unity among the tribes they meet. The ethical values, morality, and social norms of Surabaya's community are reflected in every action of the characters. Honesty, mutual respect, and a spirit of cooperation serve as strong foundations for their adventure. Through interactions with local figures along their journey, Suro and Boyo uncover cultural wisdom that fosters harmony amid diversity".

In the narrative of the animation "Suro and Boyo: The Quest for the Archipelago, viewers are presented with positive cultural values such as honesty, courage, friendship, and a spirit of mutual cooperation. Through the journey of the characters Suro and Boyo, the audience is invited to explore historic places in Surabaya, such as the Submarine Monument, Atom Market, Suramadu Bridge, Heroes Monument, Surabaya Zoo, and the Chinatown and Ampel areas, which showcase distinctive Chinese and Arab architecture. Background elements, such as buildings and scenery, with their unique local atmosphere, create a sense of familiarity for the local audience. On the other hand, the iconic landmarks

of Surabaya automatically convey the cultural identity of the city to viewers outside of Surabaya.

Through digital narration with settings and local stories featured in the animation, the preservation of *boso suroboyoan* can achieve a higher level of engagement from the community, especially the younger generation, and foster pride and a sense of ownership regarding cultural heritage, particularly in the context of the origins and development of Surabaya. The use of music and sound effects derived from local culture can provide an authentic atmosphere and enrich the viewer's experience. This may include the use of traditional musical instruments or popular songs in Surabaya. The theme song "rek ayo rek" during each of Suro and Boyo's adventures evokes a sense of belonging and identity as residents of Surabaya. In certain scenes, the playing of gamelan music automatically brings forth emotional connections to local customs, providing a deep and emotional experience for the audience.

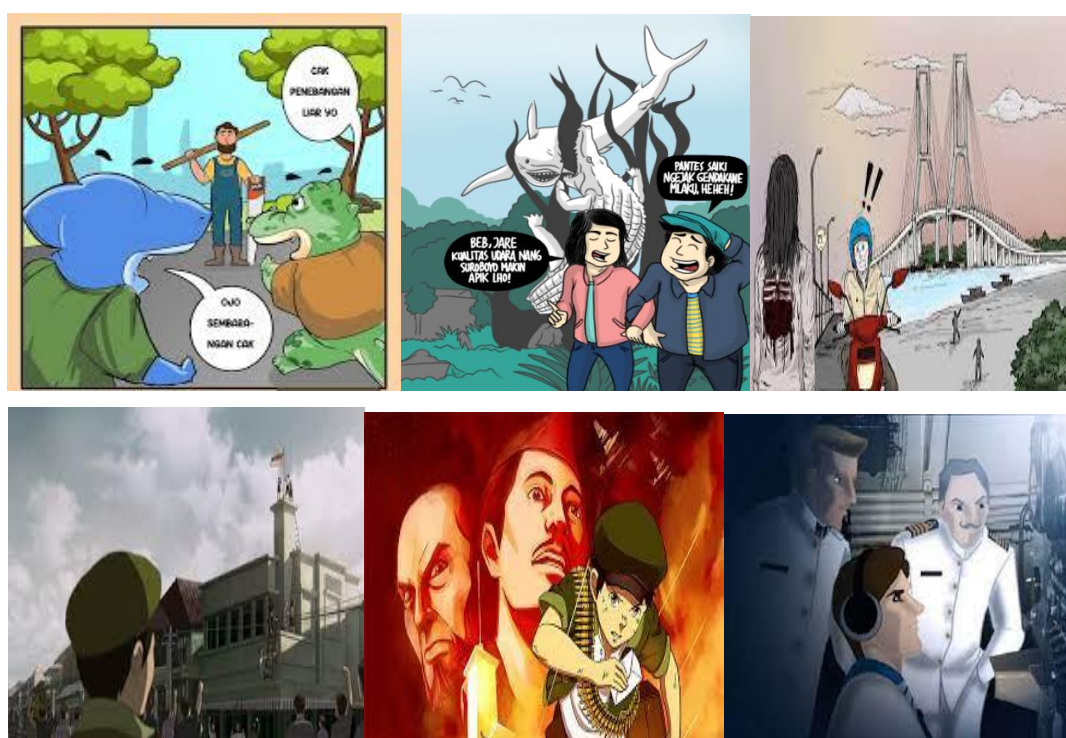


Figure 2. Background and Storyline Based on the History of Surabaya

Symbols and visualizations in the animated film also represent the cultural values and identity of Surabaya. For instance, the official logo of Surabaya incorporates elements of bravery and resilience. The use of animal symbols (shark and crocodile) philosophically reflects the natural conditions of Surabaya, which comprises both land and water (sea and rivers). Meanwhile, "*Sura ing Baya*" serves as a motto, spirit, and ethos meaning "Brave in Facing Danger." Additionally, a submarine symbolizes the city's maritime spirit as a major port. The mythical characters Sura and Baya represent the humor and courage of its people, while the *Suroboyo* Bridge, an icon of the city, signifies intercultural connection and unity within Surabaya. This bridge stands as a physical symbol of the close relationships among various communities in the city.

The use of the environment and character costumes in the animated film plays not only a visual role but also serves as a means to implicitly convey a depiction of the daily life of Surabaya's residents. Parks, squares, and malls in the animation provide a sense of the vibrant social life and strong communal bonds among the people. The portrayal of traditional markets or street vendors reflects the economic and culinary life of Surabaya, while also illustrating the social disparities present in the city. Historical buildings, traditional streets, and the old town showcase the cultural heritage and history of Surabaya. Furthermore, representations of local transportation such as motorcycles, *angkot* (shared minibuses), buses, and cars highlight the mobility and ways in which the community interacts in everyday life.

In the presented animated film, the connection between language and culture is integrated into traditional motifs or characteristic arts of Surabaya within the story's background and character design. These motifs convey rich cultural messages and reflect the beauty of local art and cultural heritage preserved by the community. Symbolic events, such as traditional celebrations or rituals unique to Surabaya, are interwoven into the narrative, providing deeper insight into the culture of the people. This creates opportunities to depict social norms or highly regarded values. Through the use of metaphors and symbols, the animated film can convey messages in a more subtle and comprehensive manner. Audiences can intuitively grasp cultural or social values without the need for lengthy explanations. With this approach, animated films serve not only as visual entertainment but also as a powerful medium for celebrating and preserving the artistic cultural heritage of the Surabaya community.

Animated films play a crucial role as effective tools in sustaining local languages and cultures, such as *boso suroboyoan* in Surabaya. They provide an enjoyable and engaging approach to conveying information. Children, and even adults, tend to prefer learning through entertainment. By presenting *boso suroboyoan* in animated form, the community can gain an understanding of the language and culture in a fun way. Animation also aids in grasping vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation of the local language. Animated characters speaking in *boso suroboyoan* can help audiences understand everyday usage and nuances of the language. Through the stories and animated characters, aspects of local culture, including customs, traditions, and values upheld by the people of Surabaya, are introduced subtly and comprehensively, allowing the audience to better appreciate the uniqueness and richness of Surabaya's culture.

Folklore and local legends packaged in contemporary genres enable younger generations to continue inheriting and disseminating cultural heritage thoroughly. The use of *boso suroboyoan* in the dialogue and narrative of the animation also provides a positive encouragement to use the language in everyday life. The audience, especially children, can be inspired to practice and enrich their language skills. Thus, the younger generation remains connected to their cultural roots and feels proud to use *boso suroboyoan*. By optimizing the power of animated films as educational and entertaining tools, the Surabaya community can maintain the sustainability of *boso suroboyoan* and promote pride in their cultural heritage. In a global context and language preservation efforts, animated films serve as a window to introduce East Javanese cultural customs to the world stage.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of *boso suroboyoan* in animation for preserving and promoting Surabaya's local culture. Animated films function not only as forms of visual entertainment but also as effective means for supporting local language and cultural expression. Essential components such as dialogue, narration, visual elements, and digital communication strategies are crucial for delivering cultural messages in a captivating and pertinent way. By integrating unique vocabulary, expressive facial cues, and contextual narratives, animated films can foster emotional connections and strong identification among viewers. The incorporation of digital technologies like 3D animation and stop-motion provides a means to explore cultural themes in greater detail. These animated films present not only the local language but also incorporate cultural aspects such as local legends, traditional festivities, and recognizable symbols of Surabaya. This approach enables a deeper preservation of local language and culture, leading to increased community involvement, particularly among youth growing up in the digital age. With the thoughtful implementation of digital communication strategies, animation can serve as an effective instrument for protecting, promoting, and instilling pride in cultural heritage, especially regarding *boso suroboyoan* in Surabaya. The outcomes of this research carry important implications for creating animation content that prioritizes cultural preservation. Suggestions include fostering stronger partnerships between animators, language experts, and local communities to ensure accurate and rich representations of cultural heritage in animations.

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