

A contrastive analysis of language style in traditional Javanese and Japanese children's songs and their educational values from an ethnostylistic perspective



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Receipt: 30 January 2026; Revision: 9 April 2026; Accepted: 18 April 2026

Abstract: This study analyses the language style in the lyrics of traditional Javanese children's songs (*tembang dolanan*) and Japanese children's songs (*warabe uta*) through contrastive analysis from an ethnostylistic perspective. This study aims to describe the forms of language style used and to reveal their similarities and differences based on their cultural backgrounds. The study used a qualitative method using content analysis by contrasting Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics. Data were collected through document analysis of song lyrics, supported by interviews with instructors from Japan and experts in the Javanese language. The data, validated through source triangulation and strengthened by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), were analysed using James P. Spradley's ethnographic stages, including domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analysis. The findings indicate that language style in both Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics is constructed through rhyme, repetition, lexical choices related to nature, animals, and plants, as well as the use of figurative language (metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and simile) and symbolism. These stylistic choices collectively support the construction of meaning and the transmission of educational values within their respective cultural contexts. Therefore, this study contributes to the development of contrastive linguistic analysis by demonstrating that such analysis can extend beyond structural comparison to integrate specific analytical perspectives, such as ethnostylistics. In addition, it offers insights into the exploration of stylistic language use in creative texts, particularly song lyrics, which may serve as alternative media for character education in children. Future research is recommended to expand the corpus by including a wider range of children's songs across cultures and to examine their implementation in deeper learning contexts involving culturally based creative texts.

Keywords: Contrastive language style; children's songs; ethnostylistics; *tembang dolanan*; *warabe uta*

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INTRODUCTION

Javanese traditional song, known as *tembang dolanan*, is Javanese spoken cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation without any author. Endraswara (2005) defines *tembang dolanan* as a song that is sung while playing with friends and

is based on children's folklore context. This song is known for its simple language, easily recognizable melodic patterns, a limited number of verses, and content that relates to children's everyday experiences. This simplicity is not limitation, rather cultural strategies to effectively transfer values to children. This view is in line with Danandjaja (2007) who categorizes *tembang dolanan* as spoken folklore representing children's world through simple, repetitive, and easy-to-remember poetic structure. From a folkloristic perspective, Sutton-Smith (1999) states that traditional children's songs play a role to represent how society tries to understand children, their social relation, and values that are important for them during that age. Therefore, *tembang dolanan* is inseparable from its cultural context whether in terms of language, symbolism, or its expressive style. Winarti (2010) further states that *tembang dolanan* contains various language functions: regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, informative, and poetic; which effectively deliver moral values and local wisdom to children through communicative and aesthetic forms.

A similar phenomenon can also be found in Japanese society. In Japan, this type of song genre is called *warabe uta* (童歌). According to Kawase and Takagi (2020), *Warabe uta* is a Japanese folk song that is created spontaneously through children's play without any known creator or composer. They further explain that this song is also passed down orally from generation to generation within Japanese communities. This song is generally sung as part of traditional games, such as circle games, clapping games, or role-playing activities; thereby reinforcing their social and educational functions in the lives of Japanese children.

Warabe uta does not only function as entertainment but also a medium to learn language and internalize Japanese values: togetherness, discipline, and closeness to nature (Yokoyama, 2010). Linguistically, the lyrics of *warabe uta* often use repetition, onomatopoeia, simple metaphors, and distinctive rhythms, which represent Japanese ways of thinking and aesthetic preferences (Pujiono & Gapur, 2019). These characteristics show that the linguistic style in traditional children's songs is influenced much by the society's values, social structure, and view of the world.

In general, the basic functions of traditional children's songs across cultures are similar: they serve as a means of play, learning, early socialization, and the transmission of educational values and societal ideologies (Danandjaja, 1997). Furthermore, according to Latifah et al. (2023), children's creativity can be improved through the development of rhythmic and melodic sensitivity gained from learning songs, including children's songs. However, the language style used in children's song lyrics varies. These differences are influenced by cultural background, linguistic systems, and social ethos. Such variation can be observed in diction choices, forms of metaphor, cultural symbols, patterns of repetition, as well as poetic structures found in traditional Javanese and Japanese children's songs. Therefore, it is important to examine the language style in traditional children's song lyrics from both Javanese and Japanese contexts in order to understand the similarities and differences in how these cultures shape children's understanding and experiences. This includes aspects such as sound patterns or rhyme, word choice, symbolism, and the moral messages conveyed. Accordingly, a contrastive study of traditional Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics presents a compelling area for further in-depth research.

The ethnolinguistic stylistic approach is considered relevant in this study because it does not only analyze stylistic or linguistic features, but also connects them to the

ethnographic and cultural contexts that underlie them (Diplan, 2018). Ethnostylistics focuses on the relationship between language forms and cultural practices, as well as how stylistic elements reflect the worldview of a community (Duranti, 1997). This approach provides an integrative analytical framework to understand that language style choices in children's song lyrics are also shaped by cultural context and local wisdom. In this way, ethnostylistic theory enables researchers to reveal the connections between linguistic form, meaning, and cultural function within a society. In the context of this study, the approach offers analytical guidance for identifying how language choices in *tembang dolanan* and *warabe uta* function not only as aesthetic elements but also as representations of cultural values. For example, rhyme patterns, marked by similarities or regularities in vowel and consonant sounds, create rhythmic effects that reflect values of harmony and order. In addition, the use of symbolism through nature-related vocabulary indicates a close relationship between the community and the natural environment, which forms part of their cultural worldview. Thus, children's song lyrics should not be understood merely as linguistic texts, but also as representations of the values, norms, and worldview of the communities that sustain them.

Previous studies on traditional children's songs have been conducted by several scholars; however, they generally focus on educational values or functional aspects, without deeply examining language style as an aesthetic and cultural construction, as seen in the works of Setyaningsih (2019), Sukisno (2021), and Abdullah et al. (2021). Meanwhile, studies on *warabe uta* in Japan tend to emphasize musical aspects and the development of children's musicality rather than stylistic analysis (Kawase & Takagi, 2020). Comparative cross-cultural research on children's songs also remains limited, especially studies that apply a contrastive approach using an ethnostylistic perspective as the analytical framework. Therefore, this study offers potential novelty by examining, in a contrastive manner, the language style of traditional Javanese and Japanese children's songs and by revealing its connection to educational values through an ethnostylistic perspective. Accordingly, this research is expected to contribute to the development of cultural stylistics studies and its application in character education based on local wisdom.

Based on this research background, the problem formulation of this study focuses on how language style is used in the lyrics of traditional Javanese and Japanese children's songs—particularly *tembang dolanan* and *warabe uta*—as well as on their similarities and differences when examined through contrastive analysis. In addition, this study also analyzes the educational values embedded in both types of song lyrics as reflections of local wisdom that contribute to children's character development. The scope of the problem further includes the relationship between the stylistic forms used and the cultural values, social functions, and ethnographic contexts of Javanese and Japanese societies. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the fields of cultural linguistics, oral literature, and cross-cultural studies in understanding the representation of values and cultural identity, particularly through the language style of traditional Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics.

METHOD

This study used a contrastive analysis method within a descriptive qualitative framework. Contrastive analysis itself is a linguistic method used to systematically compare two languages in order to find similarities and differences in terms of linguistic

structures (Carl, 1980; Lado, 1960). In terms of perspective, ethnostylistics is applied. Ethnostylistics is an approach that views language style as a cultural practice inseparable from the value system of its speech community. Stylistic analysis is integrated with cultural aspects and assumes that linguistic choices: sound, words, or sentence structure level; reflect particular cultural worldviews (Duranti, 1997; Foley, 1997). Contrastive analysis was also used to systematically compare the language styles found in traditional Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics, by which the researcher used to reveal similarities and differences in stylistic characteristics that stem from distinct socio-cultural backgrounds. In this context, stylistics functions as an analytical tool to identify salient linguistic features, as theorized by Leech and Short (2007), who state that stylistics does not merely examine language forms but also their relationship with meaning and social function.

The data source of this study consisted of Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics, including the ones sung while playing traditional games as well as those not directly related to game activities. The selection criteria included lyrics that strongly exhibit stylistic features, such as rhyme patterns, concrete words, nature- or living-being-related diction, and moral values. In the case of *warabe uta*, one example is the song *Koinobori* (こいのぼり), a traditional children's song associated with Children's Day in Japan, which is celebrated on May 5. This song is commonly sung to express joy and hopes for children's future success in life.

The data consisted of word choices or diction that supported the realization of language style at the levels of sound (phonological), word (lexical), and sentence structure (syntactic). Data were collected through content analysis of song lyrics, involving an in-depth examination of recurring linguistic elements that have cultural meaning (Krippendorff, 2018). In order to strengthen data interpretation, in-depth interviews were also conducted with cultural experts from Tenri University in Japan. Data validity was ensured through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving cultural experts who have lived in Japan for an extended period and have professional experience, as well as experts in Javanese language and culture. This strategy covered triangulation of sources and expert validation which are regarded as effective to enhance the credibility of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The data analysis technique in this study followed the stages of the ethnographic method proposed by James (2006). Stage (1) was domain identification, in which the entire corpus of traditional Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics was treated as a cultural unit of analysis. Stage (2) was taxonomic analysis, which involved determining the stylistic features, including sound patterns, word choice, and sentence structure, based on stylistic theory (Nurgiyantoro, 2014). Through the classification of domains into these taxonomic features, componential patterns emerge. This led to componential analysis (Stage 3), which revealed relationships of meaning and differences in stylistic characteristics. In this stage, each clause of the song lyrics was reduced into categories based on the identified taxonomic features and then analyzed for meaning. This process resulted in a detailed mapping of stylistic elements as well as their interpretation within each domain or clause of the lyrics. Stage (4) was cultural theme analysis, which involved interpreting these stylistic patterns by relating them to the socio-cultural context of the communities that sustain the songs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis results refer to the structures that construct style within a text. In song lyrics, these structures include rhyme patterns, word choices that create associations or contain particular collocations, as well as sentences that create imagery.

Language Style in the Aspect of Rhyme

The aspect of rhyme is an important element in creative texts such as song lyrics. The repetition of vowel and consonant sounds, or the recurrence of identical or similar sounds at the end of each line (rhyme), produces rhythmic and musical effects. Therefore, it enhances aesthetic quality and ease of pronunciation. All song lyrics, both Javanese and Japanese, contain rhyme, as shown in the following data.

Assonance and Final Vowel Rhyme

Assonance, or the repetition of vowel sounds, in Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics is found in all of the songs.

Traditional Japanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (1) やねよりたかいこいのぼり *Yane yori takai koinobori*
'Taller than the roof is the carp streamer' (こいのぼり/Koinobori/K)
- (2) 生きているから歌うんだ *Ikiteiru kara utaunda*
'Because we are alive, we sing'
生きているからかなしいんだ *Ikiteiru kara kanasinda*
'Because we are alive, we feel sad (手のひら太陽に Te no Hira Taiyo ni/THTN)
- (3) やねまでとんで *Yane made tonde* 'Flying up to the roof' (シャボン玉/ *shabon dama/ SD*)

Traditional Javanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (4) *Jamur gajih mbejijih sakara-ara/ Sira bage jamur apa*
'Jamur Gajih tumbuh besar melebar seperti ara-ara/ What kind of mushroom do you want?' (Jamuran/J)
- (5) *Ana manuk Ondhe-ondhe/ Dipanah kena buntute/ Bok sir bamba bok sir kate*
'There is a small ondhe-ondhe bird (small cute bird)/ Shot and hit on its tail / Perhaps you are a bird, perhaps a little chicken' (Te Kate/ TK)

Alliteration and Final Consonant Rhyme

Traditional Japanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (6) こわれて きえた *kowarete kieta* 'Broken and gone' (シャボン玉/ *shabon dama/ SD*)
- (7) かぜかぜ ふくな *kaze kaze fukuna* 'Wind, wind, blow' (シャボン玉/ *shabon dama/ SD*)

Traditional Javanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (8) *Sikil kaya bumbung/ mung mlakumu megang megung* 'Feet like bamboo / only walking while holding tightly' (Gajah/G)

- (9) makjenthit lololobah/ wong mati ora obah/ yen obah medeni bocah ‘Startled, swaying / the dead do not move / if they move, they scare children’ (*Sluku-sluku Bathok/ SSB*)

Linked Rhyme

Traditional Japanese Children’s Song Lyrics

- (10)僕らみんなは生きている bokura minna **ikiteiru** ‘We are all living beings’ (手のひら太陽に Te no Hira Taiyo ni/THTN)
(11)生きているから笑うんだ **ikiteiru** kara waraunda ‘Because we are alive, we laugh’ (手のひら太陽に Te no Hira Taiyo ni/THTN)

Traditional Javanese Children’s Song Lyrics

- (12)Te kate **dipannah** ‘The little chicken is shot’ (*Te Kate/ TK*)
dipannah ngisor gelagah ‘Shot beneath the reeds’
(13)Sluku-sluku **bathok** ‘Gently stroking the head’ (*Sluku-sluku Bathok/SSB*) **bathoke** ela elo ‘The head shakes from side to side’
(14)Cublak-cublak **suweng** ‘Feeling around for the earring’ (*Cublak-cublak Suweng/CCB*) **suwenge** ting gelenter ‘The earring falls scattered’

Based on the analysis, the repetition of vowel sounds (assonance) and final vowel rhyme are the dominant rhyme features in traditional children’s song lyrics in both Japanese and Javanese. The consistent repetition of vowel sounds, whether within a single line or across lines, plays a role in creating rhythmic regularity and producing aesthetic sound effects that are easy to remember. This similarity in rhyme patterns indicates that children’s songs in both languages utilize phonological elements as a strategy to support their aesthetic function. As a result, the lyrics become easier to memorize and sing, while also possessing strong rhythmic and musical qualities.

In Japanese children’s song lyrics, final rhyme appears only in the form of vowel sounds (assonance). This is due to the syllabic nature of the Japanese language. In contrast, Javanese is non-syllabic, which allows for the possibility of final rhyme in the form of consonant sounds (alliteration). Nevertheless, the presence of rhyme in these song lyrics indicates that songwriters pay careful attention to the aesthetic quality of pronunciation from a phonological perspective. In other words, they deliberately consider word choice in relation to similarities in syllabic sounds. Such patterns make the expressions more engaging and aesthetically pleasing when sung.

Language Style in the Aspect of Word Choice (Diction)

Repetition

Repetition is a prominent feature in both Japanese and Javanese children’s song lyrics, although with different patterns and intensity. In Japanese children’s song lyrics, almost all song titles use repetition. This feature is used to build a simple rhythm that is easy to remember. Based on the types of repetition in discourse (Sumarlam, 2013), the dominant form of repetition in Japanese children’s song lyrics is epizeuxis. Examples include *kaze kaze fukuna* (かぜ かぜ ふくな) ‘wind, wind, blow’ and *minna, minna ikiteirunda* (みんな、みんな生きているんだ) ‘everyone, everyone is alive’. The direct repetition of the words *kaze* and *minna* without pause functions to intensify emphasis.

Anaphoric repetition can be observed in the repeated occurrence of the phrase *shabon dama tonda* (しゃぼんだま とんだ) ‘soap bubbles fly’ (SD/1), as well as in the clause *bokura minna ikiteiru* (僕らみんな生きている) ‘we are all living beings’. These repetitions appear several times at the beginning of each line.

Meanwhile, Javanese children’s song lyrics display a wider variety of repetition. Epizeuxis can be seen in words such as *sluku-sluku*, *ela-elo*, *lolo-lobah* (SB/1,2,4), and *cublak-cublak* (CC/1). Anaphora appears through repeated line openings such as *yen obah – yen urip* (SB/5,6) and *jamuran, jamur apa, jamur gajih* (JN/1,2,3). In addition, anadiplosis is evident in the word *bathok*, which appears at the end of one line and is repeated at the beginning of the next (SB/1,2). The word *obah* ‘move’ at the end of line five (SB/5) is repeated at the beginning of the following line as *yen obah* (SB/6). Similarly, the word *dipanah* at the end of line one (TK/1) is repeated at the beginning of the next line, and *suweng* ‘earring’ in the first line is repeated as the opening word of the subsequent line.

Lexicon of Nature, Plants, and Animals

The use of natural lexicon in Japanese and Javanese children’s songs shows that both traditions incorporate environmental elements as part of children’s imaginative worlds, such as wind, living beings, and the sun. In Javanese songs, elements like rivers and the moon are often used to depict spatial and temporal settings. Meanwhile, Japanese songs tend to present nature in a more detailed and specific manner, as illustrated in the following data.

Traditional Japanese Children’s Song Lyrics

- (15) かせかせふくな *Kaze kaze fukuna* ‘Wind, wind, blow’ (シャボン玉/ *shabon dama/ SD*).
(16) 僕らみんな生きている *Bokura minna ikiteiru* ‘We are all living beings’ (手のひら太陽に *Te no Hira Taiyo ni/ THTN*)
(17) 手のひらを太陽にすかしてみれば *Te no hira wo taiyou ni sukashite mireba* ‘Place your hand under the sun and try to see’.

Traditional Javanese Children’s Song Lyrics

- (18) *Kidang talun/mangan kacang talun* ‘The deer calls/eating peanuts noisily’ (*Kidang Talun/KT*)
(19) *Padhang bulan padhange kaya rina* ‘The bright moon shines like daytime’ (*Padhang Bulan/PB*)

Meanwhile, Javanese children’s songs also incorporate plant-related lexicon, presented in a more contextual manner that reflects the distinctiveness of rural life through specifically Javanese terms. Examples include *bathok* ‘coconut shell’ in *sluku-sluku bathok* (SSB), *jamur* ‘mushroom’ in *jamuran ya gege thok* (J), and *gelagah* ‘wild grass’ in *dipanah ngisor gelagah* (TK). The term *bumbung* ‘the lowest section of bamboo’ appears in the song *Gajah*. These expressions serve as representations of a village environment. In addition, imitations of natural sounds, such as *sir-sir pong*, reflect how Javanese children perceive their surroundings through auditory experiences—for instance, the sound produced by empty soybeans when shaken in a tray. There are also examples of onomatopoeia, such as *kodhok* ‘frog’, with the sound *theot thek blung* in

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the song *Kodhok Ngorek*. Animal-related lexicon is also found in both Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics, such as:

Traditional Japanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (20) こいのぼり *Koinobori* 'Carp Streamer'
(21) スズメだって、イナゴだって、カゲロウだって *Suzume date, Inago date, Kageroudatte* '**Sparrows too, grasshoppers too, mayflies too**'.
(22) トンボだって、カエルだって、ミツバチだって *Tonbo date, Kaeru datte, Mitsubachi datte*. '**Dragonflies too, frogs too, honeybees too**'.
(23) スズメだって、イナゴだって、カゲロウだって *Suzume date, inago date, kageroudatte*. '**Sparrows too, grasshoppers too, mayflies too**'.

Traditional Javanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (24) *Kodhok ngorek, kodhok ngorek* '**Frogs croaking, frogs croaking**'
(25) *Te Kate dipanah* 'The little **chicken** is shot'
(26) *Jaranan, jarane jaran Teji* '**Horse** play, the horse is Teji'
(27) *Gajah... mripat kaya laron* '**Elephant... its eyes are like small insects (moths)**'
(28) *Mambu ketundhung gudel* 'Smelling like a chased-away **buffalo calf**'

Animal-related lexicon appears prominently in both Japanese and Javanese children's song lyrics as a representation of children's close relationship with their natural surroundings. The mention of various animals, such as fish, birds, insects, frogs, chickens, horses, elephants, deer, and buffalo; functions not only as a thematic element but also as a means of introducing concrete vocabulary that is easily understood by children. Moreover, the use of animal lexicon is often accompanied by repetition and figurative expressions, which enhance imaginative appeal as well as the aesthetic quality of the sound patterns in the lyrics. The shared use of animal-related vocabulary in both traditions indicates that elements of nature, particularly living creatures such as animals, serve as an important medium for conveying both aesthetic and educational values in line with the characteristics of children's world.

Language Style in the Use of Figurative Language

In song lyrics, there is often the use of sentence structures whose meanings are intentionally deviated or extended in order to produce certain effects on the listener. This is realized through the use of figurative language.

Traditional Japanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (29) やねよりたかい こいのぼり *Yane yori takai koinobori* 'A carp streamer higher than the roof'. (K)
(30) おおきいまごいは おとうさん *Ookii magoi wa otosan* 'The big carp is the father'. (K)
ちいさいひごいは こどもたち *Chiisai higo wa kodomotachi* 'The small carp are the children. (K)
(31) おもしろそうにおよいでる *Omoshirosou ni oyoideru* 'They swim happily'.
(32) 童謡の歌...一杯涙をうかべた *Doyo ...Ippai namida wo ukabeta* 'A doll... filled with tears. (DU)

Traditional Javanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (33) *Bathoke ela-elo* 'The coconut shell nods from side to side'. (SSB)
(34) *Gajah gajah... kowe takkandhani/mripat kaya laron, sikil kaya bumbung*
'Elephant, elephant... let me tell you/eyes like small flying insects, legs like bamboo segments'. (G)

In the lyrics of Japanese and Javanese children's songs in data (29–34), the use of figurative language can be observed as a deviation from literal meaning to create aesthetic and imaginative effects for listeners. Hyperbole in data (29) is used to exaggerate the height of the *koinobori* beyond the roof of a house, producing a strong visual impression. Data (30) shows the use of metaphor by equating a large carp with a father and a small carp with a son; thus, constructing a family image that is close to children's everyday experiences. Data (31) and (34) illustrate personification, where animals are given human characteristics, for example, fish are portrayed as father and child, and an elephant is depicted as having the ability to listen to advice or speech from the lyrical "I." This form of personification resembles the structure of fables, in which animals function as characters with human traits. Personification is also evident in data (32), where a doll is described as having human-like emotions, such as happiness and sadness.

Meanwhile, data (33) demonstrates a symbolic metaphor in which the coconut shell is interpreted as representing a particular movement or expression. Data (34) uses simile by comparing parts of an elephant's body to winged termites and its legs to bamboo segments. Such use of simile aims to help children concretize abstract ideas. Overall, the use of figurative language in both Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics serves to enrich meaning, enhance imagination, and strengthen the aesthetic appeal of the songs.

Educational Values in the Symbolism of Song Lyrics

The concrete words presented in song lyrics often carry symbolic meanings that embody educational values. In song lyrics, these values are not only expressed explicitly but can also be embedded in figurative expressions or symbolism. This can be observed in the following data.

Traditional Japanese Children's Song Lyrics

- (35) 手のひらを太陽にすかしてみれば
まっかに流れる僕の血潮「ちしお
Te no hira wo taiyou ni sukashite mireba
Makkana nagareru boku no chishi o
'Place your hand under the sun and try to see'
Bright red, my blood is flowing
- (36) ミミズだってオケラだって、アメンボだって
みんな、みんな生きているんだ
友達なんだ
Mimizu date, okera date, amembo date
Minna minna ikiteirunda
tomodachi nanda
'Worms too, mole crickets too, water striders too'
All, all are living beings

They are friends

(37) ああわが父母いかにおわす *Aa waga chichi haha ikani o was(u)*

'Ah, my father and mother, I hope you are always well' (Title: Kokyou no Sora/KS)

Traditional Javanese Children's Song Lyrics

(38) *Ya pra kanca dolanan neng jaba* 'Come on friends, let's play outside'

Ngelingake aja padha turu sore 'Reminding (us) not to sleep in the afternoon'

(Title: Padhang Bulan/ PB)

(39) *Nyunggi nyunggi wakul kul gembelangan*

Wakul ngglimpang segane dadi saklatar

'Carrying a rice basket carelessly

The basket falls over and the rice scatters all over the yard'

The concrete words presented in Japanese children's song lyrics in data (35)–(36) function not only as aesthetic elements but also carry symbolic meanings that represent educational values. In data (35), the expression in the lyrics suggests to children that the human body contains blood, which appears red on the hand when exposed to sunlight. This meaning is not merely literal; it also conveys a symbolic message that by observing ourselves more closely, we can understand that our bodies consist of various organs that form a structured system, each functioning according to its role (as symbolized by the notion of "flowing"). The functioning of these organs represents a gift from the Creator to all living beings, including insects and animals mentioned in the subsequent lyrics. The final expression, "are friends," implies that humans and animals are equally living beings with bodily systems; therefore, they should coexist harmoniously, like companions. Such lyrics also reflect educational values such as curiosity and environmental awareness. In life, individuals are expected to maintain harmony with their surroundings, treating nature as a companion rather than exploiting it or damaging its ecosystem. This idea is similar with a well-known Japanese principle, *Shizen to tomoni ikiru* (しぜんとともに生きる), which means living in harmony with nature. This expression reflects the traditional Japanese worldview that humans are part of nature, not its absolute rulers. The same value is echoed in *Wa o motte tōtoshi to nasu* (をもってとうとしとなす), meaning "harmony is the most important value." This principle originates from the *Jūshichijō Kenpō* (Seventeen-Article Constitution of Prince Shōtoku), which emphasizes the importance of maintaining order and harmony, including in relation to the natural environment.

Japanese children's song lyrics, the interpretation of educational values can also be found in more explicit expressions, as seen in data (37). A child's hope for their parents' well-being reflects care and filial devotion. This expression implicitly emphasizes the importance of remembering and praying for one's parents, both when together and when apart. This corresponds with Japanese cultural practices, as reflected in the commemoration of Keiro no Hi (敬老の日), which is observed to honor and remember parents and the elderly, particularly one's own parents. Such expressions reflect educational values related to communicativeness, social awareness, and responsibility.

Meanwhile, in Javanese children's song lyrics, messages are often conveyed more explicitly through interrogative sentences marked by the particle *ya*, as seen in data (38). In these lyrics, the interrogative form functions as an invitation for children to play together outside the house. This expression reflects educational values related to friendship, peace, and social awareness. Such values correlate with Javanese cultural

principles that emphasize togetherness and social harmony (*guyub rukun*). Furthermore, advisory expressions are conveyed through the marker *aja* ('do not'), as in *aja padha turu sore* 'do not sleep in the afternoon', which represents the cultivation of time discipline and personal responsibility. In Javanese society, sleeping in the late afternoon is believed to cause confusion or disorientation upon waking. This belief is commonly reflected in everyday experiences, such as children mistakenly thinking it is morning when they wake up and preparing for school at the wrong time. In addition to explicit expressions, Javanese song lyrics also use concrete words that carry symbolic meanings and educational interpretations. For instance, the image of a head carrying a *wakul* (rice basket) in the song *Gundhul-gundhul pacul* symbolizes something highly valuable, as rice is the staple food in Javanese culture. When the rice is carried by someone who behaves carelessly (*gembelengan*), the *wakul*, representing a valuable trust, can easily fall and lose its worth. This conveys an educational value of responsibility, emphasizing the importance of maintaining proper conduct and safeguarding entrusted duties.

Discussion

Traditional Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics demonstrate distinctive linguistic structures and lexical choices shaped by their respective cultural backgrounds. Contrastive analysis is a method used to systematically compare two or more languages in order to describe their similarities and differences (Carl, 1980; Lado, 1960). Based on the contrastive analysis conducted on Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics from an ethnostylistic perspective, the findings reveal not only similarities and differences at the level of language performance (surface structure), but also the underlying socio-cultural backgrounds and values embedded within them. To date, no previous studies have applied a contrastive analysis using an ethnostylistic perspective. Existing contrastive studies on song lyrics have generally focused on phonological aspects, such as the study by Tungkup et al. (2023), or on lexical and structural aspects, as in Werner (2023). A contrastive stylistic analysis has been conducted by Putra and Hamzah (2021), but it examined English and Indonesian song lyrics and was limited to the lexical level. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective in contrastive analysis by applying a specific linguistic framework. Moreover, a contrastive study of song lyrics that considers language performance alongside socio-cultural context (through an ethnostylistic perspective) can enrich the diversity of theories and methodologies, particularly within the fields of ethnostylistics and contrastive linguistics.

At the level of language performance, particularly in the aspect of rhyme, both Javanese and Japanese children's song lyrics use word choices that share similar vowel or consonant phonemes at the end of each line. This creates rhyme patterns that generate rhythmic and musical nuances, making the songs more engaging and easy to listen to. This finding can serve as a useful reference for language and literature teachers in teaching creative writing skills, such as composing songs or poetry, by utilizing rhyme as a tool to enhance both the aesthetic quality and meaning of a text. This is in line with the conclusion of Pelangi et al. (2025), which states that rhyme functions not only as a form of creative expression but also as a means of strengthening the meaning of creative texts.

The use of linguistic structures reflected in word choice (diction) in song lyrics tends to be simple, straightforward, and repetitive. This is intended to ensure that the lyrics

are easy for children to sing and remember. Thus, the claims by Zavalniuk et al. (2022), Al-Muslimawi (2024), and Umairoh et al. (2021) are supported, as repetition as a stylistic device emphasizes key points and strengthens the emotional tone of a text, whether in poetry, prose, or other creative forms. Repetition helps draw attention to central themes and intensifies emotional impact. Furthermore, diction in the form of nature-related lexicon in Javanese children's songs is generally presented as part of children's daily activities and play; thus, improving a close relationship between language, lived experience, and local traditions. In contrast, Japanese children's song lyrics, although also using simple language, tend to display more structured and refined sentence patterns. This reflects values of collectivism, social harmony, and attentiveness to interpersonal relationships. The use of nature-related diction in Japanese songs is typically more detailed and descriptive, inviting children to recognize flora and fauna more clearly, in line with the Japanese cultural perspective of harmony between humans and the environment Kramsch (1998). Symbolism and metaphor are used to convey more complex concepts, such as moral values, social relationships, and closeness to nature. In Javanese songs, nature often symbolizes simplicity and tranquility, whereas in Japanese songs it emphasizes harmony and togetherness. Symbols such as the sun, flowing blood, various living beings, and invitations to play and befriend others reflect values of respect for life, social empathy, and environmental awareness. This is consistent with the findings of Bukit et al. (2023), which suggest that children's songs can serve as an effective medium for instilling moral character in early childhood through both explicit and implicit messages in their lyrics.

Educational values are also constructed through the choice of words in song lyrics. These values may be embedded implicitly through symbolic concrete words, as well as expressed explicitly through imperative forms. Word choices referring to parts of the human body, living beings, and the natural environment suggest educational values such as curiosity and environmental awareness. By presenting diction related to bodily organs, living creatures, and nature, children's creativity can be stimulated, encouraging them to explore further and to develop a sense of care in maintaining harmony with their surroundings. Expressions related to filial devotion, as found in *warabe uta*, convey educational values such as communicativeness, social awareness, and responsibility. In contrast, in Javanese song lyrics, concrete words, such as those found in *Gundhul-gundhul Pacul*, symbolically imply the value of responsibility in carrying out entrusted duties without negligence. Moreover, explicit expressions in the form of imperative sentences, as seen in the song *Padhang Bulan*, reflect the value of discipline, particularly the importance of managing time effectively between social interaction and personal needs, such as rest. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that traditional children's song lyrics, both Japanese and Javanese, contain educational values conveyed either implicitly through symbolic diction or explicitly through direct expressions. This explanation is consistent with the findings of Mardatillah and Mulyani (2025), which indicate that children's songs can be used as instructional materials to develop character values such as responsibility, cooperation, and social awareness in both formal and informal learning contexts. Thus, symbolism in traditional children's song lyrics can function as a medium for internalizing character education values, including awareness of life, discipline, empathy, social concern, and responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the contrastive analysis of language style in traditional Javanese children's songs (*tembang dolanan*) and Japanese children's songs (*warabe uta*) from an ethnostylistic perspective, it can be concluded that both traditions employ stylistic language as a means of aesthetic expression as well as a medium for conveying educational values and transmitting cultural heritage. Similarities are evident in the use of rhyme, repetition, nature-related lexicon, and figurative language, all of which function to build musicality, facilitate memorization, and correspond with children's imaginative world. However, differences emerge in stylistic characteristics influenced by their respective cultural backgrounds. Japanese children's songs tend to exhibit more regular sound patterns, refined linguistic structures, and symbolism emphasizing harmony, equality among living beings, and collectivist values. In contrast, Javanese children's songs display more varied and creative sound patterns, the use of rural-specific lexicon, and a more direct and contextual language style closely tied to children's everyday life. The educational values embedded in the symbolic expressions of the lyrics include awareness of life, environmental care, social togetherness, respect for parents, discipline, and personal responsibility. Thus, this study affirms that language style in children's song lyrics not only reflects linguistic aesthetics but also represents the worldview and cultural value system of the communities that sustain them. As such, it is highly relevant for studies in character education and cross-cultural research. Theoretically, this analysis contributes to the development of ethnostylistics by demonstrating that stylistic analysis can be integrated with ethnographic context to reveal the relationship between language and culture in oral traditions. Practically, the findings can be utilized as a reference in developing teaching materials, particularly for culturally based creative texts, and as an alternative medium for instilling educational values in character formation. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of study by involving a wider range of creative texts, such as song lyrics from diverse cultures, and to examine their implementation in educational contexts in order to achieve more comprehensive and meaningful insights.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Universitas Sebelas Maret (LPPM Universitas Sebelas Maret) for funding this research under contract number 371/UN.27.22/PT.01.03/2025.

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