

## Enhancing Student Engagement at *Museum Keris Nusantara*: The Role of Bilingual Educational Book and Interactive Kids’ Corners

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**Abstract:** *This study was conducted at Museum Keris Nusantara (MKN) to provide a safe area for child visitors. Based on field observation and an interview with M. Fariz Al Hazmi from MKN, it was found that school-age visitors have been declining since February 2024. This decline is due to a shift in visitor interest toward other attractions and the mystical stigma associated with keris. The RG English for Vocational Purposes team from the English Diploma Program, Vocational School, Universitas Sebelas Maret, responded by developing a kids’ corner and creative educational book to attract children. The activities began in March with the preparation of a questionnaire to identify visitor preferences for book content and desired activities in the kids’ corner. The questionnaire results showed that 65% of the sample data were children who wanted direct interaction with the keris and easily understandable content. The creative educational book includes short stories with attractive illustrations, trivia, and coloring pages. The kids’ corner is equipped with acrylic puzzles, a snakes and ladders game, and some keris miniatures. In conclusion, the presence of the bilingual creative educational book and kids’ corner at MKN helped the child visitors better understand the history of keris.*

**Keywords:** *educational book, child visitors, interactive learning, kids’ corner, museum keris nusantara.*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini dilakukan di Museum Keris Nusantara (MKN) dengan tujuan menyediakan area yang aman bagi pengunjung anak-anak usia sekolah. Berdasarkan observasi lapangan dan wawancara dengan M. Fariz Al Hazmi dari pihak MKN, diketahui bahwa pengunjung usia sekolah merupakan segmen kunci yang potensial, namun jumlah pengunjung anak-anak usia sekolah terus mengalami penurunan sejak Februari 2024. Penurunan ini disebabkan oleh pergeseran minat pengunjung yang lebih tertarik mengunjungi tempat lain serta adanya stigma mistis terkait keris. Tim RG English for Vocational Purposes dari Program D-3 Bahasa Inggris, Sekolah Vokasi, UNS, merespons dengan mengembangkan kids’ corner dan buku edukatif kreatif untuk menarik minat anak-anak. Kegiatan dimulai pada bulan Maret dengan menyusun kuesioner guna mengidentifikasi preferensi pengunjung terhadap konten buku dan aktivitas yang diinginkan di *kids’ corner*. Hasil kuesioner menunjukkan bahwa 65% dari sample data adalah anak-anak menginginkan interaksi langsung dengan keris serta konten yang mudah dipahami. Buku edukasi kreatif yang disusun memuat cerita pendek dengan ilustrasi menarik, trivia yang mengaitkan keris dengan senjata superhero, serta lembar mewarnai. Kids’ corner dilengkapi dengan puzzle akrilik, permainan ular tangga, dan miniatur keris. Kesimpulannya, adanya buku edukasi kreatif dwibahasa dan *kids’ corner* di MKN berhasil membantu pengunjung anak-anak dalam memahami sejarah keris dengan lebih baik.

**Kata kunci:** *buku edukasi, pengunjung anak, pembelajaran interaktif, kids’ corner, museum keris nusantara.*

## INTRODUCTION

According to Hein (1998), museums are special places that offer visitors a variety of unique experiences. Many people can relate past experiences documented in museum collections to their personal experiences. However, not all experiences in museums are educational, because experience and education do not always go hand in hand. Someone may only get a pleasant impression from a visit to a museum, but that does not automatically increase the educational side. They do not necessarily grasp the moral message that is trying to be conveyed through the collections provided by the museum. Although the experiences presented are alive, clear, and interesting, the lack of coherence can create a disjointed and chaotic behaviour pattern. This kind of habit can make it difficult to manage experiences in the future so individuals can only enjoy or even hate the experience without deeper reflection (Dewey, 1938, pp. 13-14).

Dewey made two important observations about how museum experiences can affect us. First, routine experiences that do not challenge our minds are unlikely to be educational. For experiences to be truly educational, they must engage not only the hands but also the minds. Second, experiences that are simply “vivid, vivid, and interesting” are not enough; they must be structured to support learning. For visitors to learn from their visits, we must understand the meaning they derive from the experiences.

This raises the question: how do both the casual reactions and the moments of insight during a museum visit affects visitors? How can we maximize the educational impact of these experiences? This understanding is important because museums are increasingly playing an educational role and are under pressure to prove their worth. Many museums use market research to identify their audiences, design engaging exhibits, and increase attendance. Entertainment such as that offered by Disney and other theme parks teaches us how to manage crowds, create engaging spaces, and market recreational products.

However, a deeper analysis is needed to understand museums' educational value and potential. According to Dewey, “vivid, vivid, and interesting” experiences, coupled with adequate facilities, may be sufficient for entertainment but not necessarily sufficient for education. The real challenge for museums is to turn visitors' excitement into a structured, engaging experience that can support their growth.

Building on this understanding of museum experiences, it becomes clear that fostering

educational engagement, particularly among younger audiences, requires more than just the presentation of vivid exhibits. At Museum Keris Nusantara, this challenge is addressed through innovative strategies that aim to captivate and educate young visitors. One of the proposed approaches is integrating educational book and interactive kids' corners, designed to enhance student engagement.

These tools create an immersive environment where learning becomes a dynamic and participatory process. By providing interactive learning spaces alongside educational materials, museums can transform passive viewing into active exploration, encouraging deeper connections with cultural heritage. This approach is crucial in making museum experiences both enjoyable and educational, particularly for children who require more hands-on and mind-on activities to sustain their attention and foster learning. The role of these educational tools in shaping meaningful museum visits is essential for developing knowledge and a lasting appreciation for cultural history.

In the following sections, we will explore how educational book and interactive learning spaces at Museum Keris Nusantara are helping to engage young visitors, encouraging both enjoyment and growth through enriched museum experiences.

The aspiration to create a space that serves both as a playground and an educational hub is one of the main objectives of Museum Keris Nusantara. Established in 2017, the museum has become a key destination for students from Solo and beyond, offering a unique opportunity to learn about the keris, an important cultural artifact. However, the museum's ambition has not been free of challenges. Over time, the number of visitors has consistently decreased.

In-depth interviews conducted by the Community Service Team with MKN curators, M. Fariz Al-Hazmi and Anjang Pratama, identified two primary challenges facing the museum. First is the lack of a Kids' Corner and educational book that is attractive and interesting. M. Fariz Al-Hazmi noted that students, particularly those of preschool and kindergarten age, make up the largest segment of visitors. Despite this, MKN lacks dedicated facilities and resources for young children. The absence of a Kids' Corner and educational book packages has limited the museum's potential to cultivate cultural literacy and engage younger audiences effectively.

Second, it is the problem related to the limited human resources and expertise. Employees are often required to handle multiple roles, resulting in overextended responsibilities and

reduced operational efficiency. Additionally, the staff's expertise in developing bilingual educational content for children is lacking. This deficit hampers the museum's efforts to captivate and sustain the interest of younger visitors in its culturally significant collection.

To make the museum more accessible and enjoyable for children, the research group developed a variety of activities centered on the theme of *keris*. These included interactive puzzles, snakes and ladders games, and child-friendly infographics that explain *keris* in simple terms. Additionally, bilingual educational book featuring stories, tales, and comic strips were created to provide a more immersive learning experience.

The Kids' Corner is not merely a place for entertainment but also a platform for cultural education. By combining games, stories, and independent activities, the team sought to make learning about *keris* both fun and informative. The puzzles stimulate curiosity and introduce basic concepts. The creation of acrylic puzzles is grounded in the well-documented benefits of puzzle play for children. Research by the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) highlights the significant cognitive advantages associated with puzzles (ANMM Store, 2023). Acrylic puzzles offer significant cognitive benefits for children. They enhance memory, boost problem-solving skills, and encourage attention to detail. These puzzles can be a valuable tool for developing a child's overall cognitive abilities. By engaging with acrylic puzzles, children can improve their problem-solving strategies, logical thinking, and resilience.

On the other hand, the infographics simplify complex historical and cultural aspects. The books offer a creative outlet for children to imagine and engage with the stories of *keris*. Furthermore, the inclusion of independent activities, such as colouring pages and quizzes, allows children to reinforce their learning and continue exploring the topic at home. This ensures that the museum visit is not a one-time event but a gateway to ongoing education about Indonesian culture. Ultimately, the Kids' Corner at Nusantara Keris Museum aims to create a memorable and educational experience for young visitors. By providing a variety of interactive activities, the team hopes to inspire children to appreciate the cultural significance of *keris* and develop a lifelong interest in Indonesian heritage.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach to ascertain the interests and expectations of school-age children regarding museum visits and to identify the challenges parents encounter when bringing their children to museums. Data were collected through closed and open

questionnaires, focusing on interest in *keris*, activity preferences, and satisfaction levels. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 parents to delve deeper into their experiences visiting museums with their children. These twenty five parents were selected based on specific criteria: they enjoy visiting museums and have school-aged children, approximately 5 to 12 years old. This ensures that their responses to the questionnaire and interview align with the questions asked.

The questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively, categorizing respondents' answers into four primary themes: the need for educational book, the potential benefits of such books in explaining *keris* history and tales, the desired content of these books, and parental interest in these resources. Meanwhile, interview transcripts were analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify key terms, themes, and patterns.

The next stage involved triangulating data from the questionnaires and interview transcripts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Kids' Corner. By analyzing the questionnaire responses and interview data, we were able to refine the design of the Kids' Corner, create more engaging educational materials, and assess the overall effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, a sharing session with museum staff provided valuable insights into their specific needs and priorities related to the Kids' Corner and educational materials.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The English for Vocational Purposes research group is committed to the 2024 community service activities aimed at developing a Kids' Corner and a bilingual creative educational book for Museum Keris Nusantara (MKN). Prior to advancing these initiatives, the team conducted surveys and interviews with visitors, specifically targeting those with school-aged children (ages 5–12). The questionnaires comprised ten core questions that aimed to assess the museum's immediate needs. In addition to these assessments, a sharing session was held with MKN staff to gather insights on the proposed content.

Data collection through questionnaires and interviews with 25 volunteer respondents was conducted on May 21-26, 2024. The results of this initiative revealed strong visitor support for the development of a creative educational book for children, as well as the establishment of a "kids' corner" at Museum Keris Nusantara (MKN). The survey results demonstrated that a majority of visitors (75%) agreed that a creative educational book could help children better understand the *keris*. This finding indicates a significant demand for engaging and accessible

learning materials to introduce young audiences to Indonesia's cultural heritage, particularly the keris.

Visitor support extended beyond educational materials, with 70% endorsing the creation of a dedicated kids' corner equipped with various educational activities. This indicates a clear desire for a designated space within the museum tailored to children, where they can learn and play while gaining a closer understanding of the keris. Furthermore, the survey results highlighted the importance of child-friendly infographics, with 65% of visitors expressing the belief that such visual aids would attract children's interest in learning about the keris. This suggests that the effective visualization of information, presented in an engaging and comprehensible manner, is crucial for capturing the attention of younger visitors.



Figure 1. Questionnaire Results Presentation and Sharing Session with MKN Staff

Collaborative discussions and brainstorming sessions with MKN personnel have generated several interesting and educational concepts for the kids' corner. These proposed activities aim to provide children with enjoyable learning experiences while introducing them to the richness and beauty of Indonesian cultural heritage, particularly through the lens of the keris.

The data gathered through these instruments revealed that museum visitors wanted the museum to provide educational book that facilitate their children's understanding of

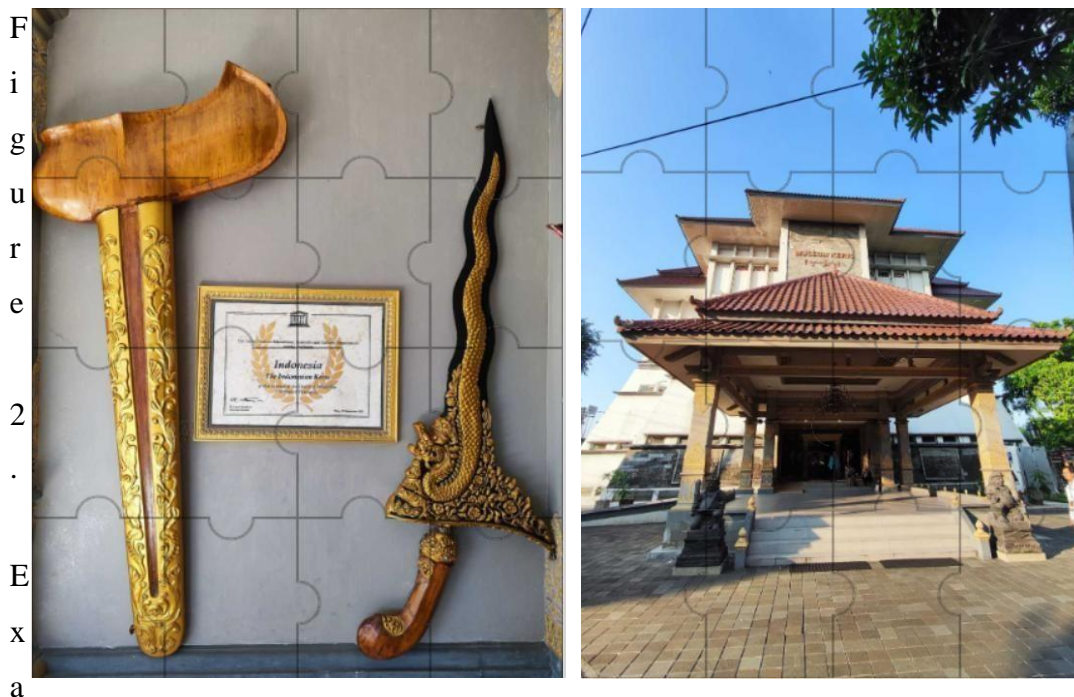
Indonesia's cultural heritage. The findings highlight that interactive elements like snake-and-ladder games, keris miniatures, acrylic puzzles, and child-friendly infographics are essential to provide children with an immersive experience at the Kids' Corner. In line with these preferences, the proposed bilingual creative educational book will include short stories about the museum's keris masterpieces, comic strips introducing the keris, anatomy sheets, quizzes to assess comprehension, shadow-matching activities, and keris-themed coloring pages.

Thus, the development of the Kids' Corner and bilingual creative educational book at Museum Keris Nusantara was driven by the need to create an immersive and engaging learning environment for young visitors. Based on visitor feedback and interviews, the activities were designed to foster interest in keris, combining both educational and entertainment elements to enhance the museum experience. Each activity has a clear educational purpose, grounded in research that supports interactive and child-centered learning.

The following are the explanations of activities developed for kids's corner at MKN:

- **Acrylic Puzzles**

The use of acrylic puzzles aims to promote children's cognitive development. Puzzle play significantly enhances memory, problem-solving abilities, and attention to detail, as seen in educational settings (Fissler et al, 2018). These acrylic puzzles allow children to explore the different parts of a keris in a hands-on way, breaking down the cultural artifact into understandable components. Engaging children in physical activities like puzzles not only stimulates curiosity but also reinforces their understanding of complex objects through play. The tactile nature of the puzzles offers a kinesthetic learning experience, enabling children to physically interact with the cultural item, fostering a deeper connection (Montessori, 1967).



Example of the picture used for acrylic puzzles.

- **Snakes and Ladders Game**

The Snakes and Ladders game is a strategic addition to the Kids' Corner. Its objective is to introduce historical elements of keris and traditional Indonesian culture through play. The game board incorporates keris-related trivia, where players can move forward by answering correctly or slide back if they miss a question. Incorporating games into educational settings has been shown to increase motivation and engagement in learning (Darnanta et al., 2020). Children are encouraged to learn in a relaxed, fun setting by embedding cultural knowledge into a familiar game. The design of the game is also intended to enhance group interactions, fostering collaborative learning.

- **Keris Miniatures**

The keris miniatures allow children to visualize the iconic weapon in different styles and sizes. These miniatures are carefully crafted to reflect authentic designs of keris from various regions in Indonesia, enhancing the children's understanding of regional variations and historical significance. Visual aids and tangible models help children retain information better and allow for more meaningful connections to the subject.

matter (Y Rakhmawati, 2022). The miniatures help ground abstract cultural concepts in a format children can grasp and appreciate.



Figure 3. Some of keris miniatures used for the development of kids' corner at MKN

#### • Child-Friendly Infographics

The infographics are designed to simplify the complex history and symbolism of keris for young audiences. They use bright colors, simple language, and engaging visuals to explain the origin, anatomy, and significance of keris in Indonesian culture. Visual aids have long been recognized as an effective way to enhance learning, especially for younger audiences (Raiyn, 2016). Infographics are particularly effective at distilling complex ideas into easy-to-understand visuals, making them an ideal tool for museums looking to engage children in cultural education (Traboco et al, 2022).



Figure 4. An infographic made for kids's corner at MKN

Moreover, the educational book is designed to complement the Kids' Corner by offering children and their families a resource to take home. The book is bilingual, reflecting the museum's commitment to reaching a wider audience and ensuring accessibility for both local and international visitors. Here are the descriptions regarding the content of the book:

- **Short Stories**

The short stories in the book are designed to introduce children to famous keris legends and explain their cultural significance. Each story is accompanied by illustrations that bring the narrative to life, allowing children to engage with the stories visually and textually.

#### Keris Taming Sari

##### Keris Taming Sari dan Hang Tuah



Di negeri Melaka yang indah, hiduplah seorang pahlawan hebat bernama Hang Tuah. Hang Tuah adalah seorang pendekar yang sangat pemberani dan setia. Dia memiliki sebuah keris yang sangat istimewa dan penuh dengan kekuatan ajaib. Keris itu bernama Taming Sari.



Keris Taming Sari tidak seperti keris biasa. Menurut cerita, keris ini dibuat oleh seorang empu yang sangat sakti. Empu itu memasukkan kekuatan sihir ke dalam keris sehingga siapa pun yang memegangnya akan menjadi sangat kuat dan tak terkalahkan.

Suatu hari, Hang Tuah diberi tugas oleh Sultan Melaka untuk menjaga negeri dari musuh yang ingin

Figure 5. Example of short story made for the bilingual educational book

Storytelling is an effective educational tool, especially for young audiences. Children are more likely to remember the information by incorporating historical artifacts into stories (Combs & Beach, 2016).

- **Comic Strips**

The comic strips offer a modern interpretation of keris legends, presenting the weapon in a way that is easily understood by children. The characters in the comics explain the

uses of the keris in simple terms, making this cultural artifact more relatable and exciting. Comics are a highly engaging medium for children, combining visual storytelling with educational content. As stated by Ismail (2020), reading comics can help improve literacy skills and enhance the retention of information in young learners.



Figure 6. Draft of the comic strip

- **Keris Anatomy Sheet**

These sheets break down the components of the keris, such as the blade, handle, and sheath, explaining their individual meanings and cultural significance.

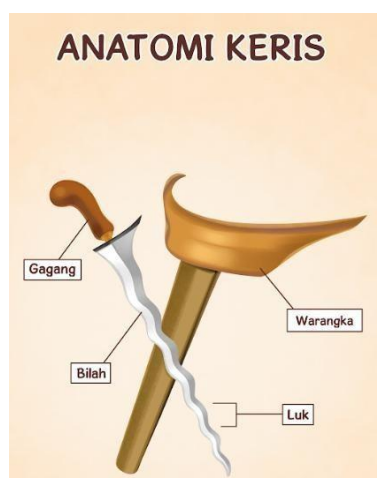


Figure 7. Sheet of Keris Anatomy

Each component is labeled with bilingual terminology, helping children develop a more nuanced understanding of the keris. Educational materials that dissect complex

objects into understandable parts enhance comprehension and foster a deeper understanding of cultural artifacts.

- **Quizzes and Activities**

The book includes quizzes that test comprehension of the stories and keris anatomy, as well as activities such as matching games and shadow-matching puzzles. These activities reinforce learning through repetition and interactive engagement. Active learning techniques, such as quizzes and matching games, enhance memory retention in children and make learning a more dynamic process.



Figure 7. Some activities made for the bilingual educational book

### QUIZ TIME

Susunlah huruf-huruf dibawah ini agar menjadi kata yang benar



Figure 8. Quiz made to asses children's understanding of the content of the book

- **Coloring Pages**

Coloring pages featuring keris designs allow children to engage with the cultural

artifact creatively. They provide an outlet for artistic expression while reinforcing the educational content presented throughout the book.

### Warnai Tara dan Keris



Figure 9. Coloring sheet designed for the book

As mentioned by LR Allen (2015), Coloring is a widely recognized method of engaging children in learning, improving their focus and motor skills while fostering a connection to the subject matter.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The establishment of a Kids' Corner and the creation of bilingual educational book at Museum Keris Nusantara (MKN) reflect the museum's commitment to providing an immersive and engaging learning environment for children. These initiatives were driven by visitor feedback and designed to balance education with entertainment, ensuring that young visitors not only enjoy their time at the museum but also develop a deeper understanding of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage.

The introduction of these child-friendly features has had a significant positive impact on the museum's overall visitor numbers, particularly among families and school groups. By creating a space where children can interact with cultural content in a playful and accessible manner, the museum has attracted more families seeking educational yet enjoyable experiences for their children. The Kids' Corner, with its interactive displays and hands-on activities, allows children to explore the history of the keris in ways that are both engaging and educational.

The bilingual educational book also play a key role in enhancing the museum experience. These books provide children, as well as their parents or teachers, with easy-to-understand information in both Indonesian and English, fostering an inclusive environment for both local visitors and tourists. This feature has helped to broaden the museum's appeal to a more diverse audience, including international visitors, thereby boosting the museum's visibility on a global scale.

As a result, the museum has seen a notable increase in visitor numbers, particularly from schools and educational institutions, which now consider MKN an excellent resource for field trips and educational outings. These improvements have not only contributed to the museum's mission of preserving and promoting Indonesia's cultural heritage but have also enhanced its role as an educational hub for the younger generation.

In conclusion, the Kids' Corner and bilingual educational book have made a measurable difference in both visitor engagement and attendance at MKN. These initiatives provide a sustainable model for other museums in Indonesia, demonstrating how strategic enhancements in children's education can significantly impact cultural preservation and public participation.

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