



EDUCATIONAL VALUES IN THE CHILDREN'S SHORT STORY PERKEDEL SUKUN: A
PRAGMATIC STUDY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Abstract

Background: Children's literature serves not only as entertainment but also as an effective medium for developing children's character through meaningful language use. However, studies examining speech acts in children's short stories from a pragmatic perspective remain limited, particularly in revealing how communicative functions convey character education values. **Objective:** This study aimed to identify the types of speech acts based on John Searle's speech act theory and to reveal the character education values embedded in Sarah Nafisah's children's short story *Perkedel Sukun*, published in *Bobo* magazine. **Method:** This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a pragmatic perspective. The data consisted of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues containing speech acts in the short story. Data were collected through reading and note-taking techniques and analyzed by identifying, classifying, describing, and interpreting the speech acts according to Searle's classification. **Results:** The findings revealed that the short story is dominated by directive and representative speech acts. Directive speech acts appeared in the form of prohibitions, advice, and suggestions, while representative speech acts were expressed through statements, evaluations, and personal experiences. The analysis also identified several character education values, including sharing, cooperation, togetherness, caring, respect for others, and clean and healthy living habits. **Novelty:** This study integrates pragmatic speech act analysis with character education in children's literature, demonstrating how speech acts function as a medium for moral value transmission. **Conclusion:** The findings indicate that *Perkedel Sukun* is not only an entertaining literary work but also an effective educational resource for fostering positive character development among children through contextual language use.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Children's Literature, Character Education

INTRODUCTION

Literature originates from the Sanskrit word *shastra*, which is derived from *shas*, meaning "to teach," "to instruct," or "to guide," and *tra*, meaning "tool" or "instrument." Thus, literature can be understood as a medium for conveying guidance and knowledge. In general, literature is an artistic expression realized through spoken or written language that embodies aesthetic value and profound meaning. Literary works function not only as a medium for authors to express their thoughts and emotions but also as a means of communicating ideas, experiences, values, and perspectives on life to readers (Kasmawati, 2022). Furthermore, the meaning of a literary work is dynamic because it is influenced by language use and readers' interpretations within particular contexts (Situmorang et al., 2026). Therefore, literature serves as a representation of various aspects of human life, including emotions, beliefs, experiences, and humanitarian values.

In addition to providing entertainment, literature also serves an educational function by offering meaningful learning experiences to readers. One of the most popular forms of literary work is the short story. A short story is a fictional prose narrative characterized by its brevity, focus on a single main character, a central conflict, and a unified event that creates a single dominant impression on readers (Kharisma Ahmad, 2020). Due to its concise yet meaningful narrative structure, a short story effectively conveys moral messages and is generally easier to understand than longer prose works such as novels. These characteristics make short stories a valuable medium for introducing moral and educational values, particularly to children.

Literature is not exclusively intended for adult readers but also plays a significant role in children's development. Children's literature is specifically designed to meet children's developmental characteristics, needs, and levels of understanding, both in terms of language and content. Through children's literature, young readers not only gain enjoyment but also acquire learning experiences that support their cognitive, emotional, and social development. One of the primary functions of children's literature is character education, as moral values are presented through characters, dialogues, plot development, and the messages embedded within the stories in ways that are simple and accessible. In line with this perspective, Haikal Zulfa and Hodijah (2025) argue that children's literature is an effective medium for instilling character values. Similarly, Anggraini et al. (2019) define children's literature as literary works created for and enjoyed by children while reflecting their experiences and worldview.

One children's short story that contains rich character education values is "**Perkedel Sukun**" ("Breadfruit Fritters") written by Sarah Nafisah and published in *Bobo* magazine. The story follows Runi and her friends as they spend the night at Runi's new house. During their visit, Runi's mother invites the children to prepare breadfruit fritters together after serving them fried breadfruit. This shared cooking activity demonstrates positive values such as cooperation, responsibility, mutual respect, caring, and togetherness. These values are conveyed through the characters' conversations and actions throughout the story, making the short story an appropriate object for examining character education in children's literature. Unlike many children's stories

that present moral values primarily through narration, *Perkedel Sukun* emphasizes natural dialogues among children and family members. These dialogues provide a rich source of speech acts that implicitly communicate character education values, making the story particularly suitable for pragmatic analysis.

Character education is fundamentally a process of guiding learners to understand, internalize, and apply positive values in their daily lives (Rosyad & Senjaya, 2021). In children's literature, character education values are commonly expressed through language, dialogue, characters' actions, and the moral messages embedded in the narrative. Consequently, language plays a crucial role in conveying moral values to readers. Umi Farinda and Nursyifa Camila (2021) emphasize that language and literature significantly contribute to character formation because they function as media for transmitting life values. Therefore, understanding the meanings embedded in the characters' utterances is essential for revealing the educational messages conveyed in children's literary works. Accordingly, examining speech acts provides a systematic approach to identifying how character education values are conveyed through linguistic interactions rather than through explicit moral statements alone.

To uncover the implied meanings embedded in the characters' utterances, this study employs a pragmatic approach. Pragmatics examines the relationship between language, context, speakers, and listeners, enabling meanings to be interpreted according to the contexts in which utterances occur (Nasution, 2023). In children's literature, the pragmatic approach is particularly relevant because it not only examines linguistic structures but also reveals the communicative functions of language that serve as vehicles for delivering moral messages (Syafutri & Hidayati, 2016). One of the principal areas of pragmatics is speech act theory, which views language as a form of action performed through spoken or written utterances.

This study adopts John Searle's speech act theory, which classifies speech acts into five categories: representative (assertive), directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Representative speech acts are used to state or report facts, directives are intended to influence the hearer to perform an action, commissives express the speaker's commitment to future actions, expressives convey the speaker's feelings or attitudes, and declaratives bring about changes in social status or situations when produced under appropriate circumstances. These five categories provide an analytical framework for identifying how character education values are communicated through the dialogues among the characters in the story.

Although numerous studies have examined pragmatics in literary works, most have focused on short stories or novels intended for adult audiences. Research specifically investigating speech acts in children's literature, particularly children's short stories published in *Bobo* magazine, remains relatively limited. Previous studies have generally analyzed speech acts or character education separately, whereas limited attention has been given to integrating both aspects in children's literary texts. This condition indicates a research gap regarding how speech acts

function as linguistic strategies for conveying character education values in children's short stories.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the types of speech acts found in Sarah Nafisah's "Perkedel Sukun" based on John Searle's speech act theory and to reveal the character education values embedded in the story through a pragmatic perspective. The novelty of this study lies in integrating speech act analysis with the identification of character education values in a children's short story, thereby providing a more comprehensive explanation of how pragmatic functions contribute to moral education through literary texts. The findings are expected to contribute not only to the development of pragmatic studies in children's literature but also to the use of children's short stories as effective instructional materials for language learning and character education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method. A qualitative descriptive approach is intended to describe, interpret, and analyze phenomena based on naturally occurring data without the use of statistical analysis (Wiwin, 2017). This method was selected because it aligns with the objective of the study, which is to describe the types of speech acts found in Sarah Nafisah's children's short story *Perkedel Sukun*. The qualitative descriptive approach is particularly appropriate because the study emphasizes the interpretation of language use within its natural context rather than numerical measurement, allowing the communicative meanings of the characters' utterances to be examined comprehensively. The study adopted a pragmatic approach with a particular focus on John Searle's speech act theory, which classifies speech acts into five categories: representative (assertive), directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. A pragmatic approach was considered appropriate because it enables the interpretation of utterances according to their contexts of use, thereby revealing the communicative functions embedded in the characters' dialogues. Furthermore, the pragmatic framework facilitates the identification of how each speech act conveys character education values through the interactions among the characters, making it highly relevant to the objectives of this research. The data source consisted of the children's short story *Perkedel Sukun*, published in *Bobo* magazine, while the research data comprised words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues containing speech acts that corresponded to Searle's classification.

Data were collected using the reading and note-taking technique. This technique involves carefully reading the research object and documenting relevant data through systematic note-taking (Sri Kurnia Hastuti Sebayang, 2019). The data collection process began with repeated readings of the entire short story to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative, conversational contexts, and relationships among the characters. Subsequently, every utterance potentially containing a speech act was identified, recorded, and organized as research data. Each identified utterance was then assigned an initial code according to its context before being classified into one of Searle's five speech act categories. After the coding process, the utterances

were re-examined to ensure that the assigned categories accurately reflected their communicative intentions. The collected data were analyzed through several stages: (1) identifying all utterances contained in the text; (2) classifying the data according to the five categories of speech acts proposed by John Searle; (3) describing the communicative function of each speech act based on its contextual occurrence within the story; and (4) interpreting the relationship between the identified speech acts and the character education values conveyed in the short story. The final stage involved synthesizing the findings to explain how the use of speech acts contributes to the construction and transmission of character education values throughout the narrative.

The trustworthiness of the data was established through persistent observation by repeatedly reading, examining, and reviewing the data to achieve an in-depth understanding of the meaning of each utterance in the story. In addition, theoretical triangulation was employed by using speech act theory, particularly John Searle's pragmatic framework, together with relevant previous studies as the basis for data analysis and interpretation. To enhance analytical consistency, the coding and categorization processes were conducted repeatedly by referring to the operational definitions of each speech act category, ensuring that every utterance was classified consistently according to its communicative function and contextual meaning. This iterative verification process reduced subjective interpretation and strengthened the credibility and dependability of the findings. These procedures were intended to ensure consistency in data interpretation while minimizing researcher subjectivity in classifying the identified speech acts. Consequently, the findings are expected to demonstrate a high level of credibility and provide a systematic description of the forms and communicative functions of speech acts found in the children's short story *Perkedel Sukun*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of the children's short story *Perkedel Sukun* by Sarah Nafisah, published in *Bobo* magazine, two types of speech acts were identified according to John Searle's classification: directive speech acts and representative speech acts. These two categories appear in the dialogues among the characters as a means of building interaction while simultaneously conveying moral messages to readers. Among the identified data, directive speech acts were found to be the most dominant. This indicates that the characters more frequently used utterances intended to influence the actions of other characters through prohibitions, advice, and suggestions. In contrast, representative speech acts were employed to express opinions, evaluations, experiences, and personal feelings regarding the situations encountered by the characters.

The predominance of directive speech acts indicates that the author intentionally constructs dialogues that encourage children to perform desirable behaviors in everyday life. Meanwhile, representative speech acts complement these interactions by expressing personal experiences

and evaluations that reinforce the moral messages embedded in the story. This finding demonstrates that speech acts function not only as linguistic forms but also as pedagogical devices for communicating character education values in children's literature.

To facilitate the presentation of the findings, the identified speech acts are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Identification of Speech Acts in the Short Story Perkedel Sukun

No.	Speech Act Type	Form of Utterance	Communicative Function	Character Education Value
1	Directive	Prohibition	Preventing the hearer from performing an action	Sharing and avoiding selfishness
2	Directive	Advice	Reminding the hearer	Discipline and personal hygiene
3	Representative	Evaluation	Expressing an opinion	Respect for others
4	Representative	Statement	Expressing personal experiences and feelings	Gratitude and positive thinking

Table 1 demonstrates that each speech act type is closely associated with a specific character education value. This finding confirms that pragmatic analysis can reveal not only the communicative function of utterances but also the educational meanings conveyed through children's literary dialogues.

Based on these findings, each type of speech act is described below.

1. Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts are utterances intended to influence the hearer to perform or refrain from performing a particular action. In Perkedel Sukun, the directive speech acts identified consist of prohibitions and advice.

Data 1

"Rudi, don't finish all the breadfruit!" shouted Runi as soon as she entered the kitchen.

This utterance is classified as a directive speech act in the form of a prohibition. As the speaker, Runi attempts to stop Rudi from eating all the breadfruit by himself. The prohibition reflects her intention to ensure that the food can be shared equally among all of her friends. Therefore, the primary communicative function of this utterance is to regulate the hearer's behavior for the benefit of the group.

In addition to functioning as a prohibition, the utterance also reflects positive social interaction among the characters. Runi is not only concerned about herself but also considers the rights of her friends to enjoy the food together. Thus, this directive speech act demonstrates values of caring, cooperation, and togetherness.

This finding indicates that prohibitive utterances in children's literature are not merely intended to restrict behavior but also to introduce social norms such as fairness, empathy, and

mutual respect. The directive speech act therefore serves an educational function by encouraging readers to recognize acceptable social behavior within everyday interactions.

Data 2

"Runi, wash your hands first," Kayla reminded her.

This utterance is also categorized as a directive speech act, specifically in the form of advice. Kayla reminds Runi to wash her hands before eating as an expression of concern for cleanliness and health. The communicative purpose of this utterance is to encourage the hearer to perform a beneficial action.

This finding indicates that the characters in the story frequently remind one another to develop positive habits. Rather than functioning as a command, Kayla's advice demonstrates concern for her friend's well-being. Consequently, the directive speech acts found in this story serve not only as prohibitions but also as recommendations that encourage positive behavior.

The use of advisory speech acts illustrates that character education in children's literature is conveyed through supportive interpersonal communication rather than authoritative instruction. Such dialogues make moral messages more acceptable to young readers because they are embedded naturally within interactions among peers.

2. Representative Speech Acts

In addition to directive speech acts, this study identified representative speech acts. Representative speech acts are used by speakers to express facts, opinions, evaluations, or personal experiences that they believe to be true.

Data 3

"Your new house is so nice," Nia complimented Runi after remaining quiet for quite some time.

This utterance is classified as a representative speech act in the form of an evaluation. Through this statement, Nia expresses her opinion that Runi's new house is comfortable and enjoyable. The utterance reflects the speaker's belief based on her own observation and experience while visiting the house.

Besides providing information about Runi's new home, the utterance also demonstrates appreciation through a sincere compliment. Therefore, this representative speech act contributes to building positive interpersonal relationships among the characters.

The evaluative utterance reflects how representative speech acts can foster positive attitudes by encouraging children to appreciate others sincerely. This finding suggests that expressions of appreciation play an important role in promoting respectful communication and positive social relationships in children's literature.

Data 4

"Yes. I really love living in this house. It feels like being on vacation every day," Runi replied from behind the chili plants.

This utterance is also categorized as a representative speech act because it expresses the speaker's personal experience and feelings. Through this statement, Runi conveys her happiness about living in her new home while confirming Nia's positive evaluation.

The utterance reflects Runi's genuine feelings and personal experience, making it an example of a representative speech act. In addition, it illustrates gratitude, satisfaction, and appreciation for her living environment.

This representative speech act demonstrates that expressions of personal experience may function as models of positive thinking and gratitude. Such utterances enable young readers to understand emotional values through authentic experiences portrayed by the characters.

3. Character Education Values Identified

In addition to identifying speech act types, this study found several character education values embedded in *Perkedel Sukun*. These values are conveyed through the characters' dialogues, actions, and the overall storyline, making them easily understood by young readers.

a. Cooperation

The value of cooperation is reflected when Runi and her friends help Runi's mother prepare breadfruit fritters together. Each character contributes according to their role, demonstrating the importance of working collaboratively to accomplish a shared goal.

b. Togetherness

The value of togetherness is evident throughout the story. The characters spend time cooking, talking, and enjoying food together, creating a warm atmosphere of friendship and family-like relationships.

c. Sharing

The value of sharing is illustrated through Runi's prohibition against Rudi finishing all the breadfruit by himself. This teaches children to respect the rights of others and to avoid selfish behavior.

d. Caring

The value of caring appears when the characters remind one another to do the right thing. For example, Kayla reminds Runi to wash her hands before eating, demonstrating concern for her friend's health and well-being.

e. Respect for Others

Nia's compliment about Runi's new house reflects an attitude of appreciation and respect for others. Such positive expressions encourage children to value and appreciate the achievements and possessions of their friends.

f. Clean and Healthy Living

The story also emphasizes the importance of maintaining cleanliness through the habit of washing hands before eating. This value promotes healthy behavior and encourages children to develop good hygiene habits from an early age.

The six character education values identified are not presented separately but are interconnected through the characters' interactions and speech acts. This demonstrates that children's literature can integrate linguistic functions with educational objectives, allowing moral values to emerge naturally through dialogues and narrative events rather than through direct instruction.

Overall, the findings indicate that speech acts in *Perkedel Sukun* function not only as a means of communication among the characters but also as an effective medium for conveying character education values. Directive speech acts are predominantly used to guide the behavior of other characters through prohibitions and advice, whereas representative speech acts serve to express opinions, evaluations, personal experiences, and feelings. Furthermore, the study identified six major character education values: cooperation, togetherness, sharing, caring, respect for others, and clean and healthy living. These findings demonstrate that *Perkedel Sukun* possesses strong educational value and has considerable potential to be used as instructional material for character education in elementary school children.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the most dominant speech acts in the children's short story *Perkedel Sukun* are directive and representative speech acts. The predominance of these two categories suggests that the dialogues among the characters function not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for conveying moral values to readers. Directive speech acts are employed to guide the behavior of other characters through prohibitions, advice, and suggestions, whereas representative speech acts are used to express opinions, evaluations, and personal experiences. These findings are consistent with Kasmawati (2022), who argues that a pragmatic approach is effective in revealing the communicative functions of language in literary works through speech act analysis. Likewise, Nasution (2023) emphasizes that pragmatic analysis in literature extends beyond interpreting utterances by examining the communicative intentions of speakers within their contextual settings.

Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on identifying speech act categories in literary texts, this study demonstrates that speech acts also function as pedagogical strategies for embedding character education values in children's literature. Thus, the findings extend pragmatic analysis beyond linguistic classification by emphasizing the educational role of communicative acts in shaping children's moral understanding.

The predominance of directive speech acts further demonstrates the strong educational function of children's literature. Most directive utterances in the story take the form of prohibitions and advice aimed at encouraging characters to behave in accordance with positive moral values. For example, the utterance "Rudi, don't finish all the breadfruit!" teaches the importance of sharing, while "Runi, wash your hands first" promotes the habit of maintaining personal hygiene before eating. These examples illustrate that language in children's literature serves not only as a storytelling device but also as a medium for character formation. This finding supports Syafutri

and Hidayati (2016), who argue that the pragmatic function is a fundamental characteristic of children's literature because it delivers educational messages indirectly through the narrative. Similarly, Pande and Artana (2020) explain that directive speech acts are frequently used to influence the behavior of interlocutors, making them highly effective for transmitting moral and social values.

The dominance of directive speech acts can be explained by the primary function of children's literature as an educational medium. Since children are still developing social norms and behavioral awareness, directive utterances naturally become the dominant communicative strategy for introducing appropriate behavior through advice, reminders, and prohibitions. Consequently, language is employed not only to advance the storyline but also to facilitate children's moral development through contextual interactions among the characters.

The representative speech acts identified in this study function primarily to express evaluations, opinions, and personal experiences. Nia's compliment on Runi's new house and Runi's response expressing her happiness about living there illustrate how characters communicate their beliefs and personal experiences through language. These utterances not only provide information to readers but also convey values such as gratitude, appreciation for others, and the ability to express positive emotions. The findings reinforce the argument of Kartika Sari and Aliful Lutfiana (2021), who state that representative speech acts are used to communicate facts, opinions, and beliefs held by the speaker. Likewise, Arifiany and Trahutam (2016) found that representative speech acts in literary works contribute to building interpersonal relationships through expressions of appreciation, opinions, and acknowledgment of particular situations.

These findings further indicate that representative speech acts complement directive utterances by providing emotional and experiential contexts that make moral messages more meaningful. Rather than presenting values as abstract concepts, the story enables children to understand positive attitudes through the characters' personal experiences, evaluations, and expressions of gratitude.

In addition to identifying speech act categories, this study found that *Perkedel Sukun* contains a variety of character education values, including cooperation, togetherness, caring, sharing, and clean and healthy living habits. These values are conveyed implicitly through the characters' dialogues and actions, enabling young readers to understand moral lessons naturally without feeling explicitly instructed. The collaborative activity of preparing breadfruit fritters together illustrates the importance of teamwork, mutual assistance, and shared responsibility in accomplishing common goals. These findings support Haikal Zulfa and Hodijah (2025), who argue that children's literature is an effective medium for character education because moral values are embedded in the experiences of the story's characters. Similarly, Anggraini et al. (2019) emphasize that children's literature functions not only as entertainment but also as an educational resource that contributes to children's social, emotional, and moral development.

This finding suggests that character education in children's literature is constructed through the interaction between speech acts and narrative events. The educational values are not delivered explicitly through direct moral instruction but emerge naturally from the communicative exchanges among the characters. Such an approach makes moral learning more engaging and developmentally appropriate for young readers.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that John Searle's speech act theory provides an effective analytical framework for uncovering both the communicative functions of language and the character education values embedded in *Perkedel Sukun*. Unlike previous pragmatic studies that mainly concentrated on identifying speech act categories, this study integrates pragmatic analysis with character education by explaining how speech acts contribute to the construction of moral values in children's literature. The findings therefore extend the application of speech act theory to children's literary studies while providing practical implications for elementary school literature instruction. Teachers may utilize children's short stories as authentic learning materials to simultaneously develop students' pragmatic competence, language awareness, and character education. Furthermore, this study opens opportunities for future research to investigate speech acts and educational values in broader collections of children's literature using various pragmatic perspectives, thereby enriching interdisciplinary research between pragmatics, literary studies, and character education.

CONCLUSION

Main Findings: This study identified two dominant types of speech acts in Sarah Nafisah's children's short story *Perkedel Sukun*, namely directive and representative speech acts, which effectively convey character education values such as sharing, cooperation, caring, togetherness, respect, and healthy living habits. **Research Contribution:** The study contributes to pragmatic literary research by demonstrating the application of John Searle's speech act theory to children's literature and highlighting the educational function of speech acts in character formation. **Theoretical and Practical Implications:** The findings confirm that pragmatic analysis is an effective approach for revealing communicative functions and moral values in literary texts, while *Perkedel Sukun* can serve as an alternative teaching resource for integrating language learning and character education in elementary schools. **Research Limitations:** This study was limited to a single children's short story and focused only on directive and representative speech acts. **Future Research Directions:** Future studies are encouraged to analyze a wider range of children's literary works, examine all categories of Searle's speech acts, and explore their application in different educational contexts to strengthen character education through literature.

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