



Interrogatives as a pedagogical discourse strategy: Reinterpreting Propp's narrative structure in children's storybooks and its implications for critical literacy development

Ixsir Eliya ^{a,1,*}, Rahmad Nuthihar ^{b,2}, Vismaia S. Damaianti ^{c,3}, Susi Seles ^{a,4}, S. Nailul Muna Aljamaliah ^{c,5}, Zelvía Liska Afriani ^{d,6}

^a UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, Bengkulu, Indonesia

^b Akademi Komunitas Negeri Aceh Barat, Aceh, Indonesia

^c Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

^d University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

¹ ixsir@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id; ² rahmad.nuthihar@aknacehbarat.ac.id; ³ vismaia@upi.edu;

⁴ susi.seles@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id; ⁵ syifanailul@upi.edu; ⁶ Za344@students.waikato.ac.nz

* Correspondent author

Received: February 10, 2026

Revised: April 10, 2026

Accepted: April 18, 2026

KEYWORDS

Children's
Storybook
Interrogative
Sentence
Narrative Structure
Propp's Functions,
Riddle-Based
Narrative

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reinterpret Propp's narrative structure in children's storybooks by positioning interrogative sentences as pedagogical discourse strategies and examining their implications for the development of children's critical literacy. This study adopts a qualitative approach within a pedagogical discourse framework, drawing on Vladimir Propp's model to identify narrative functions in the text. The results showed that *Lomba Tebak Cepat* and *Bermain Teka-teki* followed similar narrative patterns, repeating Propp's functions ξ , M, and Pr eleven times. On the other hand, *Buah Apa, ya?* followed a different sequence— $\xi - M - Pr - G - Q - N - I$ —with the M - Pr - G pattern appearing three times. The interrogative sentences in all three books were either total or partial and mainly informative, using the word "apa" and the Indonesian particle "-kah." Repeating these questions helped shape new narrative patterns. Overall, Propp's structure can be simplified as E - P - p1, p2, p3... - X - Y - R - E, showing how a mix of interrogatives and narrative functions makes these storybooks more engaging and interactive for children. The findings show that interrogative sentences function as pedagogical strategies that actively engage children in understanding the story. Through interrogative sentences, children are encouraged to think critically and use their reasoning to make sense of the text, thereby supporting their literacy development, especially in critical and reflective thinking.

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Introduction

Research on children's storybooks extends beyond storytelling to include meaning-making processes and reader engagement within literacy practices. In language learning contexts, children's storybooks function as pedagogical resources that not only present narrative sequences for entertainment but also shape how children think, respond, and construct understanding of the world (Matos, 2025; Afash, 2024). Children's storybooks are essential reading materials for young readers, particularly in supporting their cognitive development (Danaei et al., 2020; Moedt & Holmes, 2020). In this regard, providing additional information about events, characters, and settings in stories plays an important role in enhancing children's

knowledge, helping them understand the world around them, and fostering critical thinking skills (Hayden & Prince, 2020). Therefore, to produce high-quality children's storybooks, research-based development is necessary so that these books meet children's needs and carry didactic value in their everyday lives (Parlindungan et al., 2023; Nurgiyantoro, 2018; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013).

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, has taken measures to ensure that children in Indonesia have access to high-quality children's storybooks. One such initiative is the organization of the Gerakan Literasi Nasional (National Literacy Movement, GLN) competitions, conducted by the Language Development and Fostering Agency as well as by supporting technical units of regional language offices across all provinces in Indonesia (Kemendikbud, 2017; Kemendikbud, 2016; Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2020; Mizkat et al., 2024). Books produced through the GLN are first evaluated for feasibility by the Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan (Puskurbuk). Only books that pass this evaluation are subsequently distributed nationwide. Efforts to improve book readability across different reader levels have been further supported by the publication of the book leveling guidelines (BSKAP, 2022; Rosialasa et al., 2024). Whereas children's books were previously categorized based on formal education levels, the introduction of these guidelines has led to a classification system ranging from early readers (Level A) to proficient readers (Level E) in Indonesia (Amanda et al., 2023).

The creative process of writing children's storybooks varies widely (Durriyah et al., 2023; Parlindungan et al., 2024). One form of this diversity involves the use of puzzle-based media that are then narrated into storybooks (Sun et al., 2022). The narrative structures employed in many children's stories largely refer to Propp's narrative framework (Herma & Astuti, 2022). In narratology, narrative structure has often been understood through Propp's model, which emphasizes linear and systematic narrative functions. While this approach offers a useful foundation for identifying narrative patterns, it tends to conceptualize narratives as relatively fixed and closed structures. However, evidence suggests that some writers may have limited understanding or inconsistent application of Propp's narrative structure. According to Propp, stories are typically constructed according to a fixed sequence of functions. In narrative structure, the emphasis is typically placed not on the characters themselves, but on the actions they perform, which are described as functions. Damayanti et al. (2022) concluded that the stories examined in their study contained a total of 31 narrative functions.

One of the genres in children's literature that is widely used and favored is riddles, which are categorized as a form of language play and serve both educational and recreational functions in children's development (Kılıçarslan, 2015; Ely & McCabe, 1994; Katermina & Solovyeva, 2021; Kuncirkova & Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2021). Riddles can be a means of stimulating readers' curiosity (Francalanci, 2024). The use of riddles simultaneously helps children develop good rhetorical skills (Zipke, 2008). This is because riddle books contain clues or guiding prompts that readers must solve. Riddles are constructed using interrogative sentences or questions. The type of question sentence used is generally an informative question sentence. The use of informative questions aims to request information on one of the elements forming a proposition (Pandean, 2018).

Based on the type of response expected by the questioner, interrogative sentences can be classified into four types: partial questions, total questions, disguised questions, and rhetorical questions (Lindawati, 2017; Nuthihar et al., 2019; Pandean, 2018). These four types differ mainly in the kind of answer intended by the questioner as well as in the question words used (Nurzafira et al., 2020).

The choice of diction in question forms found in children's storybooks, such as "*Boleh kupinjam sepedamu?*" or "*Boleh kucoba sepedamu?*", can help foster politeness in children's character development (Fauziyyah et al., 2020). The types of sentences used in storybooks for lower-grade students differ from those intended for higher-grade students. In storybooks for higher-grade readers, sentence structures are further developed through transformations such as the addition of permutations, substitutions, and interrogative forms. Accordingly, Pratiwi et al. (2018) concluded that the use of thematic textbooks in the form of children's stories incorporating crossword puzzle activities is effective in attracting students' interest in the learning process.

Narrative structure in children's storybooks plays a crucial role in determining their overall quality and attractiveness to young readers (Kharismatuzzahra & Daniar, 2024; Sanjaya et al., 2022). The use of interrogative sentences can serve as a stimulus that encourages children to read through the entire book (Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021). For this reason, interrogative constructions should be designed using simple patterns so that the substance of the questions can be understood and answered by readers, particularly young children.

However, such a structural approach may not fully account for how linguistic features, such as interrogative sentences, function in constructing interaction between text and reader. In children's storybooks, interrogative sentences do not only serve as part of the narrative structure, but may also

function as strategies that potentially stimulate readers' cognitive and interpretive engagement. Accordingly, there appears to be a gap in narrative studies that has not yet sufficiently examined the role of interrogative sentences as part of discourse dynamics in texts. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts a pedagogical discourse perspective to view narrative not only as structural but also as interactive and contextually situated. This approach allows for an analysis of how language, particularly interrogative sentences, may function as discourse strategies that shape the relationship between text and reader.

Accordingly, this study aims to reinterpret Propp's narrative model by positioning interrogative sentences as pedagogical discourse strategies in children's storybooks, and to examine their role in fostering reader engagement and supporting children's literacy development. In doing so, the study seeks not only to extend narrative analysis but also to offer a perspective on children's texts as spaces for active and dialogic literacy development.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative design within a pedagogical discourse framework to examine narrative structure in children's storybooks. Vladimir Propp's model of narrative structure was used to identify narrative functions in the text (Liu et al., 2024; MirAli & Abdolmaleki, 2012). However, rather than being applied descriptively, the model was reinterpreted from a discourse perspective to examine how linguistic features, particularly interrogative sentences, are strategically used to shape narrative progression and reader engagement.

Data were collected by reviewing children's storybooks containing riddles available on a digital book platform (<https://budi.kemdikbud.go.id>). Through the search, two books are chosen: *Lomba Tebak Cepat* (Kuswardhani, 2021) and *Bermain Teka-teki* (Sabir, 2021). Then, an additional book published by the Indonesian Children's Literacy Foundation, *Buah Apa, ya?* (Yuliani & Sadida, 2017), was also included to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

The three books selected as data sources were analyzed using a triangulation technique that involved data presentation, data reduction, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). The analysis of narrative structure was guided by Propp's theory (Kiss et al., 2022). The analysis was conducted in three steps: (1) identifying narrative structure in the text based on Propp's Functional Model, (2) examining the occurrence and location of interrogative sentences within the structure, and (3) interpreting interrogative functions as pedagogical discourse strategies that establish a dialogic relationship between the text and the reader. This integrated approach, combining structural analysis and a discourse perspective, enables an interpretation that not only accounts for narrative structure but also reveals meaning-making processes and their implications for children's literacy. Furthermore, to obtain as accurate an understanding as possible of the contexts in which interrogative sentences were used, the three books were examined using the AntConc software (Anthony, 2012). The analysis using AntConc followed several steps, including (1) data entry, (2) keyword identification, (3) data export, and (4) data analysis.

Results and Discussion

1. Synopsis of *Lomba Tebak Cepat*

Lomba Tebak Cepat is a 26-page children's storybook authored by Dian Sukma Kuswardhani. (Kuswardhani, 2021). Designed specifically for early childhood readers, the storybook has successfully passed a readability assessment conducted by the Center for Curriculum and Book Development (Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan, Puskurbuk). It was ratified based on the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 001/P/2022, dated 19 January 2022, regarding the category of non-Textbooks.

The storybook *Lomba Tebak Cepat* tells the story of two main characters, Kiki and Lala, who visited an insect park during their holiday. At the park, a fast-paced riddle competition was held for children their age. All participants were required to answer seven questions. Kiki and Lala answered all the questions quickly and submitted their responses before the other participants. When the correct answers were announced, all of their responses were correct, and they received prizes.

a. The Context of the Book *Lomba Tebak Cepat*

The AntConc analysis shows that the interrogative sentence "Who am I?" is the most dominant form in the book. This question appears 11 times and serves as a key element in constructing the narrative context presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Context of the Book *Lomba Tebak Cepat*

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
Suka membuat bentol dan gatal. Aku bersembunyi di dekat bantal.	Apakah aku? (10)	Aku suka berbaris. Aku suka makanan manis. Kalau
Si jago terbang jadi julukanku. Aku melihat dengan mata besarku.	Apakah aku?	Selesai. Kiki dan Lala paling cepat! Mereka berharap
suka melompat. Kaki belakangku sangat kuat. Warnaku hijau atau cokelat.	Apakah aku? (6)	Aku suka makan kayu. Juga buku-bukumu. Namun
yang lahap. Saat dewasa, aku punya sayap. Bunga tempatku hinggap.	Apakah aku? (2)	Aku hanya terlihat saat malam. Perutku bersinar seperti
malam. Perutku bersinar seperti bohlam. Aku tinggal di dekat kolam.	Apakah aku? (3)	Kau dengar aku? Itu suara gesekan sayapku. Si
suka makan kayu. Juga buku-bukumu. Namun aku bukan kutu.	Apakah aku? (7)	Rumahku gelap, kotor, dan tersembunyi. Aku bau sekali.
dan tersembunyi. Aku bau sekali. Kalau bertemu denganku, kamu lari.	Apakah aku? (8)	Aku suka mengerubungi sampah. Aku kecil tapi tidak
sangat. Tetapi aku tidak jahat. Aku mengumpulkan madu yang lezat.	Apakah aku? (5)	Aku suka melompat. Kaki belakangku sangat kuat. Warnaku
berbaris. Aku suka makanan manis. Kalau kugigit, kamu bisa menangis.	Apakah aku? (11)	Helikopter mirip denganku. Si jago terbang jadi julukanku.
aku? Itu suara gesekan sayapku. Si jantan yang bersuara merdu.	Apakah aku? (4)	Aku punya sangat. Tetapi aku tidak jahat. Aku
mengerubungi sampah. Aku kecil tapi tidak lemah. Menangkapku tidaklah mudah.	Apakah aku? (9)	Katanya aku nakal. Suka membuat bentol dan gatal.

Table 1 presents the left and right contexts of the interrogative sentence “Apakah aku?” as extracted from the book using AntConc. The left context shows the clue sequences leading up to the question (hit), while the right context contains subsequent clues or narrative progression. The table highlights that the right context is not directly connected to the left context because the answers to the riddles are revealed only at the end of the story.

2. Synopsis of *Bermain Teka-Teki*

Bermain Teka-teki is a children’s storybook written by Sabir, consisting of 24 pages (Sabir, 2021). It is intended for early childhood readers and has passed the readability assessment conducted by the Center for Curriculum and Book Development (*Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan, Puskurbuk*), in line with the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 001/P/2022 dated January 19, 2022, on non-textbooks.

The story is about a child who went on a holiday with his father. During the trip, the father gave the child a series of riddles to solve. There were eleven riddles in total, and the child managed to answer all of them correctly. As a reward, the father gave the child a boiled sweet potato.

a. Context of *Bermain Teka-teki*

Bermain Teka-teki is structured around the interrogative sentence “Apa, ya?”, which is connected to the phrase “Aku tahu” in the central position (hit). The right context contains the answers to each riddle, and all eleven answers are highlighted in green. In this book, the structures show a clear connection between the left context, the hit, and the right context. The patterns identified through analysis with the AntConc tool are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Context of the Book *Bermain Teka-teki*

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
tahu. Laba-laba. Kaki bertanduk. Kepala bermahkota merah. Apa, ya?	Aku tahu.	Ayam jago. Malam bolak-balik. Siang tidur terbalik.
Cumi-cumi. Bersisik bukanlah ikan. Bermahkota bukanlah raja. Apa, ya?	Aku tahu.	Buah nanas. Dipotong tetap panjang. Dikunyah tetap panjang.
lele. Kakinya banyak. Badannya satu. Darahnya hitam. Apa, ya? Oh,	aku tahu.	Cumi-cumi. Bersisik bukanlah ikan. Bermahkota bukanlah raja.
Berkumis bukan manusia. Bertanduk seperti jarum. Apakah itu? Apa, ya?	Aku tahu.	Ikan lele. Kakinya banyak. Badannya satu. Darahnya hitam.
Dipotong tetap panjang. Dikunyah tetap panjang. Apakah itu? Apa, ya?	Aku tahu.	Kacang panjang. Kakinya satu. Tangannya banyak. Jantungnya di
bolak-balik. Siang tidur terbalik. Apakah itu? Apa, ya? Oh,	aku tahu.	Kelelawar. Berkumis bukan manusia. Bertanduk seperti jarum. Apakah

bukan nelayan. Berbenang bukan layang-layang. Apakah itu? Apa, ya?	Aku tahu.	Laba-laba. Kaki bertanduk. Kepala bermahkota merah. Apa,
panjang. Kakinya satu. Tangannya banyak. Jantungnya di luar. Apa, ya?	Aku tahu.	Tanaman pisang. Dari belakang bisa masak. Dari depan
masak. Dari depan bisa dimakan. Apakah itu? Apa, ya? Oh,	aku tahu.	Ubi. Wah, semua jawabanmu benar. Aku dapat hadiah

The structures presented in Table 2 show that each riddle on the left is immediately followed by its correct answer in the middle. The left context occasionally includes interjections marked by the word "oh," forming the phrase "Oh, aku tahu" when combined with the middle answer (hit). Alternatively, when the interjection is not used, the question "Apa, ya?" is employed. Both styles lead to the correct answer provided on the right side, along with additional explanations.

3. Synopsis of *Buah Apa, Ya?*

Buah Apa, Ya? is a children's book written by Kusumadewi Yuliani and Rizqia Sadida, and published by the Yayasan Literasi Anak Indonesia (Yuliani & Sadida, 2017). The book is designed to introduce children to various types of fruits in an interactive and enjoyable way. It invites young readers to guess the type of fruit based on unique characteristics presented on each page. Each fruit is described with engaging details that help children recognize its shape, color, taste, and nutritional benefits. Through short stories and engaging illustrations, the book functions both as a source of knowledge and a tool for fostering children's critical thinking and imagination.

a. Context of the Book

The phrases "menggantung tinggi" and "di atas dahan, gelap" dominate the text of *Buah Apa, Ya?* These phrases each appear three times in the book, forming recurring constructions that structure the interactive guessing activity. The pattern of these repeated phrases is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Context of the Book *Buah Apa, Ya?*

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
seram. Buah apakah itu? Banyak pohon buah di kebun Kakek.	Menggantung tinggi	di atas dahan, gelap di luar tetapi juga
Apakah itu buah misteri Kakek? Gendong! Gendong! Gendong! Sedikit Lagi!	Menggantung tinggi	di atas dahan. Gelap di luar, terang di
Mereka tidak sabar untuk menyelesaikan teka-teki Kakek kali ini.	Menggantung tinggi	di atas dahan. Gelap di luar, terang di

Table 3 shows how the riddle sequences are structured in the book. The left context gives the clues, the hit is the repeated keyword "menggantung tinggi," and the right context provides the answers or extra details. The keyword and right context appear three times across different clues. While the left and right contexts are related, the left context doesn't directly continue from the hit or right context. This pattern suggests that the author carefully arranges the riddles to help readers work toward the answers while keeping them engaged. The repeated use of the phrases "menggantung tinggi" and "di atas dahan, gelap" draws the attention of the story's characters, encouraging both them and the readers to anticipate the answers. The solutions to the riddles are revealed only at the end of the story, after the characters have made three unsuccessful attempts to guess correctly.

The author's perspective as a narrator plays a crucial role in creating an engaging conclusion. The third-person point of view is clearly maintained, predominantly using the pronoun "Grandfather" (*Kakek*). The illustrator's role is also significant, as the visuals help clarify the riddles and support reader engagement. Different from the previous two books, all child characters in this story actively attempt to solve the riddles and ultimately succeed in discovering the correct answers.

4. Reinterpretation of Propp's Narrative Structure

Based on the analysis of the three books using Propp's narrative function theory, it was found that *Bermain Teka-teki* and *Lomba Tebak Cepat* share the same pattern and structure. Both books employ the sequence $\xi - M - Pr$, repeated eleven times. This repetition corresponds to the presence of eleven separate riddles within each book. In contrast, *Buah Apa, Ya?* exhibits the sequence $\xi - M - Pr - G - M - Pr - G - M - Pr - G - Q - N - I$. In this book, only the $M - Pr - G$ sequence is repeated three times, and the narrative revolves around a single riddle to be solved. The differences in the narrative diagrams of the three books are illustrated in Figure 1.

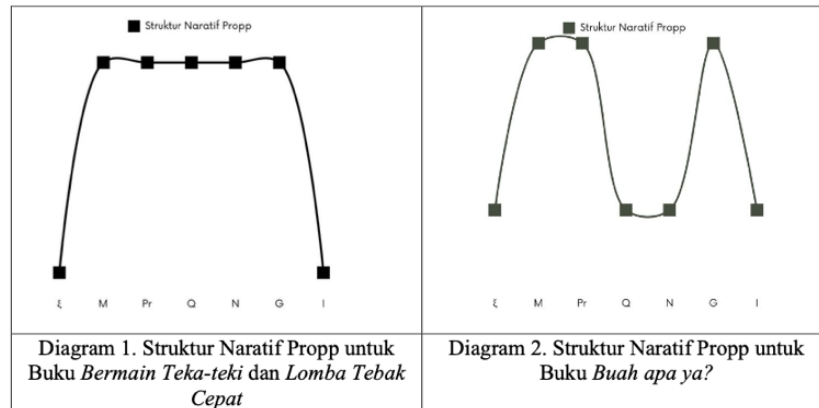


Fig. 1. The Differences in the Narrative Diagrams of the Three Books

Explanation:

- ξ : Information delivery
- M : Difficult task
- Pr : Investigation
- Q : Recognition
- N : Solution
- G : Change of location
- I : Victory

As shown in Figure 1, the narrative patterns of *Bermain Teka-teki* and *Lomba Tebak Cepat* appear relatively flat, while the narrative structure of *Buah Apa, Ya?* shows a fluctuating curve. The differences in Propp's narrative structures across the three books are influenced by the number of riddles and interrogative sentences used. The greater the number of riddles to be solved in a book, the more the narrative graph shifts to accommodate subsequent structures.

In *Bermain Teka-teki*, there are eleven questions, each of which is immediately solved correctly by the story's main character. In *Lomba Tebak Cepat*, eleven riddles are first presented as clues before being solved. In contrast, *Buah Apa, Ya?* contains only a single set of clues that the characters must solve throughout the story. This variation in riddle distribution directly affects the shape and progression of the narrative according to Propp's functions.

The findings suggest that narrative functions in Propp's model may undergo shifts in role. Some functions appear to be less dominant or may be reduced, as the storyline is not solely driven by a sequence of events, but rather by recurring interrogative patterns. Interrogative sentences do not merely function as additional elements; instead, they may serve as a central organizing device of the narrative. In other words, the development of the story does not necessarily depend on what happens, but on how questions are posed and potentially taken up by the reader.

Based on these findings, we propose that the narrative structure in children's storybooks should be reinterpreted not only as a functional system, but also as a space of interaction. Within this interactive space, interrogative sentences function as a discourse mechanism that links the text with the reader while also shaping the rhythm of meaning-making. Narrative therefore no longer serves merely to convey a story, but also to support and sustain readers' cognitive engagement and responses throughout the reading process. This reinterpretation not only extends Propp's framework, but also shifts the focus of narrative inquiry from functional roles toward interaction as the central site of meaning construction.

5. Interrogatives as a Pedagogical Discourse Strategy

Across the three books, the interrogative sentences follow a similar pattern. The questions are mostly formed using the word "Apa?", which is commonly used to introduce riddles. This recurring pattern can be observed in excerpts 1-5:

- (1) *Si jago terbang jadi julukanku. Aku melihat dengan mata besarku. **Apakah** aku?*
- (2) *Suka melompat. Kaki belakangku sangat kuat. Warnaku hijau atau coklat. **Apakah** aku?*
- (3) *Badannya satu. Darahnya hitam. **Apa, ya?***
- (4) *Bertanduk seperti jarum. **Apakah** itu?*

- (5) *Menggantung tinggi di atas dahan. Gelap di luar, terang di dalam. Siapa saja berani makan mata terpejam, wajah pun seram. Buah apakah itu?*

Despite the same use of the question word “*Apa?*”, the interrogative sentences in excerpts 1–5 demonstrate differences in their types and functions. Sentences (1), (2), and (5) are classified as total interrogatives, as they request complete information about the object being described. These questions provide clues and require readers to provide the correct answer according to the hints embedded in the sentence. Sentence (5) also includes the particle *-kah*, which reinforces its classification as a total interrogative.

Sentence (3) is categorized as an indirect or disguised interrogative due to the use of the phrase “*Apa, ya?*”. This phrasing forms an indirect question with a casual tone, inviting the reader to infer the answer from the clues rather than explicitly requesting a response.

Partial interrogatives are also present in the data. Sentence (4) represents a partial interrogative, as it asks for specific information about one feature of the object (e.g., the small horn) rather than its entire characteristics. The use of the particle *-kah* in partial interrogatives further indicates that the question seeks only partial information. Thus, the interrogative sentences in these children’s storybooks create interactive and layered engagement, guiding readers to solve riddles either directly or through inference.

Within a pedagogical discourse framework, the interrogative pattern indicates that language in children’s narratives serves as a learning strategy. Interrogative sentences not only drive the progression of the narrative but also guide readers’ understanding of the text. Reading, therefore, is an activity involving reasoning and reflection rather than passive reception of information. In this sense, the use of questions in the text contributes to the formation of active literacy practices, where children are encouraged to think, respond, and construct meaning independently.

These findings indicate that interrogative sentences in children’s storybooks serve not only as linguistic features but also as pedagogical discourse strategies. The dominance of questioning patterns suggests that narratives are constructed not only through events but also through interaction that engages the reader. In this context, reading becomes a dialogic process that contributes to children’s literacy development, particularly critical and reflective thinking.

Children’s storybooks featuring riddles can stimulate readers’ imagination by encouraging them to solve questions based on the provided clues. The effectiveness of these riddles is enhanced when illustrations are sufficiently detailed, helping readers visualize and infer the correct answers. Propp’s narrative function theory, however, is not fully sufficient to determine the structure used in these books. Of the 31 functions proposed by Propp, only seven were applied by the authors, while the remaining 24 functions were not utilized in constructing the narratives.

The analysis of the three books shows that the narrative patterns employed to present and construct riddles are relatively simple. Structurally, the books consist of questions, correct and incorrect answers, investigation, and resolution. The main differences among the books lie in the number of questions and the distribution of correct and incorrect answers provided by the stories’ main characters. Riddles are central themes in children’s literature, as they spark curiosity and motivate readers to find correct answers. The authors’ narrative strength lies in the careful design of clues that guide readers toward the answers. Interrogative sentences in the book titles are a key feature of riddle-based children’s storybooks.

Propp’s narrative structure can be simplified, particularly for children’s literature. Based on these findings, the narrative pattern of riddle-based children’s books is shown in Figure 2.

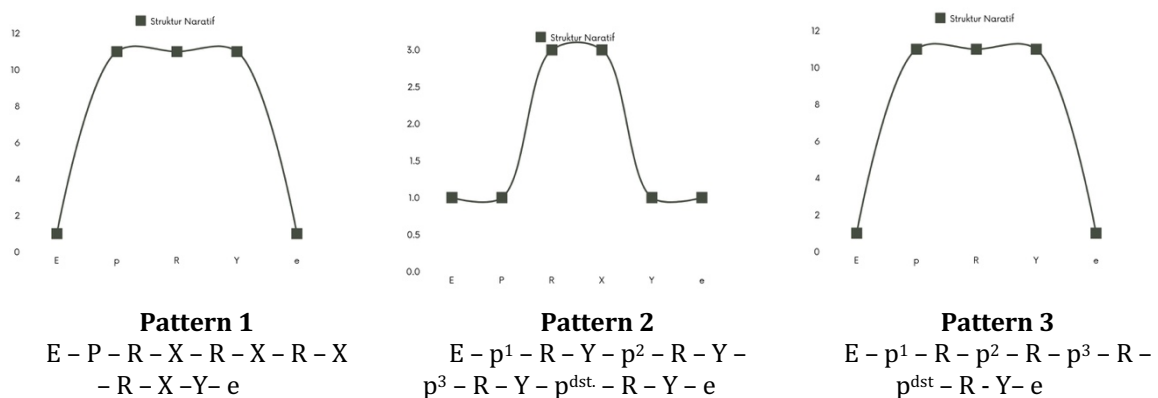


Fig. 2. The Narrative Pattern for Riddle-Based Children’s Books

Explanation:

E	: Introduction/opening/general information
P	: Main question
p₁, p₂, p₃, etc.	: Subsequent questions
X	: Incorrect answer
Y	: Correct answer
R	: Investigation
E	: Resolution

As illustrated in Figure 2, the analysis indicates that the second and third narrative patterns lead to correct answers for all eleven riddle questions. In contrast, in the first pattern, the story's characters tried to solve the riddle clues but gave wrong answers three times. In subsequent attempts, they eventually arrived at the correct solutions. Among the three books, only the first book includes a conflict that is ultimately resolved.

A good story needs conflict and a clear resolution, and this is true for children's storybooks as well. A book with engaging conflicts is more likely to capture children's interest and encourage them to read through to the end. In the case of *Bermain Teka-teki*, no physical or emotional conflicts are present. The author simply presents the riddles, and the answers are immediately revealed on the same page, so readers do not need to follow the entire story to reach the solution.

By contrast, *Buah Apa, Ya?* maintains the reader's curiosity until the end, as the answers to the riddles are provided only at the conclusion of the book. Similarly, the inclusion of incorrect answers by the characters stimulates children's imagination and encourages them to think critically in order to find the correct solutions.

The use of informative interrogative sentences is a defining feature of children's storybooks. Questions are constructed with simple interrogative forms and avoid complex or compound sentences. Each question is typically followed by an exclamatory sentence that provides the answer to the riddle based on the clues presented. The impact of such storybooks for early childhood extends beyond entertainment; they also serve as a medium to stimulate curiosity, critical thinking, and rhetorical skills.

From the perspective of book leveling for A1 and A2 reading levels, parental guidance is recommended, as children at this stage are encountering books for the first time (BSKAP, 2022; Uchrowi & Trimansyah, 2021). Book content is limited in terms of word and sentence count, which challenges authors to narrate engaging stories within strict guidelines. Children's storybooks are subject to regulations set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to ensure that young readers have access to high-quality reading materials.

The use of interrogative strategies also has positive implications for children's literacy development (Gardner-Neblett et al., 2012; Joseph et al., 2016). First, it supports critical and inferential thinking, as children are required to evaluate clues and generate hypotheses rather than receiving direct answers (Irayana & Assyauqi, 2025). Second, it develops the ability to interpret implied meaning, as children learn to read between the lines and understand non-explicit messages. Third, it fosters metacognitive reading strategies through internal dialogue, encouraging children to become aware of their own thinking processes. Finally, it enhances active engagement, as interactive reading environments are shown to promote children's participation and reading motivation (Irayana & Assyauqi, 2025).

A similar pattern is observed in puzzle books, where reading becomes an engaging problem-solving activity. Children are not passive recipients of stories but actively engage in guessing and learning. Therefore, interrogative strategies contribute to dynamic literacy practices closely related to emergent literacy, where children interact with texts in symbolic and creative ways (Septiani & Syaodih, 2021; Rohde, 2015). Research on child cognition indicates that symbolic play, replacing objects with symbols, is crucial for the development of abstract thinking and problem-solving skills (Lestari, 2024; Liliard & Kavanaugh, 2014; Delfin & Wang, 2023). In puzzle books, the use of symbols or visual cues (e.g., a picture of ball in sports-related puzzles) functions similarly to symbolic play, helping children understand broader concepts. This highlights that children's literacy extends beyond word recognition to include the ability to interpret complex information through active engagement with texts (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Conclusion

Riddles can be effectively incorporated into children's storybooks as they have the potential to enhance cognitive, social, and emotional development. The types of riddles found in the three books analyzed cover topics such as fruits, animals, vegetables, and plants. There is no strict limit on the number of riddles in a children's book; some books contain as many as eleven riddles, while others include only one. However,

authors are constrained by the total number of pages according to the book's reading level. The more riddles included, the longer the book tends to be. Riddles are culturally widespread across Indonesia, often reflecting local languages and contexts. Therefore, children's storybooks featuring riddles should consider incorporating region-specific riddles to make the content more relatable and engaging. The production of children's storybooks containing riddles should be expanded and prioritized within the National Literacy Movement (GLN) programs organized by the Language Development and Fostering Agency. Riddle-based books can serve as an effective alternative to increase reading interest, as they stimulate children's curiosity. Additionally, the presence of riddles in storybooks can promote productive skills in children, particularly in speaking and verbal reasoning, while maintaining engagement with the narrative.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : Ixsir Eliya designed the study and drafted the manuscript. Rahmad Nuthihar, S. Nailul Muna Aljamaliah, and Vismaia S. Damayanti conducted data collection and analysis. Susi Seles and Zelvya Liska Afriani contributed to data transcription and manuscript revision. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.
- Funding statement** : This research did not receive any funding.
- Conflict of interest** : All authors declare that they have no competing interests.
- Ethics Approval** : This study did not involve human participants and did not raise ethical concerns.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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