

## WRITING “JANTUR”: ART-BASED PLAYWRITING FROM DADAH FOLKLORE USING GREIMAS’S ACTANTIAL MODEL

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### ABSTRACT

This study develops an operational playwriting framework by integrating Greimas’s actantial model into an Art-Based Research (ABR) process to transform the Dadaha folklore into a contemporary drama script, “*Jantur*.” Data were drawn from five oral informants, local archival sources, contextual socio-ecological materials, and an auditable trail of iterative script drafts. The ABR process was organized into a cyclical workflow comprising (1) narrative segmentation and motif indexing, (2) actantial mapping of functional relations and value oppositions, (3) canonical narrative schema alignment (manipulation–competence–performance–sanction), (4) semiotic – to - dramaturgical translation into scene objectives, obstacle systems, and escalation patterns, and (5) reflective revision supported by documented decision logs and expert feedback. Rather than treating narrative semiotics as post hoc interpretation, actantial mapping is positioned as a generative compositional logic that regulates character functions, conflict configuration, and ethical causality during drafting. The resulting script demonstrates how creative writing can operate as analytical inquiry, preserving the folklore’s ecological and ethical meanings while recontextualizing them for contemporary performance and learning contexts. Methodologically, the study contributes a replicable semiotic-to-dramaturgical workflow that makes the analysis-to-composition pathway transparent and reusable for folklore-to-drama adaptation and scriptwriting pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Actantial mapping; Art-Based Research; Folklore-to-drama adaptation; Greimas’s actantial model; Playwriting

### INTRODUCTION

Folklore functions as cultural memory through which communities transmit indigenous knowledge, social norms, ecological awareness, and moral values across generations (Ab Jabar et al., 2024; Assmann, 2011). As an element of intangible cultural heritage, folklore historically circulates through oral storytelling, ritual practices, and communal narration, enabling collective identity to be continuously reconstructed through repetition, variation, and reinterpretation (Abdullaev, 2024; Smith, 2006). In the context of Tasikmalaya, the “Dadaha” narrative serves as a poignant example of this phenomenon. Historically, Dadaha represents more than a geographic locale; it is a symbolic landscape rooted in the ethos of water conservation and communal harmony. However, as the physical site of Dadaha has transformed from a vital ecological wetland into a modernized urban center, the underlying

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folklore risks being severed from its spatial and spiritual origins. The continuity of such oral narrative traditions is increasingly challenged by urbanization, educational standardization, and the dominance of globalized media narratives that reshape how stories are consumed, remembered, and valued (Malliga & Balamayuranathan, 2025; Smith, 2006). In many contexts, local folklore risks being reduced to static archival documentation—recorded (Krajewska, 2020), stored, and commemorated—rather than sustained as a living cultural discourse that continues to shape ethical imagination and collective responsibility.

One strategic approach to sustaining folklore as a living discourse is textual rearticulation into contemporary literary forms that can circulate across generations and institutions (Flinterud, 2023). This is particularly urgent for Dadaha folklore, where the tension between its historical identity and its contemporary urban face requires a medium that can bridge the past with the present. Among these forms, the drama script occupies a distinctive position: it is simultaneously a literary text and a performable blueprint that can be taught, rehearsed, staged, revised, and re-staged. In other words, scriptwriting offers a mode of cultural transmission that can travel between the archive and the repertoire—between documentation and embodied enactment—without being fully confined to either (Kämpfe, 2023; Taylor, 2003). For folklore-based theatre practices, the script can become a pedagogical object, a cultural artefact, and a platform for critical dialogue, making it suitable for arts education and contemporary cultural circulation (Escobar Varela, 2019). From a dramaturgical perspective, dramatic writing also provides structural affordances—dialogue, conflict, scene progression, and character motivation—that enable the moral and ecological tensions of folklore to be translated into forms legible to contemporary audiences (Bastet & Houlbrook, 2023; Hutcheon, 2006).

However, the adaptation of folklore into drama scripts often proceeds through intuitive interpretation rather than through transparent and replicable procedures that document how narrative structures are translated into dramaturgical construction. Adaptation scholarship has long emphasized recontextualization and cultural translation, positioning adaptation not as copying but as creative transformation shaped by shifting historical and social frames (Hutcheon, 2006; Nicholls, 2021). Yet, within practical script development, the key methodological question frequently remains under-specified: How are the relational structures and value tensions of a folklore narrative systematically mapped and operationalized during playwriting? Without methodological traceability, folklore-to-drama adaptation can slip into superficial appropriation—retaining plot fragments or iconic symbols while weakening the underlying moral economy and ecological ethics that give the folklore its cultural force.

The urgency of this methodological concern is magnified when folklore narratives, such as Dadaha, carry socio-ecological meanings that speak directly to contemporary environmental crises. Heritage scholarship argues that cultural sustainability is not achieved through static preservation but through adaptive continuity, where cultural forms persist precisely by being reworked and reactivated in new contexts (Soini & Dessein, 2016). In this sense, adaptation is not merely aesthetic; it is a cultural strategy for sustaining ethical knowledge under changing conditions. For Dadaha, the challenge is to prevent the "*Jantur*" narrative from becoming a mere nostalgic relic, but rather an active reflection on the loss and reclamation of ecological values. The challenge, then, is to develop an approach to playwriting that can preserve core narrative logic and value structures while enabling dramaturgical innovation and contemporary relevance.

In response to this challenge, practice-based and arts-based research traditions provide an important methodological foundation. Art-Based Research (ABR) treats artistic practice not

only as an output but as a mode of inquiry in which knowledge is generated through making, iterative reflection, and the production of artefacts that embody analytical thinking (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Within ABR, the drama script is not simply a “result”; it can function as an epistemic artefact that materializes interpretive claims and makes them available for scrutiny (Lombardo et al., 2017). Nevertheless, practice-based research is often criticized for insufficient methodological transparency when creative decisions are justified only through personal intuition. For this reason, ABR (Norris, 2013; Leavy, 2017) requires conceptual frameworks that can render the pathway from analysis to creative composition explicit and reviewable (Hunter, 2014; Candy & Edmonds, 2018). In playwriting research specifically, the need is not only to describe the creative process, but to show how analytical categories become concrete dramaturgical operations—how narrative interpretation becomes compositional logic.

Narrative semiotics offers such a framework, particularly through Greimas’ actantial model, which identifies relational functions that structure narrative action (e.g., Subject–Object, Sender–Receiver, Helper–Opponent). Traditionally, actantial analysis is used for interpretive reading of existing narratives, enabling systematic identification of agency, opposition, and value-oriented tensions (Hermans et al., 2024; Wolgemuth, 2014). Yet the model’s potential as a generative tool for creative writing remains underutilized: it is often applied after the text is completed, rather than embedded within the composition process to guide dramaturgical decisions (Gervás & León, 2016). As a result, the methodological link between semiotic structure and dramatic construction—between narrative functions and choices about character distribution, conflict escalation, scene objectives, and symbolic closure—has not been sufficiently specified in folklore-to-drama playwriting research.

To address this gap, the present study proposes an operational playwriting framework that integrates Greimas’ actantial mapping into iterative ABR cycles, enabling narrative semiotic structures to function as compositional engines in the transformation of Dadaha folklore into a contemporary drama script titled “*Jantur*.” Rather than approaching scriptwriting as an intuitive re-telling, the study treats playwriting as structured inquiry: actantial relations and the canonical narrative schema are mapped from the folklore narrative, then translated into dramaturgical mechanisms—ensemble character functions, dialogic confrontation, scene progression, and symbolic sanction—through cycles of drafting and reflexive revision. In this way, the script becomes both a cultural adaptation and a methodological demonstration of how analytical interpretation can be tested and refined through dramaturgical coherence.

Accordingly, this article has three objectives. First, it articulates how Greimas’ actantial model can be operationalized within ABR as a generative framework for playwriting, moving beyond post hoc interpretation toward compositional guidance. Second, it documents the narrative-to-dramaturgy translation process in the development of “*Jantur*” as a folklore-based drama text, showing how value structures and socio-ecological tensions embedded in Dadaha folklore are preserved and recontextualized within dramatic form. Third, it contributes a transparent and adaptable workflow for folklore-to-drama script development that can support performance research and drama education by offering a replicable method for teaching and evaluating dramaturgical reasoning in creative writing contexts. As the principal artistic output of the study, the full script “*Jantur*” may be presented as an appendix or supplementary material to enable scholarly verification and pedagogical reuse.

## METHODS

This study employed Art-Based Research (ABR) in which playwriting functioned as the primary mode of inquiry and the script served as the main research output. The design

addresses a common limitation in folklore-to-drama adaptation, where interpretation and composition are often separated and the analytical pathway informing dramaturgical decisions remains implicit. To ensure methodological traceability, Greimas’s actantial model and the canonical narrative schema were used not only as analytical tools but also as generative decision rules guiding drafting and revision. The overall conceptual pathway linking ABR procedures, semiotic analysis, and script development is summarized in Figure 1.

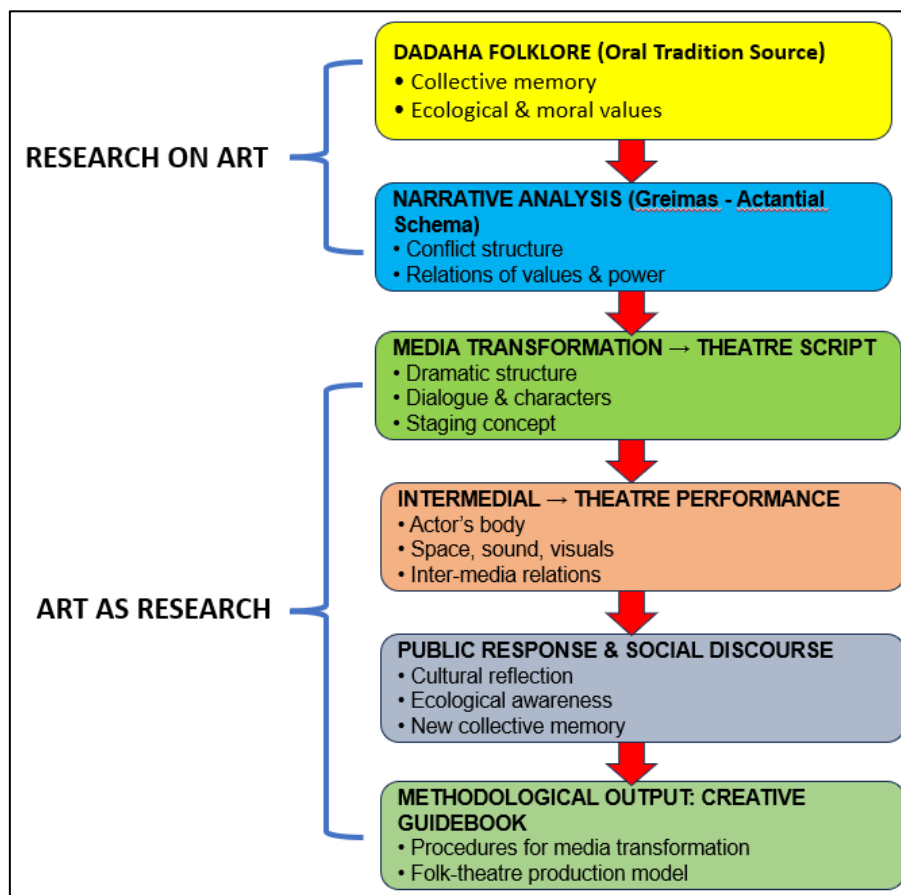


Figure 1. Conceptual pathway of Art-Based Research for transforming Dadaha folklore into the play script “*Jantur*” using Greimas’s actantial analysis

The study was situated in Dadaha, Tasikmalaya (Indonesia), focusing on locally circulating oral variants of the Dadaha folklore. Narrative data were collected from five purposively selected oral informants representing diverse positions in cultural transmission: a community elder (Abah Asmin), a cultural practitioner (Nunu Nazarudin Azhar), a cultural-policy stakeholder (Dr. Deddy Mulyana), a teacher (Euis), and a university student (Dede Iya). Selection criteria included familiarity with folklore, involvement in cultural/educational practice, and willingness to participate.

Data sources. Three complementary data sets were used: (1) oral narratives obtained through semi-structured interviews and narrative elicitation; (2) contextual documentation and archival sources used for triangulation and place-based clarification (e.g., local written notes, cultural records, and historical media); and (3) a process corpus (ABR artefacts) maintained as an audit trail, including dated script drafts, actantial maps, canonical narrative schema worksheets, episode/motif segmentation sheets, scene/beat charts, and reflexive memos documenting revision decisions. An example of the archival material used for contextual triangulation is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Newspaper “Sipatahoenan”

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Dadaha over a two-month period. The interview guide focused on narrative sequence, key events, character functions, conflict triggers, taboo/violation moments, moral causality, ecological meanings, and culturally salient symbols. Interviews were conducted primarily in Indonesian, with partial Sundanese responses from one informant. With consent, interviews were documented and transcribed; field notes were taken to capture contextual cues. Documentary materials were collected to triangulate narrative details and socio-ecological references relevant to the folklore setting.

Analysis proceeded through a linked workflow. First, each folklore variant was segmented into episodes and motifs to identify recurring events and symbols. Second, Greimas’s actantial roles (Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, Opponent) were mapped to clarify functional relations and value oppositions across variants. Third, episodes were aligned with the canonical narrative schema (manipulation–competence–performance–sanction) to clarify escalation and ethical consequence. Finally, these outputs were translated into dramaturgical operations—scene objectives, obstacle systems, confrontation patterns, escalation trajectories, and sanction as closure—forming a scene/beat chart and a character-system map used to guide drafting. The operational translation of actantial axes into dramaturgical functions used in this study is presented in Figure 3.

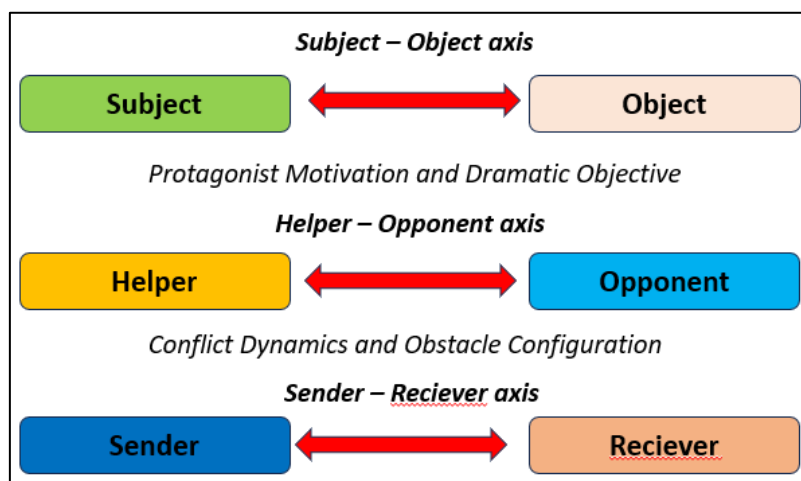


Figure 3. Greimas’s actantial axes operationalized as dramaturgical functions guiding playwriting decisions

ABR drafting and validation (condensed). Script drafting was iterative rather than strictly sequential. The script “*Jantur*” was developed over three months (including observation) and revised through two expert-informed rounds with theatre/scriptwriting specialists (artists, playwrights, and cultural practitioners). After each revision round, the draft was reviewed against mapping-based criteria—actantial coherence, preservation of value tensions, clarity of escalation, and adequacy of symbolic sanction. When inconsistencies were detected (e.g., shifts in actantial function without narrative justification, flattened escalation, or opaque moral causality), both the script and the analytic maps were recalibrated and documented. A condensed four-stage ABR playwriting workflow applied in this study is summarized in Figure 4.

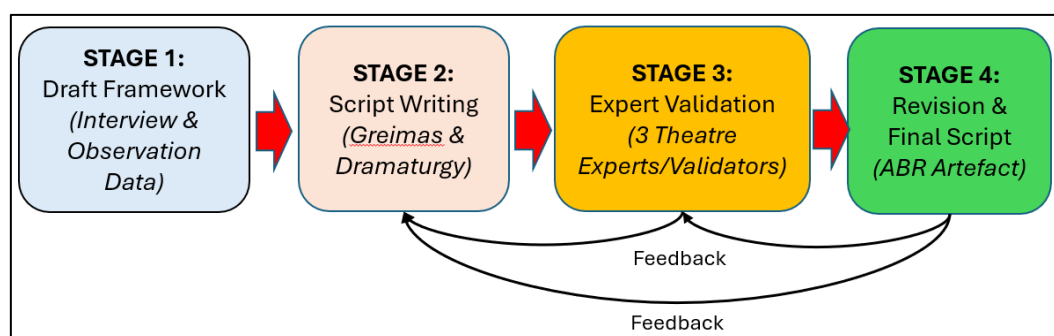


Figure 4. Four-stage ABR playwriting workflow for developing the script “*Jantur*” from Dadaha folklore using Greimas’ actantial model

Furthermore, credibility was strengthened through triangulation across oral narratives, contextual documentation, and the process corpus, supported by an audit trail of versioned drafts and decision logs. Reflexive memos documented interpretive positioning and the rationale for revision decisions to reduce reliance on purely intuitive claims. Ethical procedures included informed consent, respectful cultural representation, and confidentiality options upon request. The final script and core analytic artefacts may be provided as supplementary materials to support transparency and pedagogical reuse.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Actantial Configuration of Dadaha Folklore

Actantial analysis reveals collective community as Subject pursuing ecological continuity and communal dignity as Object. Sender is embodied by ancestral values and spiritual cosmology, while Receiver is future generations. Opponent emerges as structural modernization forces, not individual antagonists. Helper functions are represented by communal solidarity and ritual belief systems.

### Narrative Conflict Structure

Figure 5 shows the actantial analysis indicates that the central conflict in Dadaha folklore is structured around collective struggle over land, livelihood, and moral legitimacy rather than individual rivalry. The Subject is configured as the farming community, while the Object is ecological continuity and communal dignity. The Sender is embodied by ancestral values and

moral cosmology, the Receiver by future generations, and the Opponent by institutional forces of modernization. This configuration establishes a value-based conflict system in which ecological and social injustice are inseparable.



Figure 5. Four-stage ABR playwriting workflow for developing the script “*Jantur*” from Actantial configuration and narrative conflict structure of Dadaha folklore based on Greimas’ model

When translated into dramatic form, this actantial configuration is rearticulated as ideological confrontation enacted through dialogic exchange rather than symbolic narration. Instead of attributing ecological catastrophe to supernatural causality, the script frames injustice as the outcome of political decision-making. This transformation is exemplified in the confrontation scene where the farmer asserts, “*You call this development, we call it the destruction of life,*” to which the authority replies, “*Emotions will not change the decision,*” and the farmer counters, “*But this decision will not change our suffering.*”. This dialogic structure externalizes narrative opposition between Subject and Opponent as discursive struggle between incompatible value systems.

Narrative progression follows Greimas’ canonical schema, moving from initial equilibrium through disruption, confrontation, and symbolic sanction. The competence phase is characterized not by tactical empowerment but by ethical positioning, as resistance is articulated through moral appeals rather than strategic victory. Consequently, the performance phase culminates in ideological exposure rather than narrative triumph, emphasizing injustice rather than heroic resolution.

The sanction phase is realized through metaphorical ecological imagery rather than juridical closure, preserving the cosmological logic of folklore while translating it into contemporary dramatic symbolism. Disaster thus functions as ethical testimony rather than divine punishment, reaffirming the narrative’s moral economy while situating responsibility within socio-political processes. Through this structure, folklore conflict is transformed into dramaturgical critique, enabling traditional moral logic to operate within modern ideological discourse.

### Dramaturgical Construction of *Jantur*

Figure 6 shows the dramaturgical construction of *Jantur* is developed through systematic translation of actantial relations into dramatic structures rather than through intuitive plot invention. Actantial mapping functions as a compositional framework that governs character distribution, conflict articulation, and scene progression, ensuring that ideological and ecological values embedded in Dadaha folklore remain structurally operative within the drama script.

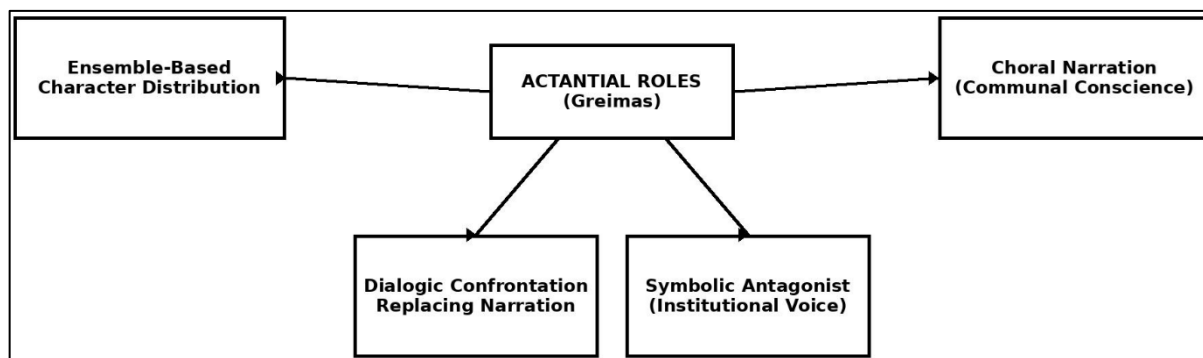


Figure 6. Actantial roles informing dramaturgical construction of the drama script *Jantur*

The Subject role is distributed across multiple characters, reflecting collective rather than individual agency. This ensemble-based characterization corresponds with the communal orientation of the source folklore and prevents narrative personalization of systemic conflict. The Object—ecological continuity and moral justice—is articulated through recurring dialogic motifs that anchor character motivation across scenes, while opposition is embodied through institutional authority rather than individualized antagonists. This symbolic representation enables structural power to function as a dramatic agent while preserving the moral economy of the original narrative.

Value transmission along the Sender–Receiver axis is realized not only through choral narration but also through intergenerational dialogue embedded within everyday interaction. Ecological ethics originally encoded in mythic belief systems are reformulated as parental instruction, as illustrated when the father explains, “Nature already has its own formula to keep life in balance, my child. We will never be poor as long as we do not disturb each other’s habitats.” (“*Alam sudah punya rumusnya sendiri biar kehidupan ini berjalan seimbang, anakku. Kita tidak akan merasa miskin selama kita tidak saling mengganggu habitatnya*”). This strategy translates cosmological morality into socially embodied ethical reasoning, allowing folklore values to persist within realistic relational contexts.

Scene sequencing follows Greimas’ canonical narrative schema, organizing dramatic progression from equilibrium through disruption, confrontation, and symbolic sanction. Rather than resolving conflict through juridical or political closure, the script employs metaphorical and ecological imagery to signify moral consequences. This dramaturgical choice preserves the cosmological logic of folklore while translating it into contemporary dramatic language, ensuring continuity of narrative ideology within transformed textual form.

Through these strategies, actantial relations become embodied dramaturgical mechanisms rather than abstract analytical categories. Dramatic form thus operates as narrative reasoning in action, where structural semiotics directly informs textual composition. The script *Jantur* therefore functions not only as an artistic adaptation but as an analytical articulation of folklore narrative logic within contemporary playwriting practice.

### Methodological Integration: Greimas within ABR for Playwriting

Figure 7 shows the study demonstrates that Greimas’ actantial model can be effectively integrated into Art-Based Research as a generative analytical framework for playwriting. Rather than functioning solely as a post hoc interpretive tool, actantial mapping was operationalized as a structural guide for dramaturgical construction, informing decisions





2005) view that artistic research gains validity through structured reflexivity rather than procedural standardization and aligns with (Haseman, 2006) conception of performative research, where knowing is generated through making but guided by conceptual intent.

Finally, the integration of Greimas’ model within ABR extends narrative semiotics into the domain of compositional praxis. While actantial models are traditionally employed for interpretive analysis of narrative texts, this study demonstrates their applicability as generative tools for producing new dramatic structures. This extension bridges narrative theory and playwriting pedagogy by offering a framework through which narrative logic can be systematically taught, tested, and adapted in script development contexts (Herman & Kirkup, 2016). Consequently, the methodology contributes not only to performance-oriented research but also to creative writing and drama education, positioning actantial-guided ABR as a viable foundation for folklore-based playwriting inquiry.

### Scriptwriting as Epistemic Practice

Figure 8 shows the Art-Based Research framework, scriptwriting in this study is positioned not merely as artistic production but as an epistemic practice through which narrative knowledge is generated, examined, and refined. Rather than treating the drama script as a representational outcome of prior analysis, the writing process itself becomes a site of inquiry where cultural meanings, narrative structures, and value relations are actively negotiated. This perspective aligns with ABR principles that regard artistic processes as modes of thinking and knowing, not simply expressive activities (Norris, 2013; Leavy, 2017).

These compositional strategies indicate that dramaturgical form operates as a mode of analytical testing, where narrative hypotheses about agency, conflict, and moral positioning are examined through textual configuration. Scriptwriting thus functions as a process of epistemic validation in which cultural interpretation is negotiated through narrative coherence and dramatic plausibility rather than through discursive explanation alone. Dramaturgical consistency becomes a criterion of analytical adequacy, allowing theoretical propositions derived from actantial mapping to be evaluated through their performative viability within the script.

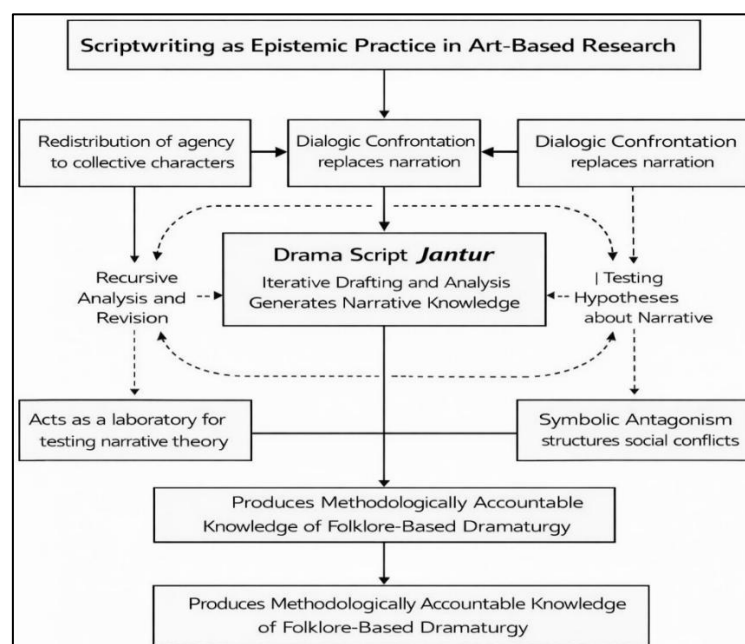


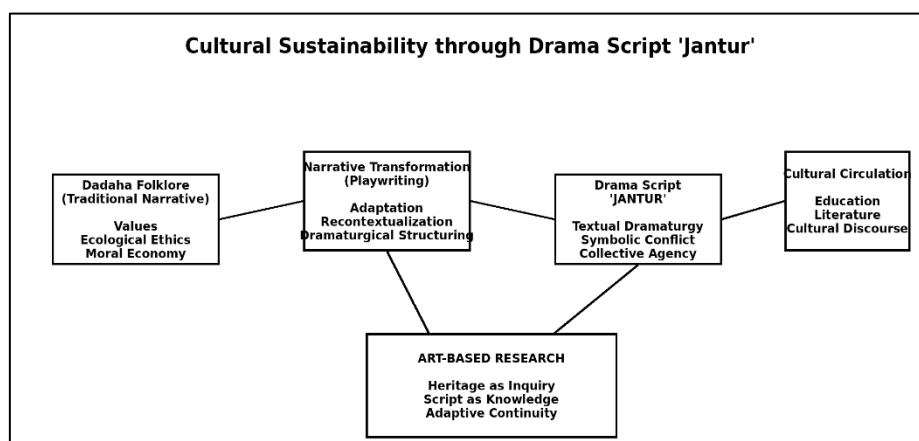
Figure 8. Epistemic function of iterative scriptwriting in the ABR process of Jantur

Moments of dramaturgical inconsistency triggered analytical reconsideration of actantial relations, indicating that revision operates as theoretical recalibration rather than stylistic refinement. This recursive alignment of narrative theory and textual form reflects performative modes of knowing in which understanding is produced through compositional experimentation (Jia & Shahir, 2025). In this process, script drafts function as analytical artefacts that materialize evolving interpretations of folklore structures, rather than as preliminary steps toward a fixed artistic product.

From a pedagogical and methodological perspective, this positioning of scriptwriting as epistemic practice expands the role of creative writing within arts education and performance research. Playwriting becomes a structured learning activity in which students and practitioners engage simultaneously with narrative theory, cultural analysis, and dramaturgical composition. By integrating analytical frameworks into creative cycles, this approach supports the development of narrative literacy, critical cultural awareness, and dramaturgical reasoning, reinforcing the role of artistic writing as a legitimate and rigorous mode of scholarly inquiry within arts-based methodologies.

### Cultural Sustainability through Folklore-Based Drama Texts

Figure 9 shows the transformation of Dadaha folklore into the drama script *Jantur* contributes to cultural sustainability by repositioning traditional narratives within contemporary textual modes of cultural transmission. Rather than preserving folklore solely as archival documentation or ritual performance, playwriting enables narrative values, ecological ethics, and moral economies to be rearticulated within modern dramaturgical discourse. This process aligns with heritage scholarship that defines sustainability as adaptive continuity, in which cultural forms persist through transformation rather than static conservation (Ab Jabar et al., 2024).

Figure 9. Cultural sustainability through actantial-guided Art-Based Research in the transformation of Dadaha folklore into the drama script *Jantur*

By retaining core narrative structures while reconfiguring character distribution and conflict articulation, the script maintains ideological continuity while enabling relevance to present socio-ecological concerns. Cultural sustainability is further reinforced through narrative closure that positions memory and ethical awareness as generational responsibility.

Instead of concluding with supernatural punishment, the drama reframes folklore warning into political and ecological consciousness articulated by the younger generation, as expressed in the closing monologue: “The land never forgets those who betray it. The rice may die, but memory will grow in every crack of concrete.” (“*Tanah tidak pernah lupa siapa yang mengkhianatnya. Padi memang mati, tapi ingatan akan tumbuh di setiap retakan beton*”). Here, ecological loss becomes inseparable from historical memory, transforming disaster from mythic fate into socio-historical testimony.

This generational articulation of memory extends beyond the narrative world of the play into the social circulation of the drama text itself. As a written and performable script, folklore becomes teachable, reproducible, and open to analytical engagement within educational and literary institutions. This supports (Taylor, 2003) distinction between archive and repertoire, suggesting that textualization complements embodied cultural memory by enabling broader pedagogical transmission and intertextual dialogue. From an Art-Based Research perspective, the script functions not only as cultural representation but as a site of cultural inquiry where heritage is epistemically reworked through creative composition in (Norris, 2013; eavy, 2017) Consequently, folklore-based drama scripts such as *Jantur* operate as mediating cultural texts that sustain collective memory while enabling ethical and critical reflection on contemporary socio-ecological conditions.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Greimas’s actantial model can be operationalized within an Art-Based Research (ABR) playwriting process as a generative framework, not merely a post hoc interpretive tool. By integrating actantial mapping and the canonical narrative schema into iterative drafting and revision, the adaptation of Dadaha folklore into the play script *Jantur* becomes methodologically traceable: character functions, conflict configuration, escalation patterns, and symbolic sanction are derived from explicit analytical decisions. The main contribution is a replicable semiotic-to-dramaturgical workflow that clarifies how narrative semiotics can guide compositional choices in folklore-to-drama adaptation and scriptwriting pedagogy.

Limitations. This research is limited by its single-case focus on Dadaha folklore and by the scope of data available for triangulation. Although five purposively selected informants and contextual documentation were used, the dataset may not represent the full diversity of oral variants circulating across wider communities and time periods. In addition, the study foregrounds textual dramaturgical coherence as validation within the ABR process; it does not include performance-based evaluation such as staged readings, rehearsal observation, audience reception, or classroom implementation. Consequently, the broader performative and pedagogical impacts of the script remain beyond the scope of this article.

Recommendations for future research. Future studies may (1) apply the proposed workflow to multiple folklore cases across regions to test transferability and identify context-specific adjustments; (2) compare Greimas-based actantial mapping with alternative narrative/structural frameworks to evaluate relative strengths for dramaturgical development; and (3) extend validation through performance-based inquiry, including staged readings, rehearsal documentation, audience-response analysis, and learning-outcome evaluation in educational settings. Such work would strengthen empirical claims regarding the framework’s

effectiveness for cultural sustainability, drama education, and ABR-based scriptwriting practices.

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