

## Building Assertive Character through the Arabic Picture Storybook

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**Abstract:** Human creativity extensively uses language to transform values, particularly through picture storybooks. "*Qissat Ashāb al-Fīl*" (The Story of the Elephant Army) by Muhammad Abbas Al-Mubarak narrates the *Ashāb al-Fīl* story, embedding various values, notably assertiveness. This study employs a descriptive qualitative analysis using content analysis to examine assertive characteristics in the storybook. Through denotative and connotative approaches, thirteen sentences exhibiting assertive traits were identified; eight sentences describe courage, one sentence describes responsibility, and four sentences describe desire. The findings indicate that "*Qissat Ashāb al-Fīl*" promotes assertiveness, crucial for children's character development. This research underscores the potential of storybooks in fostering assertive behavior by enhancing readers' understanding of communication and recognizing linguistic nuances that convey assertiveness. Thus, this study contributes to the discourse on the educational value of storybooks in character building.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool commonly used for communication, both spoken and written, in daily activities<sup>1</sup>. Human language is arbitrary or based on personal preference, which allows it to have the potential to form dynamic meanings. Initially, language consisted of abstract sounds that had specific meanings in communication. It then developed into speech acts and written language using special symbols, where these symbols formed a language system that determined the relationships between words and sentences to express their meanings. The dynamics of language change along with the development of time and human thought in communication. The components of language, especially vocabulary, also continue to evolve, including in terms of changes in meaning<sup>2</sup>.

Language plays a very urgent role in human life. Among the roles of language is its function as a medium for conveying ideas, which includes the function of expression, where language is used as a means to express feelings to others, and the

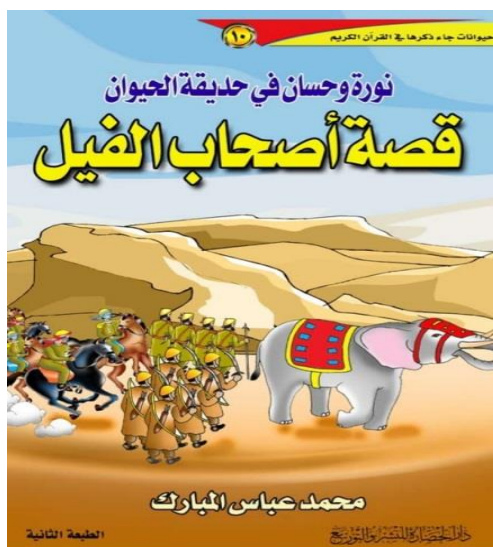
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<sup>1</sup> Fatma Nuraini Putri, "Pendidikan Karakter Siswa Melalui Pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia* 8, No. 1 (2020): 16, <https://doi.org/10.30659/J.8.1.16-24>.

<sup>2</sup> Mu'izzuddin Mochamad, "Analisis Makna Denotatif Dan Konotasi Linguistik Arab Dalam Istilah Syari'at Islam," *Journal Of Educational And Language Research* 8721, No. 8.5.2017 (2022): 2003-5, <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders>.

function of information, where language is used to convey messages to others. Additionally, language functions as a means of conveying thoughts, where the process of expressing language within a person is derived from the results of that person's thinking<sup>3</sup>. The function of language as a means of conveying ideas, thoughts, and intentions is recognized as an effective communication tool.

Through language, humans can interact with each other and discuss various matters, enabling broad exchanges of information and understanding within society<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, every human engages in communication to obtain or convey information or messages. Language is also used to assist in transferring values, attitudes, ethics, morals, and human character<sup>5</sup>. The intention is that language serves not only as a tool for communication, but also as a means to convey and internalize important values in life, such as attitudes, ethics, morals, and human character. Through language, we can teach and reinforce these values and characters, especially to children, through both spoken and written communication. One important character value to teach early on is assertiveness, as it is crucial for children in their everyday social interactions<sup>6</sup>. There has been much human creativity in presenting language as a medium for transforming values, one of which is illustrated storybooks. Illustrated storybooks can come in various languages, including Arabic, such as the illustrated storybook titled *Qissat Ashāb Al-Fil* (The Story of the People of the Elephant).



Figures 1. Cover Of *Qissat Ashāb Al-Fil*

<sup>3</sup> Yuni Revita, Sufyarma Marsidin, And Sulastris Sulastris, "Peran Bahasa Dalam Penerapan Ilmu Pengetahuan," *Journal On Education* 5, No. 2 (2023): 2981-87, <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i2.949>.

<sup>4</sup> Okarisma Mailani Et Al., "Bahasa Sebagai Alat Komunikasi Dalam Kehidupan Manusia," *Kampret Journal* 1, No. 1 (2022): 1-10, <https://doi.org/10.35335/kampret.v1i1.8>.

<sup>5</sup> Kurnia Azizah And Valdi Giffari Rahmayati Putra, "Analisis Hierarki Nilai-Nilai Max Scheler Dalam Cerita Anak Gorontalo Berjudul Saku Abah," *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa, Dan Sastra* 10, No. 1 (2024): 829-45, <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v10i1.3291>.

<sup>6</sup> Desi Nurwidawati, "Menyusun Konstruksi Kompetensi Sosial Guru Menggunakan Model Rasch Dan Analisis Faktor," *Journal On Teacher Education Research* 4, No. 3 (2023): 804-15.

The illustrated storybook "*Qissat Ashāb Al-Fīl*" (The Story of the People of the Elephant) is a work in Arabic by Muhammad Abbas Al-Mubarak. It tells the story of a father who takes his two children on a trip to the zoo and narrates the tale of the *Ashāb Al-Fīl*, where Abrahah and his army ambitiously sought to destroy the Kaaba. This event took place during the Year of the Elephant (570 CE), the year of Prophet Muhammad's birth. The story contains many values and characters, one of which is the assertive character displayed by figures such as the father, Hasan, Nurah, Abrahah, and Abdul Muttalib.

The definition of assertive character itself is the action of someone showing the courage to be honest and express needs, feelings, and thoughts openly, in order to defend oneself and reject unreasonable requests or those coming from authority figures<sup>7</sup>. In another definition, assertive character is the firm attitude of someone arising from emotional freedom, capable of expressing their thoughts and feelings accurately and honestly without imposing on others<sup>8</sup>. According to Fakhri based on Alberti and Emmon theory it is stated that an assertive character is a behavior that allows someone to act in their own best interest, uphold what is rightfully theirs, express their feelings freely, and exercise their rights without violating the rights of others<sup>9</sup>. According to Celina based on Rathus and Nevid theory it is stated assertive character is defined as the courage to openly express feelings such as comfort or discomfort, likes or dislikes, happiness or unhappiness, agreement or disagreement in an appropriate manner without hurting the feelings of others<sup>10</sup>.

From the above definition, researchers conclude that assertive character is important for children because it helps them develop self-confidence, effective communication skills, and the ability to establish healthy boundaries in relationships with others. This enables them to face challenges with greater confidence, manage conflicts effectively, and make decisions that align with their own values and needs. To instill assertive character, one effective medium is illustrated storybooks. According to Dewanti based on Mitchel theory illustrated storybooks are reading materials that present narrative text verbally accompanied by illustrated pictures<sup>11</sup>. The pictures in illustrated storybooks can capture attention

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<sup>7</sup> Fetasya Ayu Valentina, "Dampak Insecure Attachment Pada Anak Usia Dini," *Journal Of Research Gate*, No. January (2021), <https://doi.org/10.13140/Rg.2.2.10504.44800>.

<sup>8</sup> Edris Zamroni And Sumarwiyah Sumarwiyah, "Pelatihan Perilaku Asertif Terhadap Bullying Melalui Sosiodrama Pada Santri Pondok Pesantren Nashrul Ummah Mejobo," *Muria Jurnal Layanan Masyarakat* 3, No. 2 (2021): 74-84, <https://doi.org/10.24176/Mjlm.V3i2.3439>.

<sup>9</sup> Nurfitriany Fakhri And Sahril Buchori, "Perilaku Asertif Dan Optimisme Pada Mahasiswa Yang Mengajukan Skripsi" 3, No. 3 (2024).

<sup>10</sup> Salsadilla Celina Rinaldi And Arbana Syamanta, "Peran Guru Dalam Mengembangkan Perilaku Asertif Pada Peserta Didik," *Journal Of Creative Student Research (Jcsr)* 1, No. 2 (2023).

<sup>11</sup> Dewanti Lucky And Yasmita Echa Martha, "Pengembangan Bahan Ajar Tematik Terpadu Berbasis Buku Cerita Bergambar Pada Siswa Di Sdn 17 Pasar Surantih Pesisir Selatan Sumatera Barat," *Jurnal Ilmiah Hospitality* 11, No. 1 (2022): 381-88, <http://stp-mataram.e-journal.id/jih>.

and are easier for children to understand<sup>12</sup>. Illustrated storybooks also feature bright and striking colors to capture children's interest in reading, making it easier for them to understand the story's content<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, this writing is aimed at examining the assertive character values contained within the illustrated storybook "*Qissat Ashāb Al-Fīl*" (The Story of the People of the Elephant) in Arabic, authored by Muhammad Abbas Al-Mubarak, using a denotative and connotative approach within the field of semantics. This approach is particularly intriguing because Arabic language possesses richness in terms of vocabulary and meanings, especially complex denotative and connotative meanings, which require a deep understanding of word meanings within the intended sentences<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, these meanings have the potential to evoke a variety of expressions that carry values worthy of deeper examination.

Arabic language also holds significant potential as an effective means to nurture children's character, especially through Arabic-language books that are rooted in Islamic teachings. Islam emphasizes qualities such as assertiveness, honesty, ethics, compassion, and more<sup>15</sup>. Just like in the illustrated storybook "*Qissat Ashāb Al-Fīl*" (The Story of the People of the Elephant), which is based on Islamic history and reinforced by characters who potentially embody assertive values or attitudes.

The denotative meaning is the meaning of a word that directly refers to a concrete object or concept, without any associated emotional value<sup>16</sup>. In another sense, denotative refers to words that are general and directly indicate the actual meaning as stated in the dictionary<sup>17</sup>. Connotative meaning is an associative meaning that arises from social attitudes, personal beliefs, and specific criteria used in conceptual meanings. This meaning is more subjective and operational than denotative meaning, which is the actual or general meaning<sup>18</sup>.

Connotative and denotative meanings are actually inseparable because connotative meaning is essentially a denotative meaning that has undergone changes in meaning according to the writer's feelings. This aligns with Chaer's

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<sup>12</sup> Pawestri Apriliani Siwi And Hoesein Radia Elvira, "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Buku Cerita Bergambar Untuk Meningkatkan Minat Membaca Siswa Sekolah Dasar" 4, No. 4 (2020): 3(2), 524-32, <https://Journal.Uii.Ac.Id/Ajie/Article/View/971>.

<sup>13</sup> Hesti Novianti, Syarip Hidayat, And Dwi Alia, "Desain Buku Cerita Bergambar Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Untuk Menumbuhkan Karakter Bijak Bertindak Di Kelas Iii Sekolah Dasar" 06, No. 06 (2023): 1075-83.

<sup>14</sup> Edy Sulaiman, "Membumikan Bahasa Arab Sejak Dini (Analisis Kesulitan Dan Tantangan Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Untuk Pemula)," *Edu Journal Innovation In Learning And Education* 1, No. 2 (2023): 142-51, <https://Doi.Org/10.55352/Edu.V1i2.761>.

<sup>15</sup> Poetri Febryani And Asep Sopian, "Konsep Hypnoparenting Berbahasa Arab Sebagai Langkah Memupuk Karakter Anak Yang Berbasis Islami," *Al-I'tibar: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, No. 2 (2023): 89-97, <https://Doi.Org/10.30599/Jpia.V10i2.2754>.

<sup>16</sup> Febry Ramadani S, "Hakikat Makna Dan Hubungan Antar Makna Dalam Kajian Semantik Bahasa Arab," *Taqdir* 6, No. 1 (2020): 87-102, <https://Doi.Org/10.19109/Taqdir.V6i1.5500>.

<sup>17</sup> Wildan Abdus Salam And Agus Ridwan, "Makna Denotatif Dan Konotatif Pada Iklan Bmw Berbahasa Jerman," *E-Journal Identitet* 10, No. 2 (2021): 247-58.

<sup>18</sup> Feni Amanda Putri And Achmad Yuhdi, "Analisis Makna Konotasi Dalam Lirik Lagu 'Sampai Jadi Debu' Karya Ananda Badudu," *Enggang: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa, Sastra, Seni Dan Budaya* 4 (2023): 247-60.

viewpoint based on Ningsih connotative meaning is an additional meaning associated with the emotional values of a group of people or individuals who use the word<sup>19</sup>. For example, in the sentence "Since childhood, he has been the backbone," denotatively, the term 'backbone' refers to the human spine. However, connotatively, 'backbone' refers to the sole person who can be relied upon to provide for a family<sup>20</sup>.

Research on illustrated storybooks influencing character development has been conducted by many researchers. For example, research by Sari titled 'Development of Digital Picture Storybooks to Enhance Students' Responsibility Character in Elementary School' states that illustrated storybooks can help students enhance their sense of responsibility, as students feel more motivated when reading illustrated storybooks<sup>21</sup>. Another example is found in the research journal owned by Megawati titled 'Development of Picture Storybooks to Instill the Value of Discipline in First Grade Elementary School Students' in this research, it is revealed that illustrated storybooks are capable of helping children improve their discipline and instill discipline traits more effectively<sup>22</sup>.

Both examples above strengthen the research from Fitri titled 'Integration of Social Piety and Islamic Teachings in Early Childhood through the Tale of Al-Najm Al-Kabir by Dr. Zahrah Al-Baili' in this research, it is mentioned that stories are one of the effective mediums for teaching social values and individual moral values<sup>23</sup>. However, from the examples of previous studies, none have investigated Arabic picture storybooks using denotative and connotative analysis to build assertive character. Therefore, the researcher intends to conduct this study.

## METHOD

This research employs qualitative descriptive analysis. According to theory Creswell states that qualitative descriptive research can be used to analyze processes for interpreting, meaning making, and understanding derived from words in sentences or verbal and specific visual or image contexts<sup>24</sup>. The approach used in this research is content analysis of connotative and denotative meanings to

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<sup>19</sup> Dinda Tiara Wia Ningsih Et Al., "Analisis Makna Konotatif Pada Kumpulan Lagu Album Daun Jatuh" 2 (2022).

<sup>20</sup> Indri Anjari, Dewi Indah Susanti, And Jatut Yoga Prameswari, "Makna Konotasi Dalam Buku Madilog Karya Tan Malaka Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia," *Alegori: Jurnal mahasiswa wpendidikan bahasaindonesia* 2, No. 2 (2022): 163.

<sup>21</sup> Lucia Dewi Kartika Sari And Krisma Widi Wardani, "Pengembangan Buku Cerita Bergambar Digital Untuk Meningkatkan Karakter Tanggung Jawab Siswa Di Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Basicedu* 5, No. 4 (2021): 1968-77, <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v5i4.1138>.

<sup>22</sup> S. Megawati, I.W. Lasmawan, And I.K. Gading, "Pengembangan Buku Cerita Bergambar Untuk Menanamkan Nilai Karakter Disiplin Bagi Siswa Kelas I Sekolah Dasar," *Pendasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Indonesia* 6, No. 1 (2022): 1-12, [https://doi.org/10.23887/jurnal\\_pendas.v6i1.494](https://doi.org/10.23887/jurnal_pendas.v6i1.494).

<sup>23</sup> Fitri Liza, Budi Luhuring, And Panggih Abdiguno, "Integrasi Kesalehan Sosial Dan Ajaran Islam Pada Anak Usia Dini Melalui Dongeng" 11, No. November (2020).

<sup>24</sup> Vina Siti Sri Nofia And Muhammad Rayhan Bustam, "Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Sampul Buku Five Little Pigs Karya Agatha Christie," *Mahadaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya* 2, No. 2 (2022): 143-56, <https://doi.org/10.34010/mhd.v2i2.7795>.

determine assertive character traits found in the Arabic illustrated storybook titled "Qissat Ashāb Al-Fīl" (The Story of the People of the Elephant). Content analysis method examines the content of written texts, images, and research recordings<sup>25</sup>.

The stages or steps in content analysis method that will be done in this research involve collecting the data to be analyzed, conducting thorough data analysis, and producing a report or conclusions based on the analysis results<sup>26</sup>. It is expected that the results of analyzing the Arabic illustrated storybook titled "Qissat Ashāb Al-Fīl" (The Story of the People of the Elephant) will clearly reveal the assertive characters from the dialogue within the text of the book, using the approach of denotative and connotative meaning analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research findings on building assertive character through the Arabic illustrated storybook titled "Qissat Ashāb Al-Fīl" (The Story of the People of the Elephant) by Muhammad Abbas Al-Mubarak using denotative and connotative approaches. It was found that there are thirteen words containing assertive characteristics. The assertive traits that emerged are courage, responsibility, and desire. These thirteen words are grouped into the table as follows:

**Table 1. The Courage Attitude of Assertive Character**

No	Sentence	Denotative	Connotative	Assertive
1	On Page 1 حسان: لقد وعدتنا يا أبي بزيارة حديقة الحيوان في أول أيام العطلة	Hasan: Dad has promised us to visit the zoo on the first day of vacation	Hope, enthusiasm, and courage	Hasan's courage to hope for and clearly express his hopes regarding his father's promise.
2	On Page 1 حسان: كيف يكون هذا؟! بدلاً من بيت الله الحرام	Hasan: How can it be?! Replacing the sacred Baitullah!	Criticism and courage	Courage in expressing disagreement
3	On Page 1 وقال: إذا حدث ذلك ستكون دولتنا قوية وذات شأن عظيم نعم، سوف أبني كنيسة أضخم وأروع من الكعبة يحب إليها جميع العرب ومعهم أهل اليمن	And he (Abrahah) said: If that happens, our kingdom will be strong and have a great position. Yes, I will build a church larger and more beautiful than the Ka'bah...which will be loved by all Arabs and the people of Yemen.	Optimism and ambition	Courage in voicing a grand vision and optimism

<sup>25</sup> Arrumaisha Fitri, "Program Preventif Bunuh Diri Untuk Mengurangi Ide Dan Percobaan Bunuh Diri Pada Mahasiswa," *Idea: Jurnal Psikologi* 7, No. 1 (2023): 12-22, <https://doi.org/>.

<sup>26</sup> Rifda Haniefa, "Pendekatan Metakognitif Untuk Keterampilan Membaca Bahasa Arab," *Ta'limi | Journal Of Arabic Education And Arabic Studies* 1, No. 2 (2022): 151-64, <https://doi.org/10.53038/Tlmi.V1i2.41>.

4	<p>On Page 7</p> <p>وقَالَ لَهُ: إِنَّ الْحِجَاجَ إِذَا تَحَوَّلُوا إِلَى كِنِيسَتِهِ، سَوْفَ يَكُونُ مُلْكُهُمْ فِي الْيَمَنِ قَوِيًّا، وَدَوْلَتُهُمْ مُزْدَهَرَةً...</p>	<p>And he said to him: If the pilgrims turn to his church, their kingdom in Yemen will become strong, and their country will prosper</p>	<p>Political optimism and ambition</p>	<p>Courage in advocating for an ambitious and optimistic political vision</p>
5	<p>On Page 7-8</p> <p>لَأَب : غَضِبَ أَبْرَهَةَ غَضَبًا شَدِيدًا ، لِأَنَّ أَمَلَهُ خَابَ ، وَتَعَجَّبَ لِمَاذَا لَمْ يَجِبُوا إِلَيْهَا؟ وَحَتَّى أَهْلُ الْيَمَنِ ذَهَبُوا إِلَى بَيْتِ اللَّهِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ... ذَهَبُوا إِلَى الْكَعْبَةِ، لِأَنَّهُمْ تَعَوَّدُوا الذَّهَابَ إِلَيْهَا وَتَعْظِيمَهَا ... وَفَكَّرَ أَبْرَهَةَ فِي الْإِنْتِقَامِ ... نَعَمْ، لِأَنَّكَ مِنَ الْإِنْتِقَامِ، وَتَكَبَّرَ وَتَجَبَّرَ ... وَقَالَ : سَوْفَ أَهْلِدُ الْكَعْبَةَ ... سَوْفَ أَهْلِدُ بَيْتَ الْعَرَبِ ( وَكَانُوا يُسَمُّوْنَهَا هَكَذَا)، وَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي الْجَمِيعُ إِلَى هُنَا إِلَى كِنِيسَتِي</p>	<p>Father: Abrahah was very angry because his hopes were dashed, and he wondered why they didn't like his church? Even the people of Yemen went to Baitullah as usual. They go to the Ka'bah because they are accustomed to going there and venerating it. Abrahah thought of revenge. Yes, he must take revenge; he became arrogant and proud. He said: I will destroy the Ka'bah. I will destroy the house of the Arabs (and they call it that), and everyone will come here to my church</p>	<p>Great ambition to achieve lofty goals</p>	<p>Courage in expressing anger and disappointment, expressing malicious intent and ambition for dominance</p>
6	<p>On Page 10</p> <p>وَتَكَبَّرَ أَبْرَهَةُ أَكْثَرَ فَأَكْثَرَ عِنْدَمَا رَأَى أَنَّ هَزَمَ الْجَمِيعَ ، وَسَارَ بِجَيْشِهِ حَتَّى وَصَلَ قَرِيْبًا مِنْ مَكَّةَ الَّتِي فِيهَا الْكَعْبَةُ...</p>	<p>Abrahah grew even more arrogant as he saw that he had defeated everyone, and he advanced with his army until near Mecca, which contains the Ka'bah</p>	<p>Arrogance and hubris</p>	<p>Courage in expressing dominance and arrogance</p>
7	<p>On Page 10</p> <p>وَمَا جَلَسَ مَعَهُ عَبْدُ الْمَطْلَبِ طَلَبَ مِنْ أَبْرَهَةَ أَنْ يَرُدَّ إِلَيْهِ قَامِلًا: إِنِّي أُرِيدُكَ أَنْ تَرُدَّ إِلَيَّ إِبِلِي الَّتِي أَخَذَهَا جُنُودُكَ...</p>	<p>When Abdul Muthalib sat with Abrahah, he asked Abrahah to return the camel that his soldiers had taken, saying, 'I want you to return the camel that your soldiers took from me</p>	<p>Courage</p>	<p>Courage in upholding justice</p>
8	<p>On Page 12</p> <p>نُورَةَ: سَبَّحَانَ اللَّهِ الْفِيلُ يَخَافُ مِنَ اللَّهِ، وَهَذَا الطَّاغِيَةُ لَا يَعْرِفُ الْخَوْفَ ... يَا لَهُ مِنْ مُتَكَبِّرٍ</p>	<p>Nurah: Subhanallah, the elephant fears Allah, while this tyrant does not know fear... Ya Allah, how arrogant he is</p>	<p>Criticism of injustice and arrogance</p>	<p>Courage in voicing criticism against injustice and arrogance</p>

Based on the table above we can see that the analysis is as follows: On Page 1 Hasan bravely expressed his hope that his father had promised to visit the zoo on the first day of vacation. This shows his courage in having high hopes (denotative) and also the courage to voice his personal hopes, which might be unconventional in front of adults (connotative). On Page 7 Hasan openly expressed his disagreement with the plan to replace the sanctified Baitullah. This reflects his courage to criticize a decision or action (denotative), as well as his moral courage to oppose what he considers sacred and important (connotative). On Pages 7-8 Abrahah had a grand vision to build a larger and more beautiful church than the Ka'bah, hoping this would strengthen his kingdom. This demonstrates his optimism and great ambition in architectural achievement (denotative), as well as his political ambition to expand influence and create prosperity (connotative).

On Page 10 Abrahah expressed his belief that if the pilgrims switched to his church, their kingdom in Yemen would become strong and their nation prosperous. This shows his courage in advocating a optimistic political vision (denotative), as well as his bold ambition to change political and religious dynamics (connotative). On Page 10 Abrahah became angry at his failure and declared his intention to destroy the Ka'bah as a form of revenge. This demonstrates his courage in expressing anger and disappointment (denotative), as well as his ruthless ambition and desire to assert dominance over religion and culture (connotative).

On Page 12 Abrahah grew more arrogant, feeling he had defeated everyone, and he marched with his army towards Mecca which housed the Ka'bah. This reflects his courage in expressing domination and arrogance (denotative), as well as his bravery in facing great risks and challenges (connotative). On Page 13 Abdul Muthalib boldly asked Abrahah to return the camel taken by his troops. This action shows his courage in upholding justice (denotative), as well as his moral courage in confronting a much stronger ruler (connotative). On Page 15 Nurah boldly criticized Abrahah's injustice and arrogance, while praising the obedience of an elephant to Allah. This demonstrates his courage in voicing criticism against injustice (denotative), as well as his moral courage in expressing personal opinions in front of an authoritarian ruler (connotative). In each example, these characters demonstrate their courage in different ways, whether through expressing hope, criticism, ambitious political vision, defense of spiritual values, or rejection of injustice. The denotative and connotative approaches help strengthen understanding of how their courage is reflected in the story, both in terms of actions and the values they uphold.

**Table 2. The Responsibility Attitude of Assertive Character**

No	Sentence	Denotative	Connotative	Assertive
1	On Page 1 الأب : وأنا عند وعدي يا حسان.	And I will keep my promise, O Hasan	Commitment and responsibility.	Responsibility to keep promises.



Based on the table, we can know that Hasan's Father reaffirmed his promise firmly to Hasan. Denotatively, this sentence conveys a commitment to fulfill the promise made. The father demonstrates his responsibility to act in accordance with his words, showing assertive character by affirming that he will follow through on his promise. Connotatively, the sentence also reflects trustworthiness and reliability, as someone who can be trusted is someone who keeps their promises. Thus, Hasan's father exhibits assertiveness in maintaining personal consistency and integrity by honoring the promise made.

**Table 3. The Desire Attitude of Assertive Character**

No	Sentence	Denotative	Connotative	Assertive
1	On Page 1 لأب : صَبْرًا ... صَبْرًا ... أُرِيدُهَا زِيَارَةً طَوِيلَةً	Father: Be patient... Be patient... I want it to be a long visit.	Persistence and desires	Expressing the desire to embark on a long visit.
2	On Page 1 لأب : أَنْتِ صَادِقَةٌ يَا بِنْتِي ... وَأَنَا أَقْضُدُ أُنَّا نُرِيدُ فَضَاءَ كُلِّ النَّهَارِ مِنَ الصَّبَاحِ حَتَّى الْمَسَاءِ، حَتَّى تَعْرِفُوا كُلَّ الْحَيَوَانَاتِ بِالتَّفْصِيلِ	Father: You are right, my dear daughter... and I intend for us to spend from noon until evening so that you can get to know all the animals	Stating desires with clear reasoning and openly praising children.	Openly expressing desires and appreciation.
3	On Page 1 نورة : كم أنا مُشْتَاةٌ لِرُؤْيَةِ الحيوانات	Nurah: I really miss seeing the animals.	Enthusiasm and openness.	Openly expressing desires.
4	On Page 1 قَالَتْ نورة: أَنَا مُشْتَاةٌ لِرُؤْيَةِ الْفُرُودِ وَالعُزْلَانِ	Nurah: I miss seeing monkeys and deer.	Enthusiasm and desire	Openly stating desires

Based on the table above we can see that the analysis is as follows: On Page 1 The father firmly expressed his desire for a long visit to the zoo. This demonstrates clarity in expressing desires (denotative) and determination in clearly stating personal hopes to his child (connotative). On Page 1 The father praised honesty and stated plans to spend time with his children getting to know the animals. This shows clarity in stating intentions (denotative) and openly showing appreciation towards his children (connotative). On Page 1 Nurah enthusiastically expressed her longing to see the animals. This demonstrates openness in expressing desires (denotative) and enthusiasm in clearly expressing her feelings (connotative). On Page 1 Nurah clearly stated her desire to see monkeys and deer. This shows clarity in stating desires (denotative) and firmness in expressing specific desires (connotative). In each example, the characters demonstrate their ability to express their desires clearly and assertively. The denotative and connotative approaches help understand how these expressions of desires are reflected in their interactions and dialogue within the story.

Based on the analysis above, it can be seen that out of the 13 sentences containing assertive values, there are 8 sentences that describe courage, 1 sentence that describes responsibility, and 4 sentences that describe desire. Each assertive character that emerges through the characters in a story exhibits different traits such as courage, responsibility, and desire. This allows us to better understand assertive characters within a narrative. Using this approach, analyzing text or dialogue in Arabic-language picture books can develop assertive characters by integrating denotative (direct) and connotative (symbolic) meanings. This approach provides depth and complexity in character development.

This research marks the first attempt to apply the denotative and connotative meaning approach to constructing assertive characters in Arabic-language picture books. No prior studies have explored this analysis. Our findings reveal that this approach not only enriches children's reading experiences with strong and assertive characters but also fosters a deeper understanding of how language and symbolism can effectively teach moral values and courage.

The practical implications of our research suggest that this approach can be utilized by authors, illustrators, and educators to develop more meaningful and profound educational materials in children's literacy. Theoretically, our research contributes novel insights to the study of children's literature and character development. While this study represents a promising initial step, we acknowledge the need for further research, including more extensive testing of the effectiveness of this approach in formal and informal educational contexts. Further studies could also explore the deeper influences of linguistic meanings on the understanding of assertive characters in picture books.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of assertive characters in the illustrated children's book "Qissat Ashāb Al-Fil" (The Story of the People of the Elephant) by Muhammad Abbas Al-Mubarak, it can be concluded that there are several assertive characters portrayed in the story. Researchers found 13 sentences that exhibit assertive characteristics among its characters. It can be seen that out of the 13 sentences containing assertive values, there are 8 sentences that describe courage, 1 sentence that describes responsibility, and 4 sentences that describe desire. The most prominent example is Nurah, who boldly expresses her opinion by criticizing Abrahah as a tyrant who is arrogant. Another example is Hasan, who confidently reminds his father of his promise to take them to the zoo. Thus, it can be concluded that the Arabic illustrated book "Qissat Ashāb Al-Fil" by Muhammad Abbas Al-Mubarak exhibits assertive characteristics that can help in understanding how to develop assertive characters in children. This is reinforced by the role of the father character who supports an assertive upbringing for Hasan and Nurah, enabling

them to act and express their opinions without fear and without offending others. The findings of this study also prove that reading storybooks can help build assertive characters by expanding understanding of communication and allowing readers to recognize language nuances and characteristics that demonstrate assertiveness in characters within stories.

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