

# Ethnopedagogical Approach in Indonesian Language Learning in Elementary Schools

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Received: 28/11/2024

Accepted: 09/02/2025

Published: 31/03/2025

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## ABSTRACT

*Indonesian language learning in elementary schools has enormous potential in shaping students' character, cultural identity, and language competence. In the context of Indonesia's cultural diversity, an ethnopedagogical approach is a strategic alternative for integrating local wisdom values into the learning process. This article aims to examine the ethnopedagogical approach in Indonesian language learning through a literature review of various research findings and current theories. The study results indicate that ethnopedagogy encourages students to recognise and appreciate local cultures through language as a medium of expression. Indonesian language learning that employs folklore, traditional expressions, and contextualised everyday language practices has been shown to improve literacy skills, positive attitudes toward culture, and active student engagement in learning. This approach aligns with the Independent Curriculum's emphasis on differentiated and contextual learning. However, the implementation of ethnopedagogy still faces challenges, such as limited local culture-based learning resources and teacher competency in developing contextual teaching materials. Therefore, teacher training, policy support, and the development of local culture-based learning resources are needed to support the sustainable implementation of ethnopedagogy in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Literacy, Ethnopedagogy, Elementary School, Indonesian, Local Wisdom

## I. INTRODUCTION

In elementary schools, Indonesian serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for character development, instilling values, and preserving national culture. Teaching Indonesian solely focused on linguistic aspects diminishes the importance of language as an expression of cultural identity. Therefore, developing a learning approach that links language competency with local cultural values is crucial. Ethnopedagogy, as a local culture-based educational approach, provides students with the opportunity to understand language as part of the cultural heritage that lives within their communities (Sutrisna, 2023).

Indonesia's multicultural context and rich ethnography offer significant potential for developing meaningful and life-relevant Indonesian language learning. Tailoring learning to students' cultural backgrounds not only equips them with linguistic knowledge but also instills the noble values inherent in that culture. This conclusion is reinforced by Saputra (2023), who stated that integrating local wisdom into Indonesian language learning can be a strategy for strengthening national character from an early age. In practice, the use of folklore, regional rhymes, traditional games, and local language expressions in learning can contribute to a sense of nationalism and pride in one's own cultural identity.

A major problem in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level is the lack of connection between the teaching materials and the students' sociocultural realities. The material presented is often generic and tends to ignore local specificities. As a result, students experience isolation in their learning because they don't see the connection between what they learn and the real world they encounter every day. In this regard, ethnopedagogy can be a contextual approach that bridges the gap between the content of the national curriculum and the local wisdom that exists within the students' environment (Mulyani & Anwar, 2020).

The ethnopedagogical approach also aligns with the principles of differentiated learning and Pancasila-based student profiles promoted in the Independent Curriculum. By incorporating local cultural elements into Indonesian language learning, teachers can foster active student engagement while fostering empathy, tolerance, and appreciation

for cultural diversity. Saputra (2024) emphasised that ethnopedagogical-based Indonesian language learning can strengthen cultural literacy and enrich students' imaginations through texts derived from local living traditions.

However, the implementation of the ethnopedagogical approach still faces various challenges in the field. Among these are low levels of teacher cultural literacy and the limited availability of locally based teaching materials. Teachers who lack knowledge of local culture will struggle to develop contextual and relevant teaching materials. Furthermore, education policies often position local culture as a supplement, rather than a primary element, in the learning process. This indicates that there must be systematic efforts to provide teacher training and develop educational resources that support the ethnopedagogical approach (Putri & Harun, 2024).

Literature studies examining the ethnopedagogical approach to Indonesian language learning are crucial for identifying its strengths, potential, and challenges in its implementation. With this approach, Indonesian language learning can function not only as a language skill teaching tool but also as a means of instilling values, building character, and preserving local culture. In the context of primary education, this approach is relevant because students are developing their identity and values, which means that what they learn will form the foundation for their future thinking and behaviour. (Yuliana & Hartono, 2023).

This study will examine how the ethnopedagogical approach is applied in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools through a literature review. This article also endeavours to explore the implications of this approach in fostering more contextual and meaningful learning experiences for students. By referencing various scientific literature and recent findings, this article is expected to contribute to the development of educational policies and practices that are more in line with local cultural contexts, particularly in Indonesian language learning.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The ethnopedagogical approach to education is based on the belief that local culture holds tremendous potential to support meaningful learning. Ethnopedagogy refers to the use of local values, norms, customs, and practices in learning, enabling students to build direct connections between the knowledge gained in school and their real lives. According to Kartikasari and Yusnita (2023), ethnopedagogy is not merely about inserting cultural elements into teaching materials, but rather serves as a philosophical foundation and method that integrates local context into all aspects of learning. In the context of Indonesian language learning, this approach is relevant, given that language is one of the most concrete representations of cultural identity. Therefore, utilising folktales, regional rhymes, and everyday dialogue in students' native languages can naturally strengthen their understanding of the structure and function of language.

Indonesian language learning in elementary schools should ideally be directed toward the balanced development of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, in practice, a textual approach often dominates learning, failing to contextualise it with students' lives. This leads to low student interest and active participation in learning activities. According to Lestari and Ramadhan (2022), integrating local culture through ethnopedagogy can provide a richer emotional and cognitive dimension for students in understanding the language. Folktales and regional legends, for example, can be used as teaching materials to improve listening and reading skills. Furthermore, writing local stories and discussing the values contained within them also contribute to strengthening students' writing and speaking skills.

The use of an ethnopedagogical approach also supports the development of students' character from an early age. Local cultural values incorporated into the Indonesian language learning process, such as cooperation, respect for parents, and love of the homeland, become part of contextual character education. A study by Maulida and Hidayatullah (2024) showed that ethnopedagogy-based learning significantly contributes to the formation of students' social attitudes and emotional intelligence. This aligns with national education goals, which emphasise not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor aspects. Teaching rooted in local culture allows students to learn in a familiar and psychologically safe environment, thereby fostering self-confidence and active engagement in Indonesian language learning.

From a curriculum perspective, the ethnopedagogical approach aligns with the principles of the Independent Curriculum, which prioritise differentiation, contextualisation, and Pancasila-based student profile learning. According to Fadilah and Ardiansyah (2023), the implementation of ethnopedagogy in Indonesian language learning supports the development of religious students, globally diverse, and critical thinkers. Activities such as rewriting folktales, adapting regional legends into narrative texts, or presenting local culture in oral reports provide a means for students to develop comprehensive language competency. This approach also provides space for teachers to become innovators, able to develop learning resources from their surroundings.

However, various challenges remain in implementing the ethnopedagogical approach, particularly in terms of limited teaching resources and teacher competency. Many teachers lack the training or knowledge to explore and utilise local cultures as structured learning resources. According to research by Wijayanti and Prasetya (2024), the success of this approach depends heavily on the availability of locally based learning materials, teachers' willingness to explore culture, and support from local governments and school communities. So, schools, local communities, and the government need to work together to create guidelines and training for teachers, so the ethnopedagogical approach can be used effectively and consistently in teaching Indonesian in elementary schools.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative literature review approach, which aims to examine and interpret the results of previous research relevant to the topic of the ethnopedagogical approach in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. This literature review was chosen because it allows researchers to explore published theories, concepts, and empirical findings, as well as draw practical implications from emerging trends and patterns in the literature. According to Ramadhani and Kusuma (2023), a literature review is a scientific method used to organise, critically review, and synthesise various previous studies in order to produce a more complete understanding of an issue. This approach is very suitable for exploring how ethnopedagogy is applied, developed, and evaluated in the context of Indonesian language learning at the elementary level.

In its implementation, the author collected secondary data sources from various scientific repositories and trusted publication platforms, such as Google Scholar, Garuda Ristek-BRIN, Perpustakaan, and ResearchGate. The selected sources included national and international scientific journal articles, academic books, and official policy documents published within the last five years (2020–2024). The inclusion criteria consisted of the following: (1) research discussing ethnopedagogy and local culture-based education, (2) studies focussing on Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level, and (3) sources that had undergone a peer-review process. Next, the researchers systematically analysed these sources to identify the main themes, methodological approaches, findings, and recommendations from each study. The analysis technique used was content analysis, which is the process of grouping literature data into thematic categories based on similar focus and substance.

After gathering and organising the data, the authors created a thematic synthesis by identifying common issues, trends in using ethnopedagogy, and the challenges and opportunities in applying this method to Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. This process aimed to identify the link between theory and practice in the field and to develop a conceptual framework that could serve as a basis for developing contextual learning practices. In line with Fadilah and Ardiansyah (2023), thematic synthesis in literature studies allows researchers to not only compile information but also provide critical interpretations that can be used as implementation recommendations. Thus, this method is not only descriptive but also analytical and reflective, contributing to the development of science and practice in culture-based education.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Ethnopedagogy Enhances the Context of Indonesian Language Learning

One study found that an ethnopedagogical approach successfully made Indonesian language learning more contextual and relevant to students' lives. When students were introduced to materials derived from local culture, such as folktales, regional proverbs, or traditional songs, they more easily grasped the structure and meaning of the language. This aligns with research by Lestari and Ramadhan (2022), which showed that integrating local culture into Indonesian language teaching improved students' comprehension of narrative and descriptive texts because the material presented was more familiar and meaningful to them.

The local context also plays a role in fostering student learning motivation. Students feel proud when their local culture is incorporated into the classroom, leading them to become more active participants in discussions, reading, and writing. This reinforces the argument of Fadilah and Ardiansyah (2023), who stated that culture-based learning increases students' self-confidence, particularly in their oral communication skills. In Indonesian language classes, using stories of local figures or regional legends as teaching materials can encourage students to speak more fluently and expressively.

The connection between language and culture in ethnopedagogy makes the learning process not only cognitive but also affective and social. Language is taught not merely as a grammatical structure as a means of expressing local values. This supports Vygotsky's constructivist theory, which emphasises the importance of social context in constructing meaning. In other words, ethnopedagogy enriches the meaning of learning Indonesian through an approach that is grounded and relevant to students' daily experiences (Wijayanti & Prasetya, 2024).

#### 4.2 Strengthening Character Values through Language and Culture

Ethnopedagogy is also effective in supporting student character development. Local values such as cooperation, politeness, honesty, and patriotism can be instilled through Indonesian language learning materials. Maulida and Hidayatullah (2024) state that cultural texts, such as regional fables and local heroic stories, not only improve literacy skills but also reinforce the internalisation of the character values contained within the stories.

Learning using an ethnopedagogical approach encourages students to reflect on their own experiences and values. For example, when students are asked to rewrite a folktale from a personal perspective, they not only copy but also interpret social values relevant to their context. This activity aligns with the concept of contextual character education proposed by Kartikasari and Yusnita (2023), which argues that character formation is more effective when directly linked to students' cultural experiences.

Teachers can use language as a cultural vehicle to instill noble values through various text genres, ranging from narrative to expository. Teachers can design local culture-based learning projects that encourage students to interview traditional figures, write cultural reports, or create regional pantun (rhymes). These activities naturally strengthen character values through enjoyable and meaningful literacy activities (Putri & Harun, 2024).

#### 4.3 Improving Literacy through Local Cultural Texts

The ethnopedagogical approach significantly contributes to improving students' literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing. The use of local texts makes students more enthusiastic about exploring reading content because

they feel a connection to it. Yuliana and Hartono (2023) noted that fourth- and fifth-grade elementary school students showed significant improvements in reading comprehension after being introduced to folktales from their own region.

Writing activities based on local culture also help students develop ideas and expand their vocabulary. When asked to write stories or descriptions of their cultural environment, students naturally access their existing knowledge. This reinforces the constructivist approach to Indonesian language learning, where knowledge is built from concrete experiences. Lestari and Ramadhan (2022) noted that local-based writing activities enhance the authenticity of students' writing and critical thinking skills.

Cultural literacy acquired through local texts also contributes to students' ability to understand diverse language structures and varieties. By studying various text forms such as pantun, proverbs, or regional legends, students are exposed to a variety of linguistic styles, enriching their ability to produce texts. This supports Maulida and Hidayatullah's (2024) view that local culture-based learning creates a broader space for language exploration for elementary school students.

#### **4.4 The Role of Teachers in the Implementation of Ethnopedagogy**

Teachers play a central role in the successful implementation of an ethnopedagogical approach. They serve not only as instructors but also as facilitators, innovators, and bridges between local culture and the national curriculum. According to Fadilah and Ardiansyah (2023), teachers' competence in understanding, selecting, and developing locally based materials determines the extent to which this approach can be effectively implemented in the classroom.

Unfortunately, many teachers still struggle to recognise the potential of local culture as a teaching resource. Lack of training and limited references are key factors. Research by Wijayanti and Prasetya (2024) found that only 30% of elementary school teachers actively develop local culture-based teaching materials, while the remainder still rely on generic textbooks. This emphasises the need to strengthen teacher capacity through ongoing training and mentoring.

Support from the community and educational policy is essential to strengthen the role of teachers. Collaboration between schools, community leaders, cultural practitioners, and the education office can be an effective strategy in developing culture-based Indonesian language learning modules. Kartikasari and Yusnita (2023) state that the success of ethnopedagogy depends heavily on an inclusive and collaborative educational ecosystem, not just on the abilities of individual teachers.

#### **4.5 Challenges and Recommendations for the Implementation of Ethnopedagogy**

Despite its many advantages, implementing an ethnopedagogical approach is not without its challenges. One of the main challenges is the limited availability of authentic learning resources appropriate to the local context. Many schools, especially in urban areas, struggle to locate well-documented materials on local culture. This requires teachers to make extra efforts to independently gather information, which is not always possible under busy work conditions (Ramadhani & Kusuma, 2023).

Another obstacle is the lack of awareness and appreciation of the importance of local culture in education. Some teachers and parents still believe that traditional culture is irrelevant to modern needs. This clearly contradicts the philosophy of education, which prioritises local wisdom as the foundation for identity and character formation. According to Maulida and Hidayatullah (2024), a socialisation approach and the strengthening of perceptions are needed so that all stakeholders recognise the importance of local culture as an integral part of basic education.

We recommend developing operational guidelines for implementing ethnopedagogy in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. These guidelines should include examples of excellent practices, culture-based teaching modules, and appropriate learning evaluation strategies. Local governments are also expected to encourage the documentation and digitisation of folklore and local cultural expressions to ensure accessibility as teaching materials. Fadilah and Ardiansyah (2023) propose the formalisation of an ethnopedagogical approach as a regional policy to bolster cultural identity-based education.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the literature review, the ethnopedagogical approach has been proven to make a significant contribution in improving the quality of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. This approach makes the learning process more contextual, meaningful, and rooted in the local cultural values of students. Through the integration of cultural elements such as folklore, regional pantun, and local traditional practices, students can develop holistic language skills, both listening, speaking, reading, and writing more actively and meaningfully. Additionally, this approach effectively shapes students' character and instills noble values, such as mutual cooperation, respect, and love for their homeland, by using learning materials that align with their socio-cultural background. Thus, ethnopedagogy is one of the important strategies in realising Indonesian language education that is not only orientated towards linguistic aspects but also on strengthening students' identity and self-identity.

However, the implementation of this approach still faces various challenges, such as limited local culture-based learning resources, inadequate teacher training, and low policy support at the educational unit level. Therefore, synergy is needed between teachers, schools, communities, and local governments to develop and provide quality, contextual teaching resources. To guarantee that learning is more than just ceremonial or symbolic, it is also essential that teachers receive continual training in incorporating ethnopedagogy into the Indonesian language curriculum. Future recommendations include the development of operational guidelines for implementing ethnopedagogy that are applicable and implemented in various regions, along with strengthening local cultural documentation as a learning



basis. With these strategic steps, Indonesian language learning will be increasingly effective in shaping literate, character-driven, and cultured students.

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