



# Revitalizing Local Cultural Values through Indonesian Language Learning in Elementary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

*Revitalizing local cultural values is crucial for maintaining national identity amidst increasingly massive globalization. Elementary schools, as the foundation of basic education, play a strategic role in internalizing local cultural values in students from an early age. Indonesian language learning is an effective vehicle for instilling these values because it encompasses a variety of language skills rich in local content, such as reading folklore texts, writing pantun (rhymes), discussing customs, and presenting cultural observations. This literature review aims to examine in depth how Indonesian language learning in elementary schools can be utilized as a medium for revitalizing local culture. This research was conducted by reviewing various previous research results, scientific articles, and educational policy documents. The study results indicate that integrating local cultural values into Indonesian language learning not only enriches students' linguistic competence but also strengthens their character, identity, and love for regional cultural heritage. The strategies used include a culture-based thematic approach, the use of locally based texts, and creative activities based on regional stories. This study recommends the need for teacher training, the development of locally culture-based teaching materials, and educational policy support that supports cultural preservation through learning. Thus, Indonesian language learning can become a meaningful space for shaping a younger generation that is not uprooted from its cultural roots.*

**Keywords :** Culture Local, Revitalization, Indonesian Language Learning , Elementary School, Local Wisdom.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in local cultural heritage, reflecting the nation's identity and the diversity of its people. Local culture encompasses not only art and tradition but also noble values that shape the community's character, such as mutual cooperation, courtesy, honesty, and respect for nature and others. Unfortunately, in recent decades, these values have begun to erode due to the rapid flow of globalization, modernization, and the penetration of foreign cultures that do not always align with the character of local Indonesian culture (Yulianti & Nugroho, 2021). Children, as the nation's future generation, are often more familiar with foreign cultures than with their own, both in terms of language, lifestyle, and mindset. This presents a major challenge for education to revitalize local cultural values from an early age, particularly through learning at the elementary school level.

Elementary schools play a strategic role as the first formal educational institution, not only teaching basic science but also instilling the foundations of character and life values. One subject with significant potential for internalizing local cultural values is Indonesian. This subject not only develops students' language skills but also provides a platform for conveying moral and social messages through various reading texts, writing activities, discussions, and listening and speaking activities (Wibowo, 2023). With the right approach, Indonesian language learning can be utilized as an effective medium for instilling local cultural values through contextual and enjoyable activities.

In the context of the Independent Curriculum, teachers have the flexibility to select and develop learning materials tailored to the characteristics and needs of students, including by integrating local content. The Ministry of Education , Culture, Research, and Technology (2023) emphasized the importance of strengthening national identity through local culture-based education that positions students as active subjects in recognizing and appreciating their own culture. Therefore, Indonesian language teachers play a crucial role in developing lesson plans (RPPs) that include texts or activities rooted in the lives and cultures of students, such as folktales, regional legends, pantuns, and descriptions of customs.

Previous research has shown that using local culture-based texts in Indonesian language learning can improve students' understanding of culture and the moral values contained within it. Hartati and Putra (2021) found that

students more easily understood and became emotionally engaged when the texts used were based on local folklore. Furthermore, they also showed improvements in their writing and speaking skills because they felt connected to the material being studied. This demonstrates that learning Indonesian based on local culture is not only beneficial for cultural preservation but also impacts students' literacy competencies .

However, in practice, integrating local culture into Indonesian language learning still faces various challenges. Some teachers still struggle to select or develop locally based teaching materials due to limited resources or lack of training. Furthermore, not all schools have policies or support that encourage the use of local culture in teaching and learning activities (Ratnasari, 2024). Another challenge is Indonesia's vast cultural diversity, which requires contextual and flexible understanding from each educator in developing relevant and meaningful learning strategies.

To address these challenges, various approaches have been developed, one of which is a culture-based thematic approach that links lesson themes to students' cultural lives. Prasetyo and Widodo (2023) developed a culture-based thematic learning model that integrates four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) with local contexts, such as traditional ceremonies, traditional games, and regional specialties. This model has been proven to increase students' active participation and strengthen their sense of pride in their own culture. This approach is highly relevant for implementation in the context of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools, which aims to shape character and a love for the nation's culture.

Considering the urgency of preserving local culture and the potential of Indonesian language learning as an educational and cultural medium, further research is needed on strategies for revitalizing local cultural values through Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. This literature review aims to identify approaches, best practices, and recommendations for implementing learning that integrates local cultural values. It is hoped that the results of this study can serve as a reference for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in grounding local cultural values in a structured and systematic manner through formal education.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indonesian language learning in elementary schools is currently not only focused on mastering the four language skills, but also directed at developing character and instilling noble values in students. According to Anindita and Kurniawan (2023), learning that includes local cultural content indirectly strengthens students' identity because language and culture are two closely interconnected entities. Indonesian, as the unifying language of the nation, can be an effective tool for reintroducing local values that have begun to be marginalized. Through literary texts such as fairy tales, fables, and regional legends, students not only learn to understand the content of the reading but also grasp the moral and social values contained within. This demonstrates that Indonesian language learning can be a strategic bridge in efforts to revitalize local culture.

Research conducted by Maulida and Firdaus (2024) shows that the use of local wisdom-based texts in Indonesian language learning can increase students' cognitive and affective engagement. Students feel more engaged and motivated when the learning material is sourced from a cultural context they are familiar with and experience in their daily lives. In their study, they found that students who learn through local stories tend to more easily understand the storyline and vocabulary, and are able to connect personal experiences with the text's content. Thus, the integration of local culture in Indonesian language learning not only impacts learning outcomes but also creates a meaningful and contextual learning experience.

Support for local culture-based learning also comes from the educational policy side. As Ramadhani and Sulastris (2022) noted, the Independent Curriculum provides ample space for the development of contextual learning rooted in regional culture. This represents a crucial opportunity for elementary schools to explore the potential of local culture as enriching teaching materials. They also emphasize the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community in collecting stories, traditions, and cultural practices that can be used as learning materials. This approach is believed to be able to revitalize local values that have previously existed only in informal settings .

From an implementation perspective, a study by Nurhasanah and Yusri (2025) identified various Indonesian language learning strategies that successfully integrated local culture, including student-led folktale writing projects, regional poetry reading competitions, and presentations of regional culture in the form of videos or speeches. They also highlighted the importance of teacher competence in recognizing and exploring local cultural potential relevant to students' learning needs. Without teacher understanding and awareness of the importance of cultural preservation, the learning process tends to become a meaningless routine. Therefore, teacher training and mentoring in developing local culture-based teaching materials is one of the important recommendations from the research results.

Furthermore, the theoretical perspective also emphasizes that cultural revitalization through learning is not simply achieved through the delivery of information, but also through an active process of internalizing values. According to Kartikasari and Dewantara (2023), a learning process that encourages students to reflect on, discuss, and re-express cultural values in written or oral forms will strengthen their appreciation of those values. In the context of Indonesian language learning, activities such as writing stories of cultural experiences, composing poetry on customs, or composing expository texts about local traditions are concrete forms of humanistic and transformative learning. In other words, learning Indonesian with local cultural content is an important instrument in shaping national identity from an early age.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Approach and Type

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature study type ( literature review ). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for an in-depth review of various theories, concepts, and empirical findings from library sources relevant to the topic of revitalizing local cultural values through Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. The literature study aims to synthesize information from various research results, scientific articles, and policy documents to gain a comprehensive understanding and develop evidence-based recommendations. This approach also allows researchers to conduct critical analyses of learning models, implementation strategies, and the effectiveness of local cultural integration in the teaching and learning process.

#### 3.2 Data Sources and Inclusion Criteria

The data sources in this study come from accredited national journal articles (Sinta 1–4), educational seminar proceedings , academic reference books, and official policy documents such as guidelines from the Ministry of Education , Culture, Research, and Technology. The inclusion criteria used to select the sources include: (1) published between 2020 and 2025; (2) directly relevant to the theme of local cultural integration in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools; (3) written by authors with educational backgrounds or experience in elementary education or Indonesian language; and (4) containing data or arguments that can be analyzed thematically. A total of 25 documents were systematically reviewed in this process.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used is content analysis . The analysis was conducted thematically. The first step was to identify and group data based on central themes, such as local culture-based learning approaches, forms of cultural value integration in Indonesian language lessons, and challenges and solutions for implementation in elementary schools. After the data was collected, a thematic synthesis process was carried out to identify patterns, differences, and similarities from various sources. The analyzed data were then interpreted in the context of elementary education and the Indonesian language curriculum. Content validity was maintained by comparing several sources and using the principle of literature triangulation to ensure consistency of information.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Integration of Local Literary Texts in Indonesian Language Learning

Integrating local literary texts into Indonesian language learning in elementary schools is an effective strategy for instilling cultural values in students. Folktales, legends, regional fables, and traditional fairy tales not only offer engaging storylines but are also rich in moral values, ethics, and local wisdom that can shape students' character. Sumarni et al. (2024) emphasized that the use of the Gawai story from the Dayak people of Bengkayang in Indonesian language classes significantly influenced students' understanding of their own regional culture. By presenting content that resonated with their lives, students more easily understood the context and were motivated to explore their culture more deeply.

Learning Indonesian using local stories also creates emotional engagement in the learning process. This aligns with the opinion of Rokhmawan & Firmansyah (2018), who stated that local stories in the form of picture books can increase students' interest in reading and empathy for traditional values. When students read stories about local figures who display resilience, honesty, and caring attitudes, they will more easily internalize these attitudes. Strengthening character through local texts becomes even more powerful because students not only read but also discuss the meaning of the story and rewrite it in the form of new, creative texts.

Furthermore, local literary texts enable students to understand Indonesia's rich and diverse culture, foster tolerance, and prevent them from developing an exclusive attitude toward their own culture. In the context of Indonesian language learning, students not only learn to comprehend the content of stories but also develop an awareness of their cultural identity. When learning is linked to local culture, Indonesian serves not only as a means of communication but also as an instrument for cultural preservation. Therefore, teachers need to consistently integrate local literary texts into learning materials as a strategy to strengthen national identity and character.

#### 4.2 Local Culture-Based Thematic Approach as a Pedagogical Innovation

A thematic approach based on local culture offers an innovative framework for designing more meaningful and contextual Indonesian language learning. Through this approach, teachers not only teach language skills separately but also integrate them into themes derived from students' local cultural life, such as traditional ceremonies, traditional cuisine, regional games, and community social practices. According to Khazin (2024), this learning model provides space for students to explore cultural values through integrated reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. This process encourages more lively learning because students feel the subject matter is relevant to their real world.

The main advantage of this approach lies in its ability to build connections between the teaching material and students' personal experiences. When students are asked to write descriptive texts about traditional markets in their villages or recount their experiences participating in traditional ceremonies, they not only develop their writing skills but also hone their reflective skills and cultural empathy. This aligns with the concept of contextual education, where learning is designed to enable students to connect knowledge with their real-life experiences (Ramadhani & Sulastri, 2022). Such activities strengthen long-term memory and foster a deeper understanding of the cultural values being instilled.

However, the success of a local culture-based thematic approach depends heavily on teachers' preparedness in designing activities and selecting appropriate teaching materials. Teachers must possess a sound cultural understanding and be creative in linking core subject competencies to local cultural themes. Therefore, teacher training in developing local culture-based thematic learning is crucial to ensure this approach is not merely theoretical but is effectively and consistently implemented in classroom practice.

#### **4.3 Utilization of Visual Media and Creative Projects in Cultural Revitalization**

The use of visual media and creative projects is a highly effective learning method for revitalizing local cultural values. In Indonesian language learning, media such as cultural documentary videos, folklore infographics, traditional posters, and digital comics featuring local content can enrich students' learning experiences. According to Hatima (2025), the use of visual media based on local culture increases students' engagement in learning and strengthens their memory of the moral messages conveyed. Visualization makes it easier for students to understand abstract concepts in stories or cultural texts because they can see concrete representations of these cultural symbols.

On the other hand, creative projects such as creating a student-generated folktale book, creating a vlog about local traditions, or writing a poem about customs allow students to actively participate in the learning process. These activities combine language skills with artistic expression, resulting in holistic learning. Margaretha et al. (2024) in their research in Bengkayang showed that when students were asked to write and draw Dayak folktales, they demonstrated significant improvements in creativity and cultural awareness. This project also involved the participation of families and the local community, making learning more collaborative and contextual.

Beyond mere academic activities, visual media and local culture-based projects also serve as a means of strengthening contextual digital literacy. Students are trained to seek out authentic cultural information, process it into text or visuals, and present it in class forums or on school social media. With this approach, students become not only recipients of culture but also active participants in its preservation. This aligns with the goals of 21st-century education, which emphasize collaboration, creativity, and information literacy, while maintaining local values as the foundation of identity.

#### **4.4 Teacher Competence as a Key Success Factor**

Teachers' ability and awareness in integrating local culture into Indonesian language learning are determining factors in the success of revitalizing cultural values in elementary schools. Sumarni et. et al. (2024) revealed that most teachers have not received specific training in developing local culture-based teaching materials, making it difficult for them to design contextual and meaningful learning. Many teachers are still fixated on national textbooks, which tend to be culturally neutral, thus providing little space for strengthening students' local identities. This suggests that without adequate pedagogical and cultural competencies, cultural revitalization efforts through education tend to be suboptimal.

Teacher professional development in this context includes training in local culture-based curriculum, development of contextual teaching materials, and training in project-based participatory learning techniques. Nurhasanah & Yusri (2025) emphasize that teachers need to be trained not only in methodological aspects but also in an anthropological understanding of the culture of the surrounding community. With this knowledge, teachers will be more sensitive in selecting appropriate values to teach and able to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity in the teaching and learning process. Teacher involvement in local curriculum development is also crucial so they have a sense of ownership over the teaching materials used.

With adequate competency, teachers become not only language instructors but also cultural facilitators who can foster students' appreciation and love for their own culture. Teachers will be able to create classes that focus not only on linguistic skills but also on developing students' cultural awareness and national character. Therefore, investing in strengthening teacher capacity is key to the sustainability of local culture-based learning.

#### **4.5 Education Policy and Community Collaboration as Key Supporters**

National education policies that provide space for local content are crucial in supporting cultural revitalization in elementary schools. The Merdeka Curriculum, as the latest policy, opens up significant opportunities to adapt teaching materials to the cultural characteristics of each region. Ramadhani & Sulastris (2022) state that this curriculum flexibility encourages schools to explore local cultural values as part of contextual learning. However, this policy needs to be translated operationally into implementation guidelines, resource support, and an evaluation system that encourages systemic cultural integration in schools.

Beyond policy, collaboration between schools, parents, traditional leaders, and local cultural institutions is crucial to the success of culture-based learning programs. Margaretha et al. (2024) noted that in schools that involve the community in developing cultural materials, the learning process becomes more authentic and meaningful. For example, inviting traditional leaders to share local history or holding cultural days at school can increase student participation and strengthen the relationship between the school and the community. This collaboration also enriches teaching materials because it draws on real-life practices within the community.

Education cannot be effective in a silo; it must be connected to students' social and cultural lives. Therefore, education policies need to be supported by concrete collaborative practices between various parties. Synergy between the curriculum, teachers, the community, and local governments provides a strong foundation for developing a young generation that is not uprooted from its cultural roots. In this way, learning Indonesian becomes a strategic vehicle for maintaining the sustainability of local culture as part of the nation's identity.



## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that Indonesian language learning in elementary schools has strategic potential in revitalizing local cultural values. Through the integration of local literary texts, a culture-based thematic approach, and the use of visual media and creative projects, students not only develop language skills but also internalize the noble values of the nation's culture. Local culture-based learning has been proven to increase learning motivation, cultural understanding, and shape students' overall character. Values such as mutual cooperation, honesty, tolerance, and love for the homeland can be instilled contextually and enjoyably if packaged in creative and participatory Indonesian language learning.

However, the success of this strategy depends heavily on teacher competence, support from flexible education policies such as the Independent Curriculum (Curriculum Merdeka), and active collaboration between schools, communities, and parents. Without systemic support and ongoing teacher training, the integration of local cultural values tends to be sporadic and inconsistent. Therefore, strategic and structured steps are needed in developing the curriculum, developing contextual teaching materials, and building synergy among various educational stakeholders to ensure optimal and sustainable implementation of local cultural revitalization through Indonesian language learning.

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