

Research Article

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Digital Book with Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality Enriched by Indonesian Communication Culture for Foreign Students.

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Abstract

Background/purpose. This study utilizes Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Augmented Reality (AR) to improve the intercultural literacy of foreign students communicating in Indonesia through the integration of technology and local wisdom. By integrating AI and AR, a digital book is developed for Indonesian Language for Foreign Students (in Indonesia, we call it BIPA). With an intercultural and plurilingual competency-based approach, this innovation aims to strengthen the BIPA learning ecosystem and improve Indonesian language skills among international learners.

Materials/methods. Research and development (R&D) with the Borg and Gall model begins with data collection on communication culture and intercultural communication in BIPA, involving surveys and interviews. Next, a digital book framework is prepared, followed by the development of a prototype that integrates various media. After expert validation tests and small group trials, the product is revised and tested in class to measure its effectiveness.

Results. A survey on the difficulties of foreign students adapting to Indonesia showed that language (100%) and cultural differences (41,2%), so developing intercultural literacy is important for BIPA students. Digital books can be used in foreign student classes, and they argue that it is useful for them. Digital books can go beyond traditional language instruction by immersing learners in a cultural context, thereby deepening their understanding of Indonesian society and communication styles.

Conclusion. This innovative resource leverages generative AI and Augmented Reality technologies to create an engaging and personalized learning experience for BIPA learners, emphasizing the nuances of Indonesian communication culture.

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1. Introduction

The interconnectedness of interest in cross-cultural communication and the mastery of multiple languages is a hallmark of globalization. The Indonesian language has many speakers in Southeast Asia, playing a significant role in global exchange and being key to understanding Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and dynamic society. The BIPA program plays a significant role in facilitating language and cultural exchange. As the world becomes increasingly integrated, the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries becomes increasingly important, making the development of intercultural literacy among language learners a crucial goal. Swastiwi (2024:1) BIPA programs traditionally concentrate on language proficiency, but the nuances of cultural understanding are equally important for learners to navigate real-world interactions and foster meaningful relationships with Indonesian speakers (Widiyanti et al., 2024). Therefore, this project seeks to bridge the gap between language proficiency and cultural competence by creating resources that actively engage learners with the intricacies of Indonesian communication styles.

The benefits of well-designed digital resources, such as accessibility, interactivity, and multimedia integration, remain invaluable to teachers and learners during face-to-face learning. However, the transition to online BIPA learning also presents its challenges. Educators often encounter students with diverse language backgrounds and varying levels of Indonesian language proficiency, requiring teaching methods and materials that can be tailored to each student's needs. In addition, maintaining student engagement in an online environment and effectively addressing vocabulary limitations requires creative and interactive pedagogical approaches, often utilizing multimedia and applications. Learners can easily overcome these challenges with the right preparation to practice the types of questions used in each situation (Tian-uan, 2025).

Although some studies suggest that BIPA students may still prefer traditional printed materials, e-resources are generally acceptable, indicating that the key lies in the quality and design of digital content to make it engaging and effective. The need to seamlessly integrate technology into BIPA learning to explore and understand Indonesian local wisdom further emphasizes the urgency of resources such as interactive digital smart books. This requires a breakthrough beyond the traditional textbook format to embrace the potential of digital media in creating a richer, more engaging, and culturally immersive learning experience for BIPA students. Digital media has a role in BIPA tutorial activities that influence language skills between BIPA students and language partners (Solikhah & Nurlina, 2024).

Rapid advances in AI and AR technologies present unprecedented opportunities to revolutionize the language education landscape, including BIPA learning. AI generative models possess the remarkable ability to create new content, tailor learning experiences to individual needs, and deliver personalized feedback, thereby making learning more engaging and effective. In the educational context, AI can be used to personalize learning paths by analyzing students' current knowledge levels and learning preferences and dynamically adjusting learning materials in real-time in AR and VR environments (Baskara & Mbato, 2024).

In addition to personalization, AI can provide real-time guidance and support in AR environments, offering immediate feedback on pronunciation and suggesting necessary adjustments during virtual experiments or language practice scenarios. This instant feedback accelerates the learning process and builds learner confidence. AI can also enhance content creation by generating personalized quizzes, educational games, and immersive experiences through virtual and augmented reality. AR, on the other hand, overlays digital content onto the real world, creating an interactive and immersive learning experience that can make abstract concepts more real and engaging. AI and AR can work synergistically to create a powerful learning tool for BIPA (Amalia et al., 2024, p. 11). AI

can generate customized 3D objects for AR environments, bringing Indonesian cultural elements to life in an interactive way.

2. Literature Review

Digitalization has become a key driver in the transformation of education, including language learning. Information and communication technologies (ICT) not only increase student engagement but also enable more interactive and collaborative learning (Putra et al., 2024). Digital platforms provide wider access to learning resources, allowing students to learn more flexibly and according to their individual needs. In this context, digitalization not only functions as a tool but also as a paradigm shift in the way we teach and learn languages. In learning BIPA, cultural understanding is very important because language and culture are closely related (Muhammadiyah et al., 2024). Research shows that effective BIPA teaching must include cultural elements to improve learners' understanding and communication skills. This is in line with the view of Fithriyah and Isma (2024), which states that language learning involves not only linguistic aspects but also social and cultural aspects that shape how to communicate.

AI has emerged as a promising tool in education, with the ability to create adaptive and responsive learning materials. Liriwati, (2023) explains that AI can help create a more personalized learning experience by adjusting content and teaching methods according to students' needs. In the context of BIPA, the application of AI can increase student interactivity and engagement, as well as provide faster and more accurate feedback. This allows learners to learn more effectively and efficiently, and increases their motivation to learn the language. In addition, AR has become an increasingly popular technology in education, due to its ability to combine digital elements with the real world. (Muti et al., 2024). Dendodi et al. (2024) show that AR can increase student motivation and engagement by providing an immersive and interactive learning experience. In BIPA learning, AR can be used to introduce communication culture more interestingly, allowing learners to interact with cultural content in a more realistic context. Thus, AR not only enriches the learning experience but also helps students understand the social and cultural contexts underlying language use.

In the era of globalization, intercultural and plurilingual competences are becoming increasingly important in language learning. Tatiana et al. (2023) emphasize that learners need to develop an understanding of other cultures and the ability to communicate effectively in different contexts. This competency-based approach can help BIPA learners not only learn the language but also understand the norms, values, and communication practices that apply in Indonesian society. This aligns with the view that intercultural competence involves the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Various studies using AI and AR digital technology, such as that conducted by Nawafleh & Al-Abbas (2025), discuss the effectiveness of AI-based learning modules in acquiring concepts for seventh-grade students and the effectiveness of AI-based computerized learning modules in seventh-grade students' learning for the development of critical thinking. An et al., (2025) also conducted research on artificial intelligence by discussing bibliometric analysis of education and research of the Qur'an, which evaluates five main indicators, namely, author, country level, scientific production, affiliation, and source or journal. The research conducted by Messaoudi (2024) discusses the impact of blended learning models on the learning achievement of students at the Digital Literacy Skills University, with the aim of the research being to improve the digital literacy skills of undergraduate students.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a Research and Development (R&D) approach using a model developed by Borg & Gall, which consists of interrelated systematic steps (Jusuf & Istiyowati, 2023, p. 90).

This research uses the Research and Development (R&D) method with the Borg & Gall model, which consists of ten systematic stages namely (1) Research and Data Collection: A literature study on the communication culture of East Java, Jakarta, and Central Java, interculturality in BIPA, and the integration of AI and AR in education. Surveys and interviews with BIPA learners, teachers, and cultural experts from each region, (2) Planning: Preparation of a Smart Book framework that includes manners, nonverbal language, implications, and small talk, (3) Initial Product Development: Prototyping with integration of text, audio, video, animation, and AR features, (4) Expert Validation Test: Evaluation by BIPA learning experts, cultural experts, and learning media experts, (5) Small Group Trial: Limited testing with 5 BIPA students at UNESA, UNJ, and UMP to assess initial effectiveness, (6) Product Revisions: Improvements based on small group trials, (7) Field Trial: Implementation of measuring the effectiveness of digital interactive smart books through pre-test and post-test, (8) Final Product Refinement: Finalization of digital interactive smart books based on the results of field trials, (9) Dissemination and Publication: Publication in the journal Scopus EDUPIJ Q2, and (10) Extensive Production and Implementation: IPR registration and dissemination of digital interactive smart books through APPBIPA, ADOBSI, and Balai Bahasa.

Following the outcomes of the small group trial, revisions were made to enhance the existing content and features. A field trial was then conducted to assess the effectiveness of the digital interactive smart book using pre-test and post-test methodologies. The findings from this field trial informed improvements to the final product, allowing for the optimization of the digital interactive smart.

Once the final product is ready, the next step is dissemination and publication, where the results of this study will be published in the Scopus journal EDUPIJ Q2 to reach a wider audience. Finally, widespread production and implementation are carried out by registering intellectual property rights (IPR) and disseminating digital interactive smart books through organizations such as APPBIPA, ADOBSI, and Balai Bahasa, so that they can be accessed by more users and provide significant benefits in BIPA learning. An illustration of the research methodology is presented in the figure below.

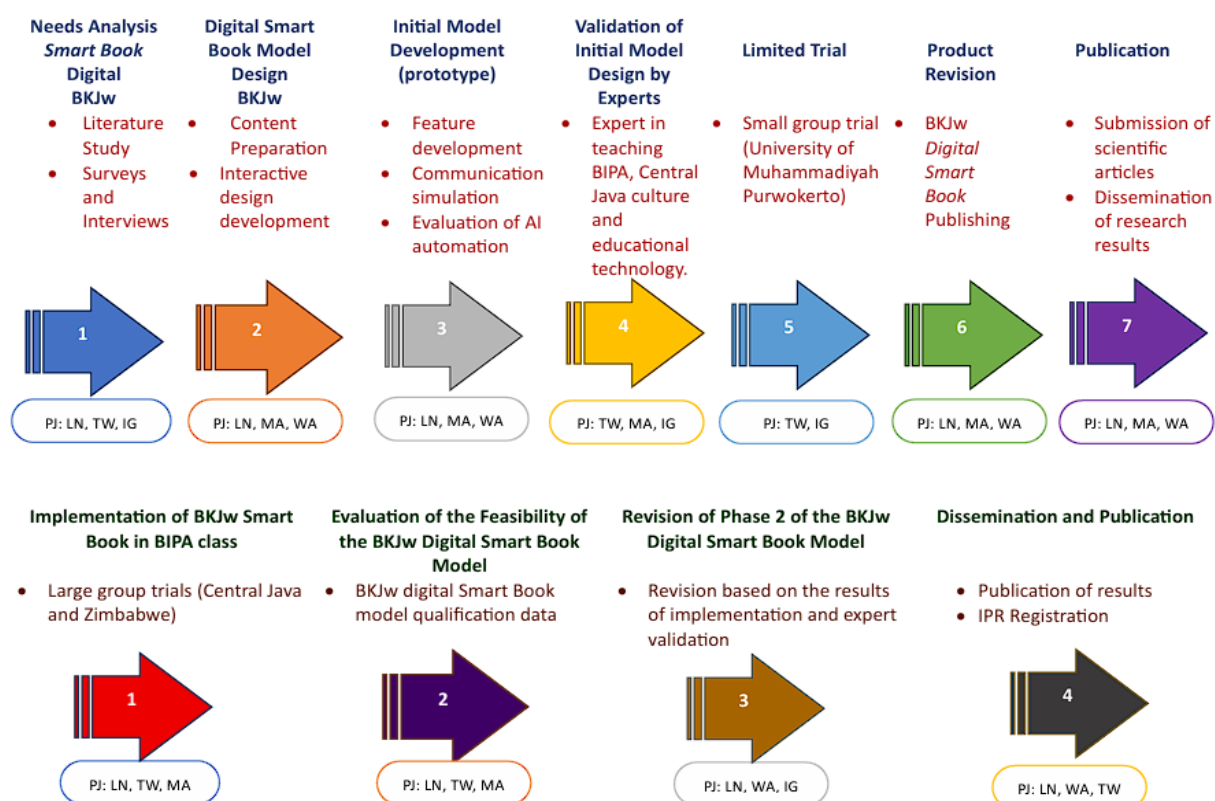


Figure 1. The Methodology of the R&D Digital Book

4. Results

The initial survey of adaptation difficulties of foreign students who first arrived in Indonesia is shown in the following figure



Figure 2. Shows the Adaptation Difficulties of Foreign Students in Indonesia

A vibrant group of 50 international students from 15 Thailand students, 5 South Korea students, and 30 Zimbabwe students shared their insights by participating in our survey. Their diverse perspectives promise to enrich our understanding of the global student experience. The key factors influencing the adaptation of foreign students are predominantly language, which affects 100% of respondents, followed by food (64.7%), cultural differences (41.2%), and acclimatization to the weather (41.2%). Consequently, fostering intercultural literacy is essential for BIPA students, enabling them to communicate more effectively and establish meaningful relationships with native speakers. These findings align with Tajfel and Turner's theory, which posits that individuals must cultivate the ability to adapt to diverse cultures to enhance intercultural communication. This theory explains how individuals define their identity through group membership, influencing their behavior towards others.

Here is a pilot study examining the importance of developing a digital book using AI and AR for foreign students, with an emphasis on communication and culture. The current BIPA curriculum aligns with the BIPA Graduate Competency Standards (SKL) as outlined in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 27 of 2017, which emphasizes the importance of developing intercultural communication skills. Additionally, the topic of communication culture in Central Java has been explored in the book "Sahabatku Indonesia," published in 2016, as illustrated in the accompanying image.:

RECAPITULATION OF TYPES OF CULTURE IN BIPA BOOKS A1 – C2 IN 2016

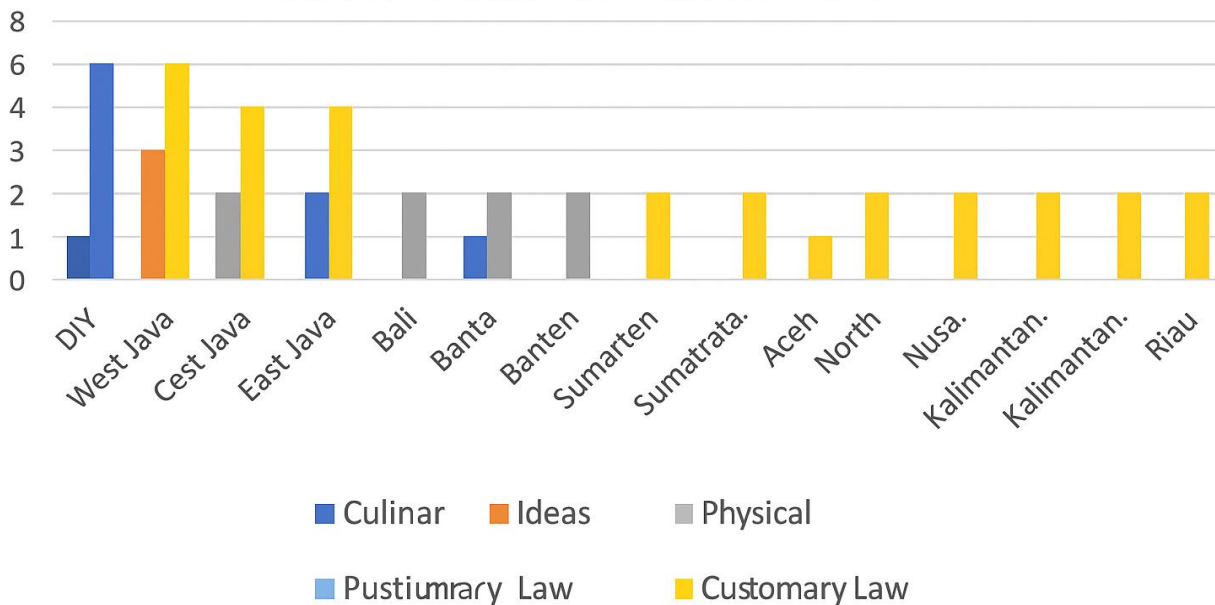


Figure 3. Cultural Data in the Book “Sahabatku Indonesia” Published in 2016

The BIPA A1 book that discusses Central Javanese culture still has limitations in integrating aspects of communication language. Currently, the book only covers one topic on culinary, eight topics on tangible culture such as temples and traditional houses, and eight topics discussing customs. However, there has been no in-depth discussion of communication language, such as ethics, Central Javanese customs, and gestures used in conversation. This shows the need for the addition of more comprehensive materials to help students understand the context of communication better.

Effective BIPA learning, especially in efforts to develop intercultural literacy, requires a deep understanding of communication culture in Indonesia. With its diverse ethnic groups and regional variations, Indonesia offers a complex and interesting cultural landscape. In general, communication in Indonesia is known as high-context communication, where much information is conveyed through non-verbal cues, context, and shared understanding, rather than just through clear verbal statements. This is in contrast to low-context cultures, where communication tends to be more direct and explicit (Yulianeta et al., 2024).

Christiani & Ikasari (2020) states that communication styles in various regions in Indonesia also have unique characteristics. For example, communication in Java, especially in East Java and Central Java, is often characterized by subtlety, directness, and an emphasis on maintaining harmony and respect for social hierarchy. In this context, polite language and avoiding direct conflict are highly valued (Dalimunthe et al., 2023). Although Indonesian serves as the official language in Jakarta and is widely used, the city's multicultural nature and historical influences also provide unique communication dynamics.

Despite regional differences, common themes can be found throughout Indonesia. Dalimunthe et al. (2023) argue that Indonesians generally value politeness and tend to communicate indirectly, often prioritizing maintaining "face" (avoiding embarrassment or humiliating oneself and others) over directness. This can be seen in the way they avoid direct rejection and use more polite language.

Non-verbal communication also plays an important role, with gestures, facial expressions, and body language conveying significant meaning.

Yulianeta et al. (2024) provided feedback that BIPA learners, especially those from cultures with a more direct communication style, understand that these nuances are essential to avoid misunderstandings and communicate effectively. For example, learners from South Korea may find differences in non-verbal cues compared to communication in Indonesia, which can lead to misinterpretations. Recognizing this potential for cultural clash is the first step in developing culturally sensitive BIPA materials that explicitly address these differences and provide learners with strategies to address them.

Table 1. Comparison of Communication Styles

Communication Aspects	General Indonesian Culture	East Java	Jakarta	Central Java
Candor	Indirect	Subtle, indirect	Indirect	Subtle, indirect
Use of Silence	General	General	Varies	General
Non-verbal Cues	Very important	Very important	Important	Very important
Emphasis on Harmony	Very high	Very high	Tall	Very high
Face Concept	Center	Center	Important	Center

Assessment strategies for digital textbooks involve several approaches, including the use of the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can Do Statements for Intercultural Communication. This aims to establish clear learning outcomes and design relevant assessment tasks. In addition, it is important to integrate intercultural communication elements into performance assignments and rubrics, and utilize measurement tools such as surveys and reflective journals to obtain student self-reports.(Moeller, 2022).

Scenario-based items that ask students to respond to culturally specific situations can also be effective assessment methods. Additionally, tools such as the Intercultural Effectiveness Survey (IES) can be used to measure student progress across multiple dimensions, such as ongoing learning, interpersonal engagement, and resilience. These tools provide useful quantitative data for assessing the impact of e-books on students' intercultural competence. It is important to note that standardized assessments may need to be adjusted or expanded to accurately reflect international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Table 2. Alignment of Digital Book Feature with Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Proposed Digital Book Features	Justification for Alignment
Focused Instruction	Clearly defined learning objectives for each module.	Ensuring that content and activities are directly relevant to expected learning outcomes.
Content Accuracy	Content is reviewed by cultural experts and BIPA educators.	Ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of cultural information and language usage.
Purposeful Technology	AR simulation of an Indonesian cultural setting.	Increase engagement and provide contextual learning experiences that are not possible with traditional materials.
Easy to Use Design	Intuitive navigation and clear visual layout.	Facilitates ease of use and allows learners to focus on the content rather than struggling with the interface.
Adaptability	AI-powered personalized learning paths based on learner progress.	Catering to different learning needs and paces, ensuring that learners receive tailored support.
Feedback Mechanism	An AI chatbot that provides instant feedback on pronunciation and grammar.	Offering timely and personalized guidance, helping learners identify and correct errors effectively.
Accessibility	Options for text-to-speech and adjustable font size.	Ensuring that students with visual impairments or different learning preferences can access content.
Intercultural Competence	Interactive scenarios that require students to navigate cultural dilemmas.	Directly assess and develop students' ability to apply their cultural knowledge and communication skills in realistic situations.

5. Discussion

To maximize the effectiveness of interactive digital smart books, it is crucial to take into account the cultural backgrounds and specific learning needs of the target student groups, including those from Thailand, South Korea, and Zimbabwe. Thai culture shares several similarities with Indonesian culture, particularly in areas such as respect for hierarchy and seniority, a strong emphasis on community and togetherness, the significance of religion and tradition, and a rich oral tradition. By leveraging these cultural similarities, we can create a more comfortable and relevant learning environment for Thai students, potentially enhancing their motivation and understanding. For instance, emphasizing the concept of "gotong royong" in Indonesia, which highlights the spirit of community, can resonate with similar values found in Thai culture.

South Korean learners, increasingly drawn to Indonesian culture due to the "Korean Wave" phenomenon, may encounter differences in communication styles, particularly in nonverbal cues. This smart book has the potential to address these misunderstandings by explicitly comparing and contrasting nonverbal communication styles between Indonesia and South Korea, thereby providing learners with practical strategies to navigate and overcome these differences effectively. To maximize the effectiveness of interactive digital books, it is important to consider the cultural

backgrounds and specific learning needs of the target student groups: Thai, South Korean, and Zimbabwean students. Thai culture shares several similarities with Indonesian culture, particularly in areas such as respect for hierarchy and seniority, emphasis on community and togetherness, the importance of religion and tradition, and a rich oral tradition (Yulaichah et al., 2024). Leveraging these cultural similarities can create a more comfortable and relevant learning environment for Thai students, potentially increasing their motivation and understanding. For example, highlighting the concept of "gotong royong" in Indonesia, which emphasizes community spirit, can align with similar values in Thai culture (Agustin, 2023). South Korean learners who are increasingly interested in Indonesian culture due to the "Korean Wave" phenomenon may experience communication differences, especially in nonverbal cues. This digital book can address these potential misunderstandings by explicitly comparing and contrasting nonverbal communication styles in Indonesia and South Korea, providing learners with practical guidance to overcome these differences.

Zimbabwean learners may face unique challenges, including language barriers (as English is the national language of Zimbabwe, while Indonesian and Javanese are widely spoken in areas such as Surakarta) and potential culture shock upon arrival in Indonesia. Digital books can include resources to assist their cultural adaptation, such as modules explaining common Indonesian customs and social norms. Additionally, Zimbabwean learners often prefer to learn through classroom instruction and discussion media that align with the interactive nature of digital books, which offer opportunities to engage with multimedia content and potentially incorporate collaborative online activities. By tailoring the content and features of digital books to address the specific cultural backgrounds and learning preferences of this target group, the resources can be made more relevant, engaging, and ultimately more effective in promoting intercultural literacy.

The integration of digital technologies is fundamentally changing the BIPA education landscape, increasing accessibility and effectiveness. E-learning platforms, language apps, and immersive technologies such as VR and AR provide learners with flexible, engaging, and interactive learning experiences. The development of culturally relevant language learning materials, which incorporate local wisdom and cultural context, plays a critical role in increasing student engagement, comprehension, and overall cultural understanding. Research shows that reading culturally relevant books can significantly improve students' reading comprehension and their ability to make personal connections with the material. Interactive digital books, with innovative integration of generative AI and AR technologies and a focus on Indonesian communication culture and local wisdom, have the potential to make a significant contribution to a more resilient and sustainable BIPA learning ecosystem (Sukrin & Ihlas, 2025).

Amalia et al., (2024:12) agree that AI's ability to personalize learning experiences, provide real-time feedback, and adapt to individual needs makes language learning more accessible and effective. Immersive AR capabilities can bring Indonesian culture to life, creating engaging and memorable learning experiences. By focusing on specific Indonesian communication styles and cultural nuances, these smart books address a critical need for culturally relevant materials that foster deeper intercultural understanding among learners. The development of these resources is in line with a broader movement toward creating a learner-centered ecosystem that fosters relationships, fosters a sense of belonging, and engages learners in meaningful ways. Furthermore, incorporating local wisdom into BIPA teaching not only enhances learners' cultural competence but also strengthens teachers' skills in delivering culturally responsive teaching. The successful implementation of this interactive digital book can be a model for future innovation in BIPA education, paving the way for a more engaging, effective, and culturally enriching learning experience for students around the world (Hong, 2023).

6. Conclusion

This research project addresses the growing global interest in Indonesian language learning and the critical need to improve intercultural literacy by proposing the development of an interactive digital book. This innovative resource harnesses the power of generative AI and Augmented Reality technologies to create an engaging and personalized learning experience for BIPA learners, with a particular focus on the nuances of Indonesian communication culture. The digital book aims to move beyond traditional language instruction by immersing learners in the cultural context of the language, fostering a deeper understanding of Indonesian society and communication styles.

7. Suggestion

By considering the specific cultural backgrounds of the target learners from Thailand, South Korea, and Zimbabwe, the digital books can be tailored to meet their unique needs and potential challenges, ultimately leading to more effective learning outcomes. Anticipated benefits include improved language proficiency, enhanced intercultural competence, increased learner engagement, and a deeper appreciation of Indonesian culture. This research has the potential to significantly advance the field of BIPA learning by demonstrating how technology can be effectively integrated with cultural insights to create a more sustainable and impactful learning ecosystem for the global community of Indonesian language learners. The researcher will cooperate with policymakers (APPBIPA and Balai Bahasa) and practitioners to use this digital book.

Declarations

Author Contributions. LN: Introduction, Literature Review, Data analysis, AF: Conceptualization, Methodology, IG: review-editing and writing, and original manuscript preparation, AS: data collection and prior analyses. All authors have read, checked, and approved the final version of the article.

Conflicts of Interest. The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Approval. We respect the results and data, so we keep the names of subjects.

Data Availability Statement. The data is derived by the BIPA institution of Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, and Universitas Negeri Jakarta.

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