

Research Article

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Cultural Immersion in BIPA Learning: Innovative Strategy for Developing Speaking Skills through Local Wisdom

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) strategically strengthens Indonesian insight and knowledge for international students. This research aims to describe the strategy and results of the Indonesian cultural immersion implemented in BIPA learning to improve speaking skills. Project-based learning and cultural integration through BIPA learning support the development of Indonesian language skills. Local wisdom in BIPA learning emphasizes culinary aspects, traditional clothing, tourism, and other fields with uniquely characteristic Indonesian values.

Materials/methods. This research employed a qualitative design, involving research subjects such as managers, teachers, and 12 students from BIPA level 1 at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA). The research data sources are BIPA learning activities, questionnaires to strengthen observation results, curriculum documents, teaching materials, supporting literature studies relevant to learning strategies, speaking skills, and innovative project-based learning in BIPA learning.

Results. The cultural immersion strategy is beneficial in understanding local Indonesian wisdom. Based on the data, the majority of respondents stated that innovative strategies in BIPA learning include visiting cultural places, participating in cultural activities, attending discussions and presentations, and watching Indonesian cultural films or videos. Additional support can be provided through role-playing or simulating cultural situations, as well as using applications such as Quizizz, Wordwall, and Kahoot. Reading articles or books also contributes to developing language skills through local wisdom.

Conclusion. These results suggest that experience-based interactive methods are more effective than text-based approaches. Integrating direct experience through projects with digital technology in learning Indonesian culture has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing BIPA students' understanding and involvement.

1. Introduction

Indonesian Language Learning for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) is designed for international students interested in learning the Indonesian language. This program is a strategic government initiative that aims to internationalize the Indonesian language. The Indonesian language teaching program is based on Article 44 of Law No. 24 of 2009, which concerns the function of Indonesian as an official language in a gradual, systematic, and sustainable manner. In line with this, article 31 of the government regulation states that the aim of internationalizing the Indonesian language is to demonstrate identity and increase the nation's competitiveness, which can be implemented through 1) using Indonesian in international forums, 2) learning Indonesian for foreigners, 3) linguistic and literary cooperation with parties abroad, 4) developing and empowering the Indonesian language abroad.

The trend of increasing interest in BIPA learning from year to year is increasingly positive. This is relevant to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, which shows that in 2020, there were 72,746 students, and in 2022, 150,290 students were studying Indonesian (Syahputra, 2025, p. 775). Indonesia functions in cultural development, cultural internationalization, and community development. Skills in communicating using Indonesian effectively facilitate cultural assimilation, thereby expanding a comprehensive understanding of Indonesian culture (Wibowo et al., 2024, p. 4363). The trend of increasing interest in BIPA learning from year to year is increasingly positive. This is relevant to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, which shows that in 2020, there were 72,746 students, and in 2022, 150,290 students were studying Indonesian (Syahputra, 2025, p. 775).

Previous studies have acknowledged the significant role of cultural integration in enhancing language acquisition, particularly speaking skills. Asteria et al. (2024) state that cultural elements such as culinary experiences, traditional clothing, tourism, and other local customs have been shown to offer meaningful and contextual learning experiences that foster language immersion and intercultural understanding. When integrated with local wisdom, the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model presents an effective pedagogical strategy that promotes active learning and enhances communicative competence. Andriyanto et al. (2025) state that BIPA instruction based on local wisdom is essential for assessing the Indonesian language skills of international students. Learning evaluation instruments can be integrated with elements of local wisdom, including literature, arts, tourism, and other cultural aspects, in order to enrich students' cultural knowledge and awareness.

Indonesia functions as a medium for developing culture and a positive image on the global stage. Practical communication skills will facilitate understanding of culture and adaptation to the environment (Wibowo et al., 2024, p. 4363). BIPA learning is a strategy for carrying out the internationalization process of the Indonesian language. Special strategies are needed through the BIPA program for the internationalization of the Indonesian language (Nurhuda et al., 2024). One strategy for internationalizing Indonesians can be done through Indonesian cultural immersion through BIPA learning based on local wisdom.

Indonesian cultural immersion can be interpreted as an effort to appreciate Indonesian culture, which refers to the activities of both individuals and groups (international students) directly involved in Indonesian culture to achieve and appreciate its cultural practices, norms, and values. In the context of comprehensive BIPA learning, this method is considered adequate, as it fosters positive habits through language and culture in everyday life. Students' participation includes culinary or Indonesian cooking, traditional dancing, batik, cultural visits, fine arts, literature, and tourism. This strategy is an effort to build an understanding of the language context, culture, and values.

At school and college levels, BIPA learning is carried out in various institutions, both formal and non-formal. One of the organizers of BIPA at the tertiary level is Universitas Negeri Surabaya (Unesa). Unesa is one of the organizers of BIPA, which comprises a diverse group of students. Students registered at Unesa include Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Madagascar, India, Yemen,

Turkey, Thailand, Iran, Papua New Guinea, Chad, Myanmar, Poland, and Australia. In 2024-2025, 60 international students will join BIPA Unesa. This consistency is implemented in several BIPA programs through schemes: Partnership for Developing Countries (KNB), Darmasiswa, regular classes, and private classes, the learning obtained by students in courses related to Indonesian language and culture skills. BIPA Learning at Universitas Negeri Surabaya offers culture classes to enhance language skills, particularly speaking, while fostering cultural understanding. Improving speaking skills is explored through culinary, traditional clothing, Indonesian tourism, and other cultures implemented at the BIPA Level 1 learning. At this level, teachers need special strategies to improve speaking skills, one of which is through project-based learning integrated with the local wisdom of the Indonesian people.

In line with this, the communication skills of BIPA students vary greatly; at the basic level, they are still influenced by language interference previously mastered by the students. Challenges for beginner-level students include limited vocabulary, which is influenced by their previous language, and the construction of simple sentences that are not yet grammatically appropriate. Students' self-confidence grows through daily conversations and direct practice with native speakers. Through consistent guidance, students are helped to reduce grammatical and intonation errors to help them approach the speech standards of native speakers. Apart from that, novice students still really need attention to improve communication in formal contexts (Astheria et al., 2024, p. 584).

A research gap remains in addressing the specific challenges faced by beginner-level BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) learners in acquiring speaking skills. These challenges include language interference from the learners' native languages, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in constructing grammatically accurate sentence structures. While daily interactions and exposure to native speakers can help build learners' confidence, innovative teaching strategies remain essential to support precise and formal communication. Despite the promising potential of cultural integration, further research is needed to evaluate the implementation of innovative strategies, particularly PBL in improving the speaking performance of BIPA learners.

This study is guided by the theoretical framework of intercultural language learning and aims to investigate how cultural immersion through project-based learning can enhance the speaking skills of beginner-level BIPA students. The research addresses two main questions: (1) What innovative strategies are implemented in BIPA learning through cultural immersion? and (2) What are the results of Indonesian cultural immersion in improving BIPA learners' speaking skills?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language and Cultural Learning Based on Local Wisdom

Indonesian for foreign speakers (BIPA) is a language teaching program for foreign or non-native speakers. The goal is for students to be able to communicate in various contexts, such as professional, academic, and social. The BIPA program includes four Indonesian language skills, vocabulary, and grammar (Murdianingsih et al, 2024, p. 1126). BIPA learning is not only related to vocabulary, grammar, and usage, but also requires strengthening aspects of Indonesian culture. Understanding the cultural context is necessary for international students studying Indonesian and understanding Indonesian character, society, and community life principles. Cultural aspects as a reflection of people's identity cannot be separated in the context of BIPA learning (Wati et al, 2024, p. 123). The norms, values, and local wisdom of society are important for students to understand (Kusmiatun, 2024, p. 245).

Ethnopedagogy functions as an educational approach that can be used to rebuild cultural values and strengthen national identity (Sakti, 2024, p. 1). Understanding local culture in BIPA learning helps students master the language effectively. Various elements of cultural material, such as folklore, are

very crucial in supporting student success (Simbolon et al, 2024, p. 2640). Folklore can be a medium in foreign language learning, which is taught through cultural material that contains its elements (Sa'adah et al, 2024, p. 279). Strengthening cultural literacy through BIPA learning can utilize Indonesian folklore, which is rich with values and can be used as a source of learning (Syahfitri, 2025, p. 72). Cultural values in Indonesian folklore can be utilized to enrich BIPA material and serve as a medium to enhance students' language skills (Syahfitri, 2025, p. 75).

BIPA teaching materials based on local wisdom can be developed by harmonizing aspects of language skills by considering interesting and systematic things to foster enthusiasm for learning (Sa'adah et al, 2024, p. 281). The book *Sahabatku Indonesia BIPA 1* represents Indonesian insight as reflected in the socio-cultural activities of Indonesian society. These various socio-cultural practices are divided into ten themes: 1) greetings, 2) introductions, 3) physical characteristics, 4) family, 5) daily activities, 6) hobbies, 7) Indonesian food, 8) Indonesian ways of communicating, 9) transportation, 10) shopping at the market (Aswan et al, 2024, p. 115). This supports the BIPA learning process, as evident from the learning resources utilized.

Innovation in BIPA learning can be implemented by developing teaching materials integrated with local wisdom to support learning effectiveness. Integrating cultural and traditional elements makes it easier for students to understand the socio-cultural context of society and its linguistic background. Innovative teaching materials that present the social context of society in life, such as customs, make learning more meaningful and engaging. Innovation does not focus on aspects of language skills, but fosters appreciation of local culture (Asih et al, 2024, p. 435). BIPA learning based on local Indonesian wisdom can be done by studying art, culinary, tourism, and other cultures, which helps improve language skills and cultural understanding of level 1 students.

2.2. Innovative BIPA Learning Strategy

BIPA learning process innovations can be implemented by considering aspects of learning design, contextual and digital-based learning media, curriculum, learning models, teaching materials, and comprehensive and enjoyable BIPA learning evaluations. Support for several of these aspects is important to optimize the learning targets of BIPA students. The integration of local Indonesian wisdom and contextual and digital media applied in learning is adapted to the characteristics of students from various countries.

Innovation in BIPA learning refers to the development of new strategies and methods tailored to the characteristics and needs of international students. One creative strategy is to apply digital technology, namely the *Halo Bahasa* application, which combines educational game methods through an interactive Game-Based Learning approach through discussions, exercises, and lectures. This innovation develops Indonesian language skills and builds motivation to grow interest (Zahra & Rahman, 2025, p. 192). Integrating local wisdom and synergy between pedagogical innovation and curriculum provides insight for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. The aim is to increase digital literacy, which contributes to the preservation and development of culture through education. Local wisdom contributes to creating a locally based educational environment by instilling digital literacy relevant to cultural aspects (Asmayawati et al., 2024, pp. 1-2).

One of the learning innovations that utilizes technology is through games. Game-based BIPA learning will encourage the creation of active and critical learning. Through games, students participate actively and develop the ability to solve problems and make informed decisions. The cognitive process motivates students to carry out critical thinking with analytical skills in learning Indonesian. Dynamic and engaging strategies strengthen problem-solving skills and Indonesian language skills (Simanjuntak et al., 2024, p. 245). The current era of modern technology supports the development of Android-based media in learning, including the Indonesian Android Games (GABI). GABI integrates Indonesian language learning with Indonesian culture. Android games foster

students' interest in learning the Indonesian language and Culture (Khasanah et al., 2024, p. 78). The implementation of Game-Based Learning (GBL) also has many advantages in BIPA learning: 1) there is high involvement and interactivity of students in learning so that it fosters motivation, 2) learning is more contextual because it makes it easier to understand language in real situations, 3) integration of technology in GBL such as wordwalls and Indonesian language card games creates interesting and modern learning activities, 4) a motivating and positive learning environment that increases understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure, 5) collaboration between students and teachers is high in learning with a variety of learning models, technology integration and varied games (Zahra & Rahman, 2025, p. 198). Another interactive media that can be used in BIPA learning is Snakes and Ladders media. This media has the advantage of increasing BIPA students' motivation and collaboration to improve skills and positive attitudes when studying (Putri et al., 2024, p. 277).

BIPA learning also utilizes the Sahabatku Indonesia textbook to support and make it easier for students to understand the culture. In line with this, the Sahabatku Indonesia textbook is a real soft diplomacy medium from the government that introduces Indonesia to international students. The cultural knowledge studied forms stronger Indonesian academic and socio-cultural knowledge through literature, art, and education. This is a positive strategy for introducing Indonesian Culture and all its elements to international students (Aswan et al., 2024, p. 120). The seven series of Sahabatku Indonesia textbooks comprehensively cover Indonesian insight through socio-cultural practices related to literature, influential figures, politics, economics, geographical conditions, arts, technology, etc. The Indonesian insight presented includes local and national aspects according to the student's language level and knowledge (Aswan et al., 2024, p. 120). Project-based learning provides practical experience through full student involvement with multidisciplinary skills strategies, group collaboration relevant to the curriculum, and student learning experiences. This is combined with holistic learning evaluation, which considers student learning processes and classroom outcomes (Purnami & Febriani, 2025, p. 38).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study focus on BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) instruction at the Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia. The observation process focused on strategies and results of deepening Indonesian culture (Indonesian cultural immersion) implemented in BIPA learning at level 1 at Unesa to improve speaking skills through project-based learning by integrating cultural elements such as culinary, traditional clothing, and tourism in learning. Research on Indonesian cultural immersion in BIPA learning involves the behavior of students and BIPA teachers at Unesa, which is documented through observational field notes and interviews with parties involved in implementing the learning. The data sources in this research are BIPA Unesa students and teachers, learning documents, teaching materials, learning activities, and relevant literature.

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 12 international students enrolled in BIPA Level 1 and BIPA instructors at the State University of Surabaya. Students come from the United States, South Korea, India, Turkey, Japan, Uganda, the Philippines, Yemen, and Myanmar. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the specific aim of exploring insights into the integration of Indonesian cultural understanding in BIPA classes. Participant selection was based on their direct and natural involvement in the BIPA learning process, as well as their willingness to take part in the study.

3.3. Data Collection

Data was collected through observations in BIPA classes, questionnaires, and interviews with 12 BIPA level 1 students and Unesa BIPA teachers. Interviews were conducted with students and BIPA Unesa teachers. Questionnaires are used to strengthen the results of observations in learning and as interviews, direct observation, analysis of documents, artifacts, cultural track records, and use of personal experience. The interview technique used in this study was semi-structured interviews, allowing learners to openly express their ideas regarding the process of learning Indonesian culture in BIPA classes. Instrument validity was ensured through construct validity by consulting experts to review the developed instruments, thereby supporting data accuracy. Meanwhile, reliability was tested using the test-retest method by administering the instrument multiple times to respondents to measure its stability (Sugiyono, 2012, pp. 177-184).

3.4. Data Analysis

Reading and analyzing interview results and cultural texts through content and narrative strategies. Researchers can look for methods for processing and interpreting learning documents (Denzin, 2011). The data analysis technique used is an interactive analysis model, namely (1) data collection, (2) reduction, (3) data presentation, and (4) conclusion (Huberman, 2015). The results of the data findings are then reduced by filtering several important aspects that are the focus of BIPA research, which are then presented in a structured manner. In the final stage, conclusions are drawn to obtain valid results regarding BIPA research.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with the approval of the ethics committee, following proper and systematic procedures, and with the informed consent of the participants. It ensured the protection of the rights and confidentiality of both BIPA instructors and learners at Unesa.

4. Results

4.1. The urgency of learning culture in BIPA classes

Learning about Indonesian culture is crucial to support a deeper understanding of Indonesia. Taking culture courses at Universitas Negeri Surabaya is an obligation for all BIPA students at level 1. Learning culture courses is strategic in improving speaking skills at the initial level. The learning process also greatly determines the learning motivation of BIPA students at level 1. Of the 12 BIPA students at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (Unesa) who took culture classes, they said learning Indonesian Culture was very important. This is based on the following questionnaire data.

Table 1. Urgency of Learning Culture in BIPA Class

Subject	Urgency	Reason
S1	Very important	To know the regulations and social institutions in Indonesia
S2	Very important	Because the language of the country is closely tied to its culture, and each country has its own unique culture, students who come to Indonesia are eager to learn more. The students have difficulty learning about Indonesian culture in their respective countries. I want to use this good opportunity to study.
S3	Important	To write sentences correctly, you must understand the culture. For

		example, in Korean, the expression "to be big-brained" means someone is "arrogant". However, in Indonesian culture, it is not like that.
S4	Very important	Because being able to learn the language and culture will be more interesting
S5	Very important	For academic purposes and to understand Indonesian culture
S6	Important	Studying culture provides a holistic understanding
S7	Very important	To better understand Indonesian society
S8	Very important	Because I will continue my studies at Unesa
S9	Very important	Learning Indonesian culture is important because Indonesia has a vast and broad culture.
S10	Very important	I am interested in Indonesian culture because knowing Indonesian culture means living in Indonesia.
S11	Very important	To truly get to know a country, you must learn about its culture.
S12	Very important	Because learning Indonesian culture can help me understand this country better and understand the meaning of every word.

Based on the data obtained, most respondents (10 out of 12) thought that studying Indonesian culture was very important, while two other respondents thought this was important. The high urgency in studying Indonesian culture is supported by various reasons, such as understanding social regulations and institutions, the close relationship between language and culture, and the readiness to learn more deeply in Indonesia.

Several respondents emphasized that understanding the culture helped them write and communicate better in Indonesian. An academic perspective is also the main reason for some students, especially those planning to continue their studies in Indonesia. Overall, these results show that cultural learning complements language understanding and provides broader insight into society and the way of life in Indonesia. Based on various responses from BIPA students, cultural learning plays an important role in improving their communication skills in Indonesian. By understanding culture, students can more easily grasp the context of a conversation, recognize the appropriate level of formality in various situations, and understand the meaning of words and expressions influenced by culture. This makes them feel more comfortable and confident when interacting with native speakers.

Indonesian people use culture as a representation of self-identity within community groups. Learning a language cannot be separated from its culture. Understanding and studying Indonesian culture can be achieved through fairy tales or other folk tales (Andriana, 2024, p. 55). It is important to carry out the process of preserving local culture and wisdom through contextual education and meaningful learning for students (Murdianingsih et al., 2024, p. 1126). Cultural learning helps

students in everyday life, such as when ordering food, understanding the character of Indonesian society, and adapting to social norms. Cultural activities such as learning gamelan, batik, and culinary arts enrich the learning experience and make the language learning process more interesting and comprehensive. Thus, integrating language and culture learning provides a deeper understanding of Indonesia and increases the effectiveness of BIPA students' communication skills.

4.2. Strategy for Indonesian Cultural Immersion

The strategy for deepening Indonesian culture in this class is implemented by focusing on: 1) aspects of cultural integration in the curriculum and support for local wisdom-based BIPA teaching materials, including Indonesian cultural diversity which is included in cultural learning materials such as traditions, arts, culinary, tourism and other local wisdom content, 2) application of digital media and technology such as podcasts, YouTube and language learning applications to present cultural material in BIPA learning, 3) An active and participatory approach and based on experience, classes are presented through cultural theory and practice.

First, the curriculum and support for teaching materials based on local wisdom are important in directing the learning process, especially in exploring Indonesian culture. The BIPA State University of Surabaya curriculum in level 1 culture courses aims at mastering knowledge of Indonesian culture as a whole while also aiming to improve students' speaking skills. The integration of Indonesian local wisdom in BIPA learning is focused on cultural aspects related to 1) a general picture of Indonesia, the characteristics of Indonesian society and applicable social institutions such as etiquette, mutual cooperation culture, 2) introducing the history of the city of Surabaya, 3) Indonesian culture in the western region: about the traditions and customs of people in Sumatra and Java, including traditional ceremonies, dance arts, traditional houses, 4) Culture in the Central Region (Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali), 5) Culture in the Eastern Region (Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Papua), 6) Famous places in Indonesia: Borobudur Temple, Tana Toraja, Raja Ampat, and Others, 7) Traditional Markets, 8) typical food from various regions in Indonesia, such as rendang, fried rice, and soto, 9) Indonesian Musical Instruments (Playing Angklung), 10) history and types of wayang (wayang kulit, wayang golek, etc.), 11) Batik: history of batik, the meaning of batik motifs, and the process of making them and making simple batik motifs on paper/cloth, 12) Traditional clothes, 13) Traditional games, 14) fairy tales/legends in Indonesia: Malin Kundang, Timun Mas, and Sangkuriang.

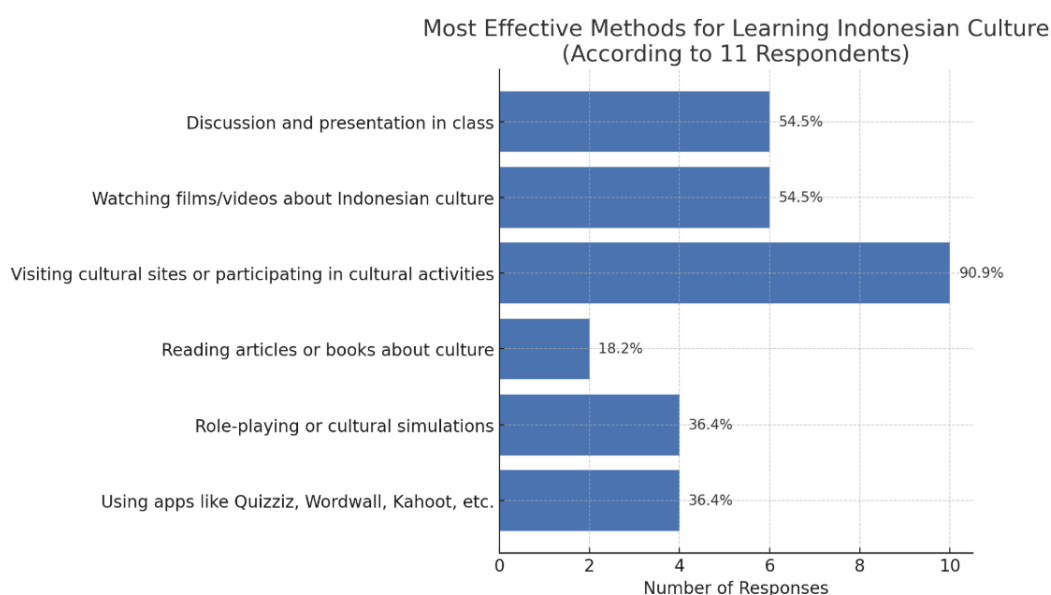
Teaching materials based on local wisdom support the learning process of BIPA students and make it easier to understand Indonesian. Teaching materials based on local wisdom help increase fluency and deepen Indonesian Culture (Darmuki et al., 2022, p. 140). The preparation of teaching materials is tailored to the needs of BIPA students by prioritizing exploratory, instructional, experiential, and informative elicitation aspects for students regarding the language (Putra et al., 2024, p. 608). The development of BIPA teaching materials is based not only on Javanese Culture but also on Culture as a whole. Cultural elements designed for learning will create a more varied and sustainable experience for BIPA students (Saddhono, 2024, p. 256).

Teaching materials that contain local wisdom influence BIPA student learning outcomes. Having teaching materials in the BIPA learning can make learning Indonesian easier for international students. International students studying BIPA aim to improve their fluency in Indonesian and understand Indonesian culture clearly. This research concludes that BIPA teaching materials based on local wisdom have a real influence on student learning outcomes, and academic ability does not influence student learning outcomes. It is recommended that BIPA teaching materials, based on local wisdom, be applied in learning to influence student learning outcomes.

Second, the learning process also uses digital, contextual media and textbook support, which is used to assist the learning process for cultural subjects. In line with this, using BIPA textbooks in Indonesian provides a stimulus for observing new vocabulary through one's experience with the

dictionary. Likewise, bilingual books make it easier to understand the context, but students tend to be passive in looking for the meaning of words (Widianti & Na'imah, 2023: 133). A communication culture that can be integrated regarding ethical norms, pleasantries, and implicatures when traveling by utilizing tourism potential and local wisdom related to history (Sayant et al., 2025, p. 255)

The BIPA cultural learning process, media, and digital technology enrich the learner's learning experience. Quizizz and Kahoot have become practical interactive tools for testing the understanding of Indonesian culture through interesting and competitive quizzes. With gamification features, students can learn while playing, making cultural material easier to remember. Additionally, videos from YouTube and podcasts provided more profound insight into Indonesian culture, starting with traditional arts, culinary delights, and customs. Languagesonline.vic.gov.au assists learners in understanding vocabulary and cultural expressions through digital, task-based exercises. Paddled is a collaborative platform where learners can share their reflections, images, or cultural projects. By utilizing these various media, BIPA cultural learning becomes more dynamic, interactive, and relevant to students' needs in the digital era.



Graph 1. Practical methods in learning culture

The methods used in learning in culture classes are very diverse. Based on the survey results, the method considered the most effective in learning Indonesian culture by BIPA students is visiting cultural places or taking part in direct cultural activities, with a percentage of 90.9%. This shows that direct experience in a cultural environment provides students with a deeper and more meaningful understanding. Apart from that, the methods of discussion and presentation in class and watching films or videos about Indonesian culture were also quite effective, with each getting 54.5% of responses. This indicates that interaction and audio-visual media are important in cultural learning. This process supports visual and collaborative learning that can stimulate students' critical analysis of broad cultural phenomena. Audio-visual media make it easier for students to interpret cultural nuances that are difficult to understand through written texts.

Apart from that, some other methods, such as role playing or simulating cultural situations and using applications such as Quizizz, Wordwall, and Kahoot, also received attention with a percentage of 36.4%. This method has urgency and pedagogical value in creating a participatory and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Meanwhile, reading articles or books about culture has lower effectiveness, only 18.2%. These results indicate that more interactive and experience-based methods are preferable to text-based approaches. Therefore, integrating direct experience with digital technology

in learning Indonesian culture can be a more effective strategy for increasing BIPA students' understanding and involvement. Overall, students responded more to contextual, participatory, and multisensory learning methods in studying Indonesian culture. A learning approach that integrates visual media, social interaction, and field activities contributes positively and is integral to culture-based curriculum design.

Digital transformation is increasingly being used in BIPA learning. Innovative digital platforms commonly used today include digital comics, Android, e-books, and YouTube, which indicate positive transformation in BIPA teaching (Maulidia et al., 2025, p. 346). Teachers utilize various digital platforms such as Wordwall, LearningApps, Kahoot, and interactive videos to make learning more interesting and interactive. This media aims to reduce student boredom and increase their participation in online learning (Hardika, 2022, p. 1713).

Apart from that, students are also invited to taste various traditional Indonesian snacks, such as lempeng, arem-arem, kue lumpur, onde-onde, gethuk, and so on, so that they not only know the typical taste of Indonesian cuisine but also understand the philosophy behind each dish. Another enjoyable activity is making batik, where they can learn techniques using canting and wax and understand the philosophical meaning of different batik motifs. Not only fine arts, students can also learn traditional musical arts by playing gamelan and angklung, which teaches them about harmony and cooperation in Indonesian culture. As part of the cultural project, they were also given a drafting challenge itinerary trips to various tourist cities in Indonesia, such as Yogyakarta, Banyuwangi, or Karimunjawa. Through this experience, students gain language skills and a deep understanding of Indonesia's cultural diversity.

4.3. Cultural immersion in Indonesia improves speaking skills

Cultural class learning at BIPA is presented through project-based learning (PBL) to improve Indonesian speaking skills through a design that has been agreed upon between the teacher and students. Performance 1 (P1) of local wisdom-based speaking projects focuses on preparation and delivery itinerary, travel to tourist destinations you want to visit in Indonesia. Learners create an itinerary that includes destinations, activities, transportation, and accommodation, and present it in clear and structured language. Meanwhile, Performance 2 (P2), a local wisdom-based speaking project, focuses more on understanding Indonesian culture, especially in tourism, traditional food, and regional clothing.

Performance 1: The project was carried out in the middle of the first semester of the culture course. After receiving general material about tourism in Indonesia, students are then given the task of designing a travel plan with the following provisions: 1) finding information about how to get to tourist destinations including transportation access and prices, 2) several accommodation options with various price ranges ranging from cheap, medium and luxury, 3) determining tourist destinations and ticket prices, 4) describing typical food and prices at tourist attractions, 5) describing local wisdom or culture in tourist areas. In the process of designing this project, students determine popular tourist destinations in Indonesia: Karimun Jawa, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Lake Toba, Bangka Belitung, Ijen Crater, Bromo, Banyuwangi, Bali, and Raja Ampat. These tourist attractions were chosen because of their popularity at national and global levels, and have a high appeal to foster motivation and interest in learning about culture and tourism in Indonesia. The following is one of the project results about making travel plans to Banyuwangi.

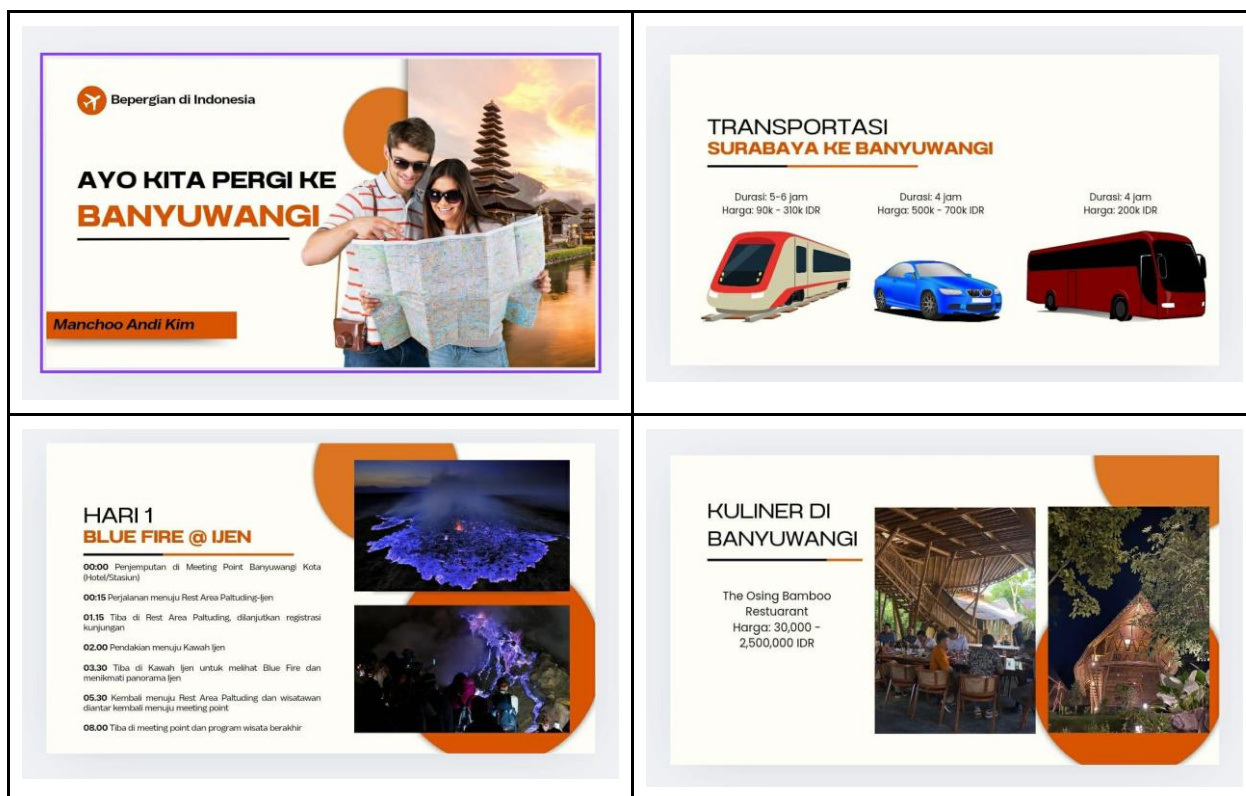
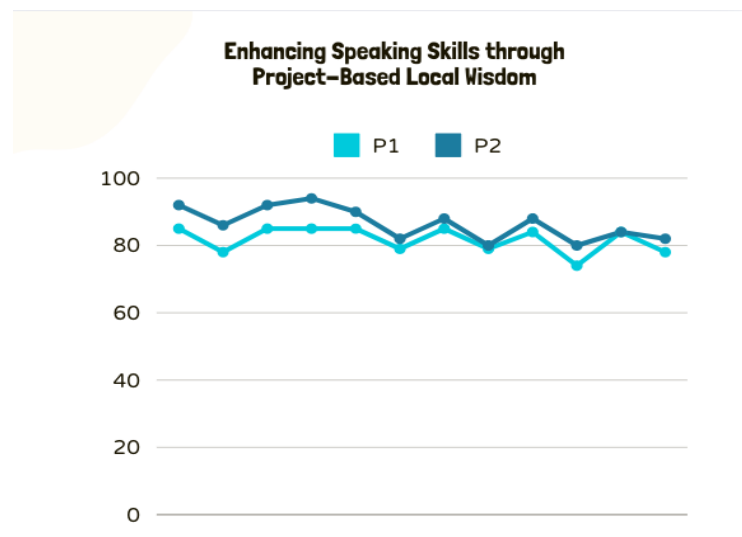


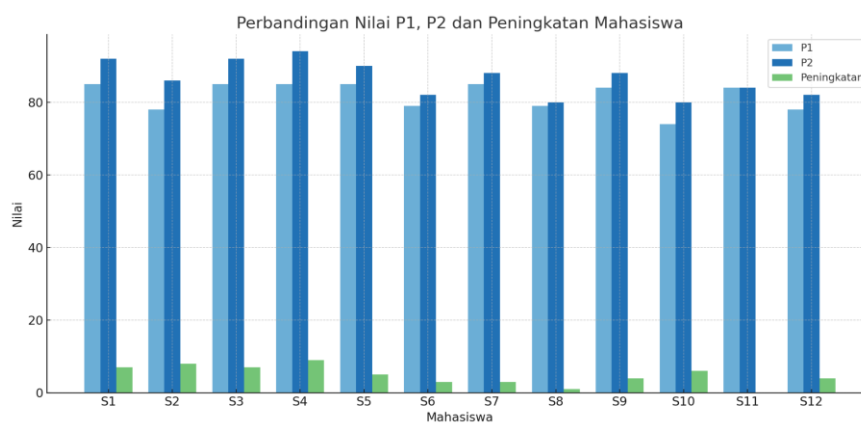
Figure 1. Projects to support cultural understanding

Performance 2: Talking about projects carried out in the middle of the final semester of the culture course. Students are allowed to design three parts of the theme according to what has been determined, including: 1) Tourism: a) Indonesian tourist attractions by providing complete information regarding the location and tourist attractions, b) mentioning tourist attractions that have been visited in Surabaya by providing interesting information accompanied by opinions. 2) Favorite food in Indonesia, a) choose favorite food in Indonesia, b) explain the main ingredients, taste, and texture of the food. 3) Regional traditional clothing, a) Central Javanese traditional clothing, Sumatran traditional clothing, Yogyakarta traditional clothing, and Minang traditional clothing.

The process of assessing the presentation of project results refers to a rubric covering five main aspects: mastery of material, suitability of content, creativity of PPT material, language (vocabulary and pronunciation), and smoothness. Mastery of material assesses how students understand and can explain the topics presented. Content suitability ensures that the information presented is relevant to the given theme. Creativity in creating presentation materials (Canva, PowerPoint, or others) is also an assessment aspect to measure idea visualization skills. The language aspect includes appropriate vocabulary and correct pronunciation, while speaking fluency shows the learner's ability to convey material without too many pauses or errors. Based on this rubric, it is hoped that students will be more motivated to improve their communication skills and understanding of Indonesian culture through independent creativity. Using this rubric, students can determine their speaking skills and repeat the knowledge they have gained from culture classes.



Graph 2. Ability to speak through local wisdom projects at P1 and P2



Graph 3. Improving speaking skills through local wisdom projects at P1 and P2

Twelve students who took the culture class can be described as in P1 (performance 1), students have a range of values. P1 value range: 74 – 85 with an average value of 81.42. P2 (performance 2) has a value range of 80-94 with an average value of 86.33. These data show that there is a consistent increase in P1 and P2. The performance shows that students can apply a more profound understanding from the first to the second project. This indicates the effectiveness of the project-based learning approach in increasing understanding of Indonesian culture. The sharp increase in S4 (+9), S2 (+8), S1 & S3 (+7) reflects active involvement in the exploration process at P2 and provides more expansive space for creative and contextual meaning of culture. S8 (+1) and S11 (0) require special attention in understanding the material and attention to the learning style applied.

Performance 1 Speaking project (P1) and Performance 2 Speaking project (P2). This is done by giving presentation projects to students based on the cultural material they have studied. Based on the data, P1 and P2 scores have been developed in culture courses for BIPA students. The majority of students showed an increase in grades from P1 to P2. This reflects a better understanding of cultural material, possibly due to more intensive learning experiences and involvement in interactive activities. Some students maintained their performance with relatively stable grades between P1 and P2. This shows that students have sufficient understanding from the start and maintain a consistent quality of student learning until the end of the semester. Apart from that, there have been improvements in the creativity aspect of making broadcast materials. The smoothness in conveying information has experienced significant improvement compared to other aspects. The progress made

in the learning process is based on increasingly effective teaching methods supported by increased student confidence in delivering cultural presentations. However, not all students experienced significant improvement; some even stagnated. This is caused by external factors such as a lack of time to study, language challenges, environmental adaptation, or other personal factors.

5. Discussion

Culture is inherently intertwined with human life and plays various roles, one of which is through education. The integration of culture and education creates meaningful and contextual learning experiences. Contextual learning refers to a learning process that aligns with local wisdom (Ermanto et al., 2025, p. 1). Introducing local Indonesian culture can be done through BIPA learning. Through food, students understand the language and gain insight into the uniqueness and richness of Indonesian culture. Local Indonesian cuisine has a unique taste and represents its history and philosophical values (Sibarani et al., 2024, p. 756). BIPA learning based on integrated ecolinguistics of traditional Indonesian food is carried out to introduce food names and regional origins. Introducing traditional regional food can be linked to tourism potential and environmental sustainability (Nugraheni, 2024, p. 272). Another aspect that can be used to support BIPA learning is tourism literary works. This contributes to providing an understanding of Indonesian culture through diverse vocabulary. Utilizing literary works from tourism can deepen knowledge about culture and natural beauty. Indirectly, events in literature can promote and encourage Indonesian tourism (Satinem, 2024, p. 5395).

The study on Cultural Immersion in BIPA Learning: Innovative Strategy for Developing Speaking Skills through Local Wisdom is relevant to previous research findings. Studying local Indonesian wisdom in BIPA learning is carried out to help explore the ability to speak Indonesian. So the strategy taken is an active and participatory approach, and based on experience in class, by presenting material on local Indonesian wisdom. In line with this, it was stated that optimizing BIPA learning can be implemented through various strategies, including the introduction of traditional games, Indonesian language competitions, teaching regional dances, showing Indonesian films, and introducing clothing from various provinces in Indonesia (Raharja, 2023; Nugraha et al, 2024, p. 2980). This strategy increases Indonesian language proficiency and helps people understand Indonesian culture. Furthermore, introducing traditional musical instruments is also an attraction in BIPA learning, especially angklung (Nugraha et al., 2024, p. 2980).

Innovative strategies in BIPA learning can be implemented, focusing on integrating cultural elements through an interactive, active learning approach. This approach aims to attract students' interest by combining interactive media and cultural materials. In addition, the Project-Based Learning (PBL) learning model can be applied to measure students' abilities through speaking skills. Learning assisted by digital technology is expected to help students learn the Indonesian language and its evaluation (Zahra & Rahman, 2025, p. 193).

There has been a positive development in BIPA students' cultural understanding, especially in material mastery and communication fluency. Teaching methods that encourage active participation and direct engagement with Indonesian Culture contribute to this improvement. Further evaluation can be conducted to understand how cultural learning can be optimized for more equitable student outcomes. The BIPA learning process, which focuses on improving speaking skills through project-based learning (PBL), requires the important role of teachers in creating active and innovative learning designs. In line with this, teachers should be able to design, implement, and evaluate pluricultural-based BIPA learning with the hope that students can achieve higher-level Indonesian language skills in line with Indonesian cultural perspectives (Asteria, 2023: 198). In this way, active and innovative learning designs can be created to support the deepening of Indonesian culture through project-based learning to improve Indonesian speaking skills.

Experience-based learning in the BIPA program provides students with the opportunity to understand Indonesian culture not only through theory, but also through direct practice. With this approach, they can better understand the habits and cultural values inherent in the daily lives of Indonesian people. One form of direct experience is interacting with people around campus to ask questions about everyday language, including slang usage, which is often used in informal conversations. This helps students understand the context of language use in a more natural and relevant way in social life.

From a theoretical perspective, the cultural immersion approach supports intercultural learning theory in BIPA instruction by emphasizing the introduction of local wisdom through direct experience, thereby fostering language skills, particularly speaking and enhancing cultural awareness. From a practical standpoint, BIPA learning through cultural immersion provides a concrete example of contextual and meaningful instructional implementation. This study encourages educators to design and implement innovative, project-based learning rooted in local wisdom. Furthermore, it can serve as a reference for developing a BIPA curriculum that is responsive to learners' needs and integrates local wisdom to enhance speaking skills.

6. Conclusion

The cultural immersion process in BIPA learning can support understanding of the Indonesian language and local wisdom. The BIPA learning process can be implemented through innovative strategies by building several crucial aspects in learning, including: 1) innovative learning design, 2) use of contextual and digital-based media, 3) integrated curriculum with local wisdom, 4) project-based learning model (PBL), 5) teaching materials based on local wisdom, 6) comprehensive learning evaluation. Learning strategies considered adequate in exploring Indonesian culture are direct involvement in cultural activities, discussion methods, presentations, and watching Indonesian cultural films or videos. Role-playing methods or simulations of cultural situations integrated with digital platforms. Reading articles and books about culture. Cultural integration through project-based learning involving direct experience is an effective strategy in increasing understanding interactively.

Project-based learning shows a positive impact in increasing understanding of Indonesian culture. The integration of contextual topics such as tourism, traditional cuisine, and regional clothing into project-based presentations has proven effective in encouraging active student engagement. Improvements observed in students' performance from Phase 1 to Phase 2 indicate increased confidence and fluency in delivering cultural content. Presentations on Indonesian tourist destinations, local culinary favorites, and traditional attire from various regions such as Central Java, Sumatra, Yogyakarta, and Minangkabau reflect not only linguistic development but also a growing appreciation of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating local wisdom into BIPA instruction to create meaningful, context-based learning experiences that support both language acquisition and intercultural competence. In conclusion, the implementation of innovative strategies in BIPA learning through cultural immersion significantly contributes to the enhancement of students' speaking skills and cultural understanding. More attention is needed to students with low improvement so that the learning applied is more adaptive to the situation.

Declarations

Author Contribution. Octo Dendy Andriyanto contributed to developing the research idea into a comprehensive concept; Suhartono contributed to designing the methodology; Didik Nurhadi contributed to conducting the data analysis and interpretation; Diding Wahyudin Rohaedi

contributed to data collection; and Meilita Hardika and Nisachon Chuchai contributed to elaborating the research findings by linking them to relevant theories.

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