

Innovations to Strengthen National Identity in Indonesia: Promoting Literacy Acquisition through Culture-Based Education

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Abstract

The rapid developments of the world demand innovations in learning. These innovations are necessary to prepare the younger generation to face the future challenges. In Indonesia, there is a large number of communities with different cultures, languages and traditions, living in numerous vernacular settings. Bringing them together to compose a unified national identity is a mammoth task. One way to do this is by utilizing culture-based learning resources, given its rich cultural diversity. In other words, innovations are important to strengthen national identity and build meaningful knowledge in this era of rapid global development and diversity. In this context, this research examines the issue of promoting literacy acquisition through culture-based education engaging various innovations rooted in culture and literacy education.

This research employs a literature review as a methodology. Numerous literary sources were gathered and reviewed. The data is then coded and classified based on pre-defined keywords. The literacy learning innovations were then identified. They include the integration of local culture into lesson materials, the development of a culture-based curriculum, the application of a culturally responsive learning approach (CRI), the use of culture-based teaching materials, and the implementation of active learning strategies. This paper thus concludes that these innovations not only enhance the literacy skills of the students but also build character, increase learning motivation and strengthen national identity.

Keywords: innovation, national identity, literacy, education, culture, Indonesia

Introduction

Research suggests that amidst the dynamics of globalization, culture-based literacy education innovation is essential to strengthen national identity. Literacy, which now goes beyond simply reading and writing, needs to be developed as a critical skill for analysing information and understanding cultural and social contexts. By leveraging Indonesia's cultural richness as a contextual and relevant learning resource, such innovations could not only enhance the literacy skills of the students but also foster a deep understanding of the nation's history and the noble values. In fact, this approach could enable the students to express and appreciate their own culture, which in turn positively correlates with academic achievements and the development of critical thinking in preserving the unity of the nation.

As said, national identity is becoming increasingly important for maintaining the integrity of the nation and the state in this era of rapid globalization. At the same time, maintaining national unity is very important in today's rapidly developing world, including the abilities to face the challenges of science and technology. In fact, innovation in learning is continuously needed to prepare future generations to face these challenges and turn them in to opportunities. One such innovation is leveraging culture-based learning resources rooted in the identities of the students. In fact, the diverse identities of Indonesian students have great potential as the foundation of a unified national identity. However, such innovations begin with the teachers or educators who possess first and foremost, competence in teaching (Aini 2024; Kusmiarti and Hamzah 2019; Petrenko 2024).

Although previous research has shown the potential of culture-based learning to strengthen national identity, more needs to be done. One prominent gap is the need for consensus on the definition and concept of culture-based literacy. Moreover, most research focus on the macro level, necessitating further studies to understand how the innovations are applied at the classroom level. In fact, the limited research on the long-term impact and the role of technology in culture-based learning is also a matter of concern.

This research begins with the question as to how cultural-based literacy learning innovations can be implemented to enhance national identity. The answers to this question will theoretically contribute to the development of learning theory, particularly in the context of culture-based literacy. There is no doubt that the findings will enrich educators' understanding of how culture can be integrated into the learning process and how this impacts student development.

In this context, this paper examines innovations in learning, in order to demonstrate that culture-based literacy learning can strengthen national identity in the world in general and in Indonesia in Particular. It aims to contribute to the development of learning theory, particularly in the context of culture-based literacy. Its objectives are as follows.

1. To ascertain how cultural-based literacy learning innovations can be implemented to enhance national identity.
2. To identify culture-based literacy learning innovations in strengthening national identity.
3. To enrich educators' understanding of how culture can be integrated into the learning process and how this impacts student development.
4. To produce a reference source for curriculum development to improve the quality of literacy learning.

Theoretical Framework

This research explores a number of intertwining theoretical concepts: Innovations, literacy education and national identity. National identity is a distinctive feature that distinguishes one nation from another and is shaped by various cultural elements, history, and noble values possessed by a nation. Indonesia's uniqueness compared to other countries can be seen in its diverse cultures, ethnic groups, languages, and even religions. This diversity can be leveraged as a source of contextual learning. It is argued that based on the six principles of learning—interactive, inspiring, enjoyable, challenging, motivating, and providing sufficient

space for the development of students' interests, talents, creativity, and independence—culture-based learning can build meaningful knowledge (Ginanto et al., 2024; Kana 'Iaupuni, Ledward, and Malone 2017; Luka 2019).

According to Nieto (2010) and Sutianah (2022), who the learners are, and their socio-political context are crucial factors in driving and hindering learning. Acknowledging and preserving students' cultural identities in the learning context is essential. Nieto (2010) suggests that students who express and appreciate their cultural origins have better academic achievements. In fact, a positive correlation exists between the students' cultural identities and learning success. In this regard, teachers play a vital role in creating an inclusive learning environment that values cultural diversity.

Roberts (2000) says that literacy education is closely related to culture. Among other things, literacy is relevant as a means of critical understanding of social and cultural realities, that is, the skill of achieving a critical understanding of why societies function in certain ways. The relevance of literacy to culture is to raise critical awareness that people are active creators of their own history and culture. In fact, the relevance of literacy as a pedagogical intervention enables appreciation and understanding of ideas and wisdom in accepting both the old and the new traditions.

In education, literacy plays an important role in strengthening national identity. At the end of the 20th century, literacy could no longer be seen as limited to a single medium or form of expression. Indeed, literacy is not simply a matter of learning to read and write printed texts but rather a dynamic and evolving ability. It is not just about the ability to read and comprehend texts but also about the ability to analyse information, evaluate arguments, and build critical thinking towards the wider cultural and social context (Buckingham and Green 2005; Sani 2022; Ulfa and Saifuddin 2018). This ability is crucial for helping people to understand the culture and history of their nation and make informed decisions in facing the challenges and changes of globalization. However, many individuals still need more literacy skills because of various factors such as limited access to quality reading materials, lack of reading interest, and ineffective teaching methods. Therefore, there is a need for innovative literacy learning approaches to help people enhance their understanding of culture and history and foster critical thinking. Culture-based literacy learning innovation is one solution to this challenge.

UNESCO asserts that literacy is a fundamental skill that every individual must master in order to fully engage in a society that upholds democratic values and inclusiveness. Literacy serves as the main provision for self-improvement, social interaction, and economic improvement. Thus, the role of literacy is important for managing personal needs, preparing for a career, and actively participating in a democratic system. Literacy skills are crucial for the effective functioning of individuals and communities. At the same time, literacy impacts a nation's economic status, the welfare of its citizens, the capability of its workforce, and its ability to compete in the global community. As Wisdom and Leavitt (2015) point out, deficits in literacy and the mismatch between citizens' skills and economic needs can have serious consequences. In essence, literacy is not just about reading and writing but also about awareness, experience, and the desire for positive change in socio-cultural situations (Hendriani, Nuryani, and Ibrahim 2018; Irianto and Febrianti 2017; Morrow and Torres 2022; Rowsell and Pahl 2015).

The integration of culture in learning has a broad scope and diverse functions. Cultural values can be incorporated into learning materials that reflect the local culture in students' learning environments. Culture-based education contributes to building the national character derived from various values such as religiosity, cooperation, arts, literature, and skills. Learning that incorporates culture and is designed attractively is expected to motivate, foster critical and creative thinking, and build character, especially love for the homeland and culture.

According to Widyaningrum (2018), implementing culture-based language learning can help students achieve their full potential. The future of education is uncertain, so teaching methods must transform to equip students with critical thinking abilities (Brodjonegoro 2024). An American educational philosopher argues that education should be student-centered (Ankesa 2021; Dewey 2018; Faizin 2020; Putri 2023; Wasitohadi 2014). Students must be

actively engaged to acquire meaningful learning. Meaningful learning resources for students can be drawn from cultural values. This is where innovation comes into the equation. To be meaningful, education must be innovative; Innovation refers to discoveries that differ from what has existed or is already known. Learning innovation refers to the renewal of methods used by the teachers to achieve the learning goals on an on-going basis.

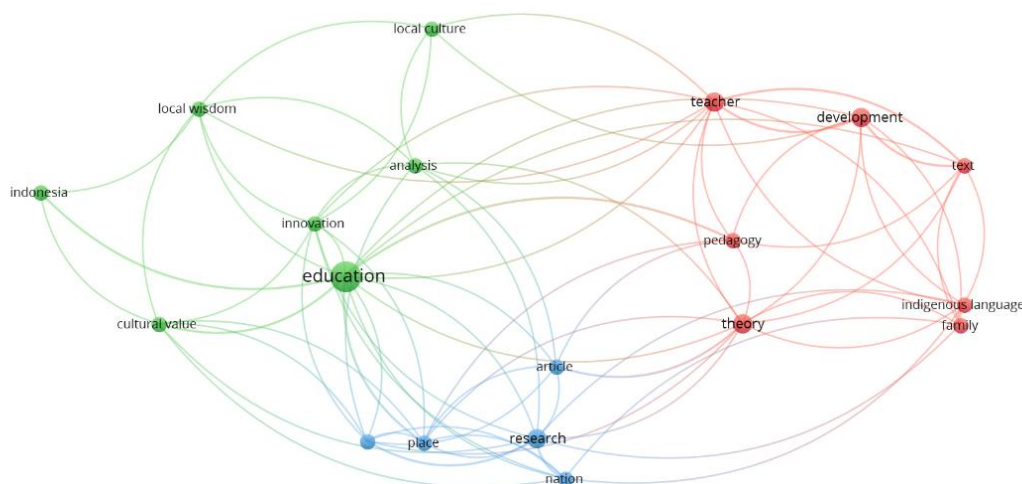


Fig. 1: The relationship between innovation, education, literacy, and culture
Source: Author

Figure 1 shows that the focus of previous research has been on education, which is relevant to innovation and culture. There is a strong emphasis on innovation in education and the integration of local culture and local wisdom, particularly in the Indonesian context. In addition, there is a significant attention to pedagogy, teacher development, and the role of factors such as indigenous languages and families in the educational process. Thus, it can be said that holistic research in education encompasses theoretical, practical, contextual, and methodological aspects. This research provides a more holistic and integrated perspective, seeking common ground and synergy between pedagogical innovations, local cultural richness, literacy development, and the goal of strengthening national identity.

For this, this research combines David Ausubel's meaningful learning theory and Henri Tajfel's and John Turner's social identity theory. Ausubel's theory suggests that for students to truly understand and remember new information, they must be connected to existing knowledge (Silva, 2020). Based on this theory, prior knowledge is crucial for new learning. Learning becomes more meaningful and memorable when students can link new concepts to what they already know. Meaningful learning involves logical, relevant content connected to students' real-world experiences. Students are part of the social groups that influence their social identity in the real world. Social identity can be a powerful source of motivation in learning. When students feel that a particular learning activity will enhance the status or prestige of their social group, they are more likely to be motivated to learn. This aligns with meaningful learning, where internal motivation is key to achieving optimal learning outcomes.

Moreover, Clifford Geertz sees identity not as a fixed entity, but as the result of a dynamic and contextual process of cultural interpretation (Geertz, 1983). Within this framework, national identity is formed through symbols, rituals, historical narratives, and social practices that provide collective meaning for a nation. Geertz emphasizes the importance of *local knowledge*—that is, local traditions and knowledge—as a fundamental foundation in building an authentic and inclusive national identity. By elevating local meaning into the national context, a country's identity can reflect the cultural richness of its people while also strengthening a sense of unity in diversity.

Language learning should not be limited to linguistic aspects alone, but should also include an understanding of cultural values, attitudes, and practices, as language and culture are

intrinsically linked. Culturally-based language learning, in particular, is one approach that can be used to enhance students' language proficiency while helping them understand other cultures (Abusyairi, 2013). Learning a language also means learning ways of thinking and behaving within a particular cultural context. Therefore, students are encouraged to become *intercultural speakers*—individuals capable of bridging cultural differences by appreciating other cultures without abandoning their own cultural identities (Soler & Jorda, 2007). This educational process must foster openness, curiosity, and the ability to suspend judgment toward other cultures, with critical cultural awareness as its reflective foundation.

In culturally-based language learning, students' local cultures should not only be acknowledged but used as a starting point for understanding the target culture, so that comparisons between the two can promote reflection on personal values. Students are encouraged to develop *critical cultural awareness* through comparisons between their own culture and others (Byram, 1997). To realize this, learning strategies such as projects, ethnographic observations, interviews, and cultural reflection are highly relevant methods, along with critical evaluation of textbooks and learning materials so as not to reinforce stereotypes of the target culture and to provide broader space for exploring local culture.

Research Methodology

This research investigates a variety of culturally grounded innovations in literacy instruction. It employs literature review as a research method. This approach allows the researcher to develop a strong theoretical framework for examining culture-based teaching practices by offering a thorough and critical comprehension of the body of existing knowledge. By using this approach, the study not only summarizes earlier findings but also spots new trends and gaps of knowledge in the subject, providing insightful information for the creation of pedagogical models in the future.

The research examines various scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed journals, academic books, and pertinent articles, centered on important ideas like learning innovation, culture-based literacy, and national identity. The use of literature reviews is therefore especially appropriate in this context. It employed keywords as a guide for the data-gathering process, guaranteeing that the chosen literature was current and pertinent. Following collection, the texts underwent a qualitative selection procedure that prioritized scholarly contribution, relevance, and credibility.

The literature review methodology proved effective in uncovering contemporary trends and critical debates in the field of culture-based literacy innovations. It also provided a strong foundation for theoretical reflection and practical recommendations, contributing to a deeper understanding of how literacy education can be meaningfully contextualized within diverse cultural settings and particularly in Indonesia.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

1. Culture-Based Literacy Learning Innovation

Culture-based literacy learning innovation is an effective solution to enhance students' literacy skills and strengthen national identity. By integrating local culture into the learning process, students can better understand and appreciate their cultural heritage while developing a strong sense of belonging to their nation and country.

Table 1. Culture-Based Learning Innovations
Source: Author

No.	Learning Innovations	Description	Objective	Impact
1.	Integration of Local Culture into Learning Materials	Incorporating elements of local culture, such as folklore, regional songs, or traditional	Enrich learning content, increase interest in learning, and strengthen	Enhance students' understanding of cultural values and strengthen

		games, into learning materials.	students' cultural identity.	their sense of belonging to the nation and country.
2.	Development of Culture-Based Curriculum	Designing a curriculum centered around students' cultural identity, with relevant and contextual learning materials.	Develop culturally aware students, and strengthen national unity.	Increase the relevance of learning, and facilitate the optimal development of students' potential.
3.	Application of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)	Creating an inclusive learning environment that values cultural diversity, actively involving students in the learning process.	Improve students' literacy and strengthen their cultural identity, creating a comfortable and conducive learning environment.	Enhance academic achievement, especially for students from minority groups.
4.	Use of Culture-Based Teaching Materials	Developing teaching materials using local resources such as folklore, arts, and traditional skills.	Increase learning motivation, enrich students' knowledge of local culture, and strengthen national identity.	Enhance students' understanding of noble values and develop critical thinking skills.
5.	Implementation of Active Learning Strategies	Using various active learning strategies such as discussions, group projects, and games to actively involve students in learning.	Enhance students' critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.	Increase learning motivation; make learning more enjoyable and meaningful.

The table above shows a range of innovative literacy learning strategies that incorporate local cultural elements into educational contents. From an educational viewpoint, these strategies indicate a movement toward more learner-centered and contextually relevant teaching methods designed to make learning experiences more meaningful, engaging, and effective. Incorporating cultural content into literacy instructions align with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize that students learn best when new information is connected to their personal experiences and cultural environments.

This culturally informed approach not only enhances students' academic abilities but also nurtures their cultural awareness and identity. When instructional materials reflect students' lived experiences, they are more likely to be motivated and able to comprehend and retain what they learn. In addition, the use of Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI) aligns with the goals of inclusive education, which prioritizes the recognition and accommodation of students' diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds.

Beyond boosting literacy skills, these approaches contribute to students' sense of belonging and self-worth, which are essential for social and emotional development and for building a shared sense of national identity. By validating and incorporating learners' cultural backgrounds, educators empower students to take an active role in their education and cultivate essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, effective communication, and empathy.

The examples presented in the table highlight the potential of culture-integrated literacy education to raise both the quality and equity of learning. This affirms that education rooted in cultural relevance is not only academically enriching but also a vital tool for strengthening national identity and promoting lifelong learning.

Table 2: Comparison of Culture-Based Learning Innovations
Source: Author

Learning Innovation	Main Focus	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example of Implementation
Integration of Local Culture into Learning Materials	Directly incorporating elements of local culture into the curriculum.	Relevant to students' context, it increases learning motivation.	Requires thorough preparation from teachers, and limited availability of resources.	Using folklore as teaching materials, organizing local culture-themed handicraft competitions.
Development of Culture-Based Curriculum	Designing a curriculum that is entirely centered around local culture.	Ensures consistency in applying local culture, provides a holistic learning experience.	Requires significant changes to the education system; takes more time to implement.	Implementing local cultural themes across all subjects throughout the semester.
Application of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)	Creating an inclusive learning environment that values cultural diversity.	Increases students' confidence, enhances academic achievement.	Requires special training for teachers; needs in-depth understanding of students' cultures.	Organizing class discussions that respect differing opinions, using teaching materials representing various cultures.
Use of Culture-Based Teaching Materials	Using teaching materials rooted in local wisdom, such as folklore, arts, and traditional skills.	Increases relevance of learning, enriches students' knowledge of local culture.	Limited availability of teaching materials requires adaptation for various grade levels.	Creating picture storybooks featuring local cultural characters and stories, using traditional musical instruments in music lessons.
Application of Active Learning Strategies	Actively involving students in the learning process through activities like discussions, projects, and games.	Enhances critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.	Requires more time, needs effective classroom management.	Organizing community activity simulation, creating group presentations on local culture.

The comparative table above provides valuable insights into innovations that bring elements of local culture into the learning process. Ethnopedagogy emphasizes the importance of grounding education in students' lived experiences, indigenous knowledge, and cultural heritage. In this context, the innovations highlighted in the table do more than simply enhance academic content. They represent a transformative shift toward culturally informed, identity-affirming, and socially relevant education.

Each of the innovations described reflects a different path towards incorporating culture into pedagogy. Some approaches enrich syllabus content with cultural narratives, symbols, or practices, allowing the students to see themselves and their communities reflected in what they learn. Others prioritize inclusive pedagogical strategies, promote respect for cultural diversity, and create spaces where all the students feel cared for and being valued. These efforts align with the goals of ethnopedagogy, which views culture not as an add-on to the curriculum but as its foundation.

While all innovations share a common goal of deepening learning and strengthening national identity each has different pedagogical implications. For example, integrating local histories, traditions, and languages can increase student motivation and cultural pride, but it requires teachers to be deeply familiar with and be respectful of the cultural context in which they work. This is consistent with the ethno-pedagogical principle that educators should act as cultural mediators, not just transmitters of formal knowledge.

Likewise, culturally responsive teaching promotes inclusion and social cohesion, but its success depends on the preparation and cultural competence of the teacher. Teachers must undergo ongoing training to develop the sensitivity and skills needed to deal with the diverse cultural expressions in the classroom. Ethnopedagogy recognizes that developing these capacities is essential for educational innovations to be sustainable and authentic.

Therefore, the selection of the most appropriate innovations depends not only on logistical factors such as resources and curricular objectives but also on the cultural setting of the school community. Ethnopedagogy encourages educators to engage with local the stakeholders such as the elders, parents, and cultural leaders-to ensure that cultural integration in education is respectful, accurate, and mutually beneficial.

In sum, the table illustrates a spectrum of culturally informed educational innovations that reflect the core principles of ethnopedagogy: education rooted in local wisdom, guided by cultural values, and responsive to community realities. This approach does more than improve academic outcomes it empowers students by validating their cultural identities and fostering deeper connections between school and community life. As such, it offers a powerful strategy for achieving a more holistic, inclusive, and meaningful education.

2. Cultural Literacy and National Identity

Cultural literacy and national identity are two closely intertwined concepts. Cultural literacy refers to an individual's ability to understand, appreciate, and participate in various forms of cultural expressions. Meanwhile, national identity is the sense of belonging and attachment to a nation, shaped by factors such as culture, history, and shared values. Indonesia's national identity lies in its diversity, especially in terms of culture and language. In the literacy process, language is the primary tool. Literacy skills encompass not only language proficiency and reading ability but also open knowledge and understanding of various aspects of life, including national identity. Literacy skills help develop individuals who are intelligent and possess critically thinking. Therefore, efforts to improve literacy will not only benefit individuals but also contribute to the nation as a whole.

The history of critical literacy begins with the ideas of Paulo Freire, who believed that literacy as an activity involves reading both words and the world critical literacy as a social force, the emancipation of women, and addressing social problems. Freire sees literacy education as a process closely linked to human liberation and the creation of culture, enabling individuals to read not only words but also their world (Roberts, 2000). Epistemologically, literacy is the foundation of human knowledge through meaningful words. Dialogue among people using words as tools for thinking, building communication, relationships, and social constructions is central to this concept (Hendriani et al., 2018). Through critical literacy, individuals are expected to distinguish between facts and opinions, identify biases, analyze, and consider issues from various perspectives. Hendriani et al (2018) emphasizes that the educational process should help the students develop critical awareness in confronting realities that represent domination, abuse of power, oppression, injustice, social marginalization, ethnic issues, racial issues, and any systems that constrain freedom.

Riyanto et al. (2024) says that culture-based education has the potential to shape children's character, nurture national identity, and promote tolerance. In fact, one of the learning strategies used is educational tourism. Educational tourism, as a form of destination, offers unique opportunities for hands-on learning experiences. By visiting historical sites, cultural villages, and participating in traditional activities, children can connect with their cultural heritage in a tangible way. However, there are challenges in promoting culture-based education, such as the rapid pace of globalization and the need for innovative teaching approaches. Riyanto suggests that one way to address these challenges is through digital technology.

(Hsin & Yu (2021) highlight the importance of integrating culture in literacy learning. They examine the development of literacy and identity in Rukai children in Taiwan. The contexts studied were stories, traditional food, religious activities, life skills, language, and various forms of text. Interestingly, this study involved 2 children who lived in the city and 2 children who lived in the village. The learning strategies applied by both are different, but both

are based on cultural integration in learning. Although there are significant differences in the learning experiences of children in the city and in the village, the results show that it is important to integrate culture-based literacy.

Amaliyah et al. (2022) explore the implementation of culture-based literacy programs in a school in Probolinggo, Indonesia. They highlight the importance of integrating culture into education, even for early childhood. By doing so, schools can not only improve students' learning outcomes but also strengthen their connection to their community and culture. The research results indicate that the improvement in school quality through literacy activities involves various aspects, including a comprehensive analysis of the learning program, curriculum integration with local culture, involving parents and the community in promoting culture-based literacy, and conducting ongoing evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the program.

3. Curriculum and Students' Culture

The review of various literature indicates that critical literacy skills are expected to equip students to address challenges both in their current lives and in the future. Therefore, innovation in education is required to design culture-based learning that strengthens national identity and instills critical thinking skills in the students. In this connection, Silalahi (2019) highlights the tendency of the students to prefer playing games on their devices rather than reading books, leading to a lack of critical argumentation skills when discussing texts in the classroom. This study found that many students need help understanding the concept of critical reading. Their understanding still needs to be improved, and critical reading challenges can help improve their academic performance. Students' perspectives on the positive impacts of critical reading include improved communication, making reading a habit, interpreting texts, and the ability to approach life intelligently (Silalahi, 2019).

Table 3: The Number of Literacy Books in Indonesia Year 2016 – 2023

Source: Linguistic and Literary Statistics (Sugianto & Mufidah, 2024)

No.	Year	Number
1	2016	165
2	2017	137
3	2018	248
4	2019	174
5	2020	60
6	2021	126
7	2022	75
8	2023	100

Literacy has evolved from essential reading and writing skills to encompass broader abilities such as critical thinking, data analysis and technological competence. Over time, literacy is seen as solving problems based on critical thinking, analyzing, and evaluating information in various contexts (Kusmiarti & Hamzah, 2019). In the 4.0 era, literacy competency is crucial. To produce students capable of facing the challenges of Industry 4.0, three key components: teachers, curriculum, and students must possess literacy skills.

In fact, the teachers play an essential role in promoting literacy development. They need to be equipped with the necessary skills to integrate new literacy concepts into their teaching and create engaging learning experiences. Curriculum adaptation is needed to incorporate new literacies that align with the demands of the digital age.

Thus, according to Rohman (2022), in the era of disruption, literacy is crucial for improving critical thinking skills. Rohman suggests that:

- (1) The culture of literacy plays a significant role in enhancing students' critical thinking abilities. The higher the literacy skills of students, the higher their critical thinking levels will be; and

- (2) the implementation of literacy culture in the learning process involves eight stages: monitoring text comprehension, using multimodal literacy, providing clear and explicit instructions, utilizing tools, responding to various types of questions, generating questions, literacy processes (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), and summarizing text content.

Hanifah et al. (2022) have carried out culture-based literacy learning to improve the literacy skills of the elementary school students. They have identified that one of the factors contributing to low literacy in Indonesia is the lack of a conducive literacy environment, particularly in terms of teaching materials. In fact, they have developed culture-based literacy materials for fifth-grade elementary students. Using a quantitative approach with pre-experimental pre-test and post-test methods to observe learning outcomes, they have found that culture-related materials effectively improved the literacy skills of the students. Unfortunately, the published results did not describe the specific types of culture-based teaching materials used.

Culture-based teaching materials can also be used to improve students' science literacy not only in the Indonesian language subject, but in the elementary schools (Suryanti et al., 2020). Based on the OECD literacy and numeracy test reports, Indonesia still needs to rank higher. This highlights the need for efforts to improve literacy. Culture-based teaching materials such as lesson plans, student worksheets, and science literacy tests were developed using a four-D method. This involves Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. The selected cultural themes included Semanggi batik, remittance, and rujak singer. The development of these materials was found to effectively train science literacy in elementary school students up to grade five.

Culturally responsive instruction (CRI) has been recognized as a promising approach to guiding students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to achieve high literacy levels (Keehne et al. 2018). They have studied CRI to enhance literacy learning in schools in Hawaii. CRI learning includes five elements: the role of the indigenous language (literacy in the native language), connections to the community, the goal of instruction, authentic assessment, and instructional content and context. Learning is designed to incorporate both cultural and higher-level thinking. Schools apply CRI in an outward-oriented, action-oriented manner, and literacy is viewed as a means to serve the community, not as an end goal. Schools emphasize CRI as content, differing from previous research with Hawaiian Indigenous students who viewed CRI as a process. CRI focuses on exploring cultural identity as a foundation for acquiring ancestral cultural knowledge and Western academic knowledge to contribute to the well-being of the families, the communities and the nation.

Damaianti et al. (2017) have developed a set of critical reading materials based on cultural literacy using the active reader strategy for junior high school students. She observed that the rapid pace of globalization, modernization, industrialization, and technological development has shifted cultural values. According to Damaianti et al, cultural literacy is necessary to form a cultured society and build a civilized nation. Through the teaching materials developed, they have demonstrated that culture-based literacy can build sensitivity of the students to the noble values of religion, customs, and culture, which can be integrated into community life.

At the same time, Zakiyah (2022) highlights the importance of innovation in culture-based literacy education to strengthen national identity. Due to the strong influence of globalization on society, especially the younger generation, there is a concern about the fading of positive character traits, which requires strengthening in the field of education. Indeed, Zakiyah shows that cultural values contribute to building national character and identity integrated with Pancasila. Cultural values such as cooperation, art and literature, and local skills are instilled in students to develop their ability to make good and bad decisions, preserve what is good, and implement it in daily life.

4. Implications of Culture-Based Learning Innovations in Indonesian Language Learning

Culture-based learning provides students with an authentic context in which the language is used, enabling them to understand not only vocabulary and grammar, but also pragmatic and socio-linguistic elements of communication. When language is taught through local stories, customs, idioms, and oral traditions, students are more likely to understand the nuances and deeper meanings embedded in linguistic expressions. This leads to more natural and meaningful use of the language, especially in speech and writing.

Integrating local culture into language lessons creates a sense of familiarity and relevance, thereby increasing student motivation and engagement. Students are more engaged when the content reflects the daily life, values, and practices of their community. This emotional connection can foster intrinsic motivations, which is essential for continued language learning.

Culture-based language learning not only enhances language skills but also fosters cultural identity and pride. Students gain a better understanding of their heritage, traditions, and worldviews through their native or local language. At the same time, they develop intercultural competence, which is essential in multilingual and multicultural societies. This dual consciousness supports national identity and global citizenship.

Culturally informed innovations often involve the use of local or regional languages alongside the national or foreign language. This practice affirms the value of linguistic diversity and supports mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE). It helps preserve endangered languages while serving as a bridge to learning other languages.

Implementing culturally informed innovations challenges educators to adapt their teaching strategies, create or use culturally relevant materials, and become more responsive to students' backgrounds. This requires ongoing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and linguistics. Teachers must also engage with the community to ensure that cultural content is accurate and respectful.

Culturally informed learning encourages students to reflect on their own cultural practices, compare them with others, and engage in dialogue about values and meanings. This process fosters critical thinking, empathy, and communicative competence, particularly in narrative, descriptive, and persuasive language. Despite the significant benefits, challenges remain, including the following.

- (a) The need for high-quality local teaching materials,
- (b) Potential curriculum constraints,
- (c) Limited teacher preparation for culturally informed teaching, and
- (d) The risk of cultural stereotyping if content is not well contextualized.

Therefore, careful planning, community engagement, and institutional support are essential for effective implementation.

These show that culturally informed learning innovations in language teaching have profound implications for the way students learn, experience, and use language. They foster not only linguistic competence but also cultural understanding, personal identity, and social cohesion. When effectively integrated, they contribute to holistic, inclusive, and transformative language learning that prepares students for local engagement and global interactions.

Discussion

Challenges and Proposed Solutions

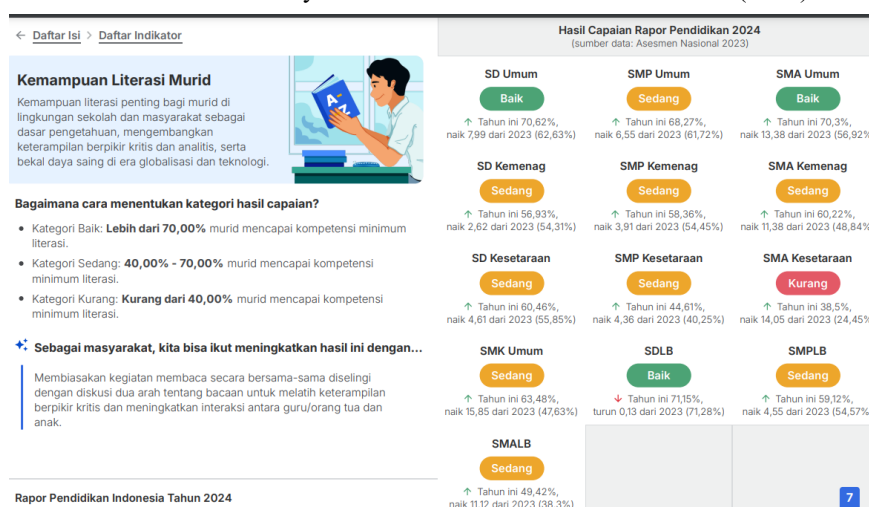
Challenges:

Various factors, such as limited access to quality reading materials, lack of interest in reading, and ineffective teaching methods, prevent students from having low literacy skills. The rapidly changing world has led to the fading of national identity in the era of globalization. The increasingly fast flow of globalization is feared to erode local values and cultures that are integral parts of national identity.

Therefore, innovation in learning is required to address future challenges. A world in constant development demands changes in various aspects of life, including education.

Innovations in learning are necessary to prepare the younger generation to face the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Fig. 2: Literacy Skills of Students in Indonesia
Source: Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia (2024)



Proposed Solutions

Culture-based literacy learning innovations can offer a solution to preserve national identity. By integrating culture into literacy education, it is hoped that students will find it easier to understand and appreciate the noble values embedded in it. Culture-based learning can also increase students' interest and motivation to learn, as the material presented is more relevant to their lives. Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, such as folklore, regional songs, and traditional games can be utilized as engaging and contextual learning resources. This can strengthen the character and national identity of the students. Developing a curriculum focused on cultural identity can help students understand and appreciate Indonesia's cultural richness. This will reinforce their national identity and foster a sense of unity and solidarity.

7. Conclusions

In today's rapidly changing global landscape, innovation in education is not only beneficial but also essential. To prepare a generation that can adapt and thrive in the midst of constant change, educational practices must evolve to reflect the complexities of modern life. One promising area of innovation is the integration of culture-based literacy learning. Research findings suggest that such a culture-based approach has significant potential to strengthen students' sense of national identity. By incorporating elements of local culture into the curriculum, educators can create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences for the students. This not only increases their motivation to learn but also fosters a deeper appreciation for their nation's heritage, values, and traditions. In addition, the use of active, culture-based learning strategies contributes to the holistic development of key 21st-century skills. These strategies encourage students to engage critically with content, think creatively about real-world issues, and collaborate effectively with their peers. As students explore and analyze cultural narratives, practices, and perspectives, they simultaneously develop cognitive and social skills that are essential for success in academic and life contexts.

In this context, this paper concludes that, innovations in literacy education through culturally responsive methods is a powerful tool for educating informed, culturally aware, and empowered citizens.

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