



TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATING LOCAL WISDOM INTO LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN INDONESIAN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Local wisdom has become an important pedagogical resource in language education because it connects language learning with students' cultural identity, community knowledge, and everyday communicative practices. However, language classrooms are often dominated by textbook-based instruction and standardized linguistic targets that provide limited space for students' local cultural experiences. This study aims to examine teachers' pedagogical strategies for integrating local wisdom into language education and to analyze how these strategies support students' classroom engagement and intercultural awareness. The study employed a mixed-method design involving 48 language teachers, 192 students, 12 teacher interviews, 8 classroom observations, and 24 teaching documents. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that teachers integrated local wisdom through contextualized materials, local narratives, cultural resource

mapping, translanguaging practices, community-based tasks, and reflective intercultural assessment. Contextualized teaching materials were the most frequently used strategy ($M = 4.32$; $SD = 0.51$), followed by local narratives and oral traditions ($M = 4.15$; $SD = 0.57$). Reflective intercultural assessment was least frequently implemented ($M = 3.08$; $SD = 0.79$), although it showed the strongest correlation with intercultural awareness ($r = 0.62$; $p < .01$). The study concludes that local wisdom should be positioned as a pedagogical foundation for culturally responsive, multilingual, and reflective language education.

Keywords: local wisdom; language education; pedagogical strategies; mixed method; culturally responsive teaching

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A. Introduction

Language education is closely related to culture because language carries values, identities, and ways of understanding the world. Learning a language is not only mastering vocabulary, grammar, and the four skills; it also means learning how meanings are constructed within particular cultural and social contexts, so language education should not be separated from students' cultural backgrounds.

In multilingual societies such as Indonesia, students often grow up using local languages at home, Indonesian in formal contexts, and English at school — bringing local stories, oral traditions, social values, and everyday expressions that can become meaningful resources for language learning rather than entering the classroom as culturally empty subjects.

Language education is nevertheless frequently dominated by standardized, textbook-based instruction that underrepresents learners' own local cultures (Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011). Culture in EFL textbooks should be treated as a process of meaning-making rather than static information (Weninger & Kiss, 2013), and

nationally endorsed Indonesian English textbooks, though containing multicultural values, still require critical classroom mediation (Setyono & Widodo, 2019).

This limited integration creates a gap between students' cultural realities and formal learning, making it less contextual and unintentionally positioning local languages and cultures as marginal compared to national or global languages.

Local wisdom refers to community-based knowledge, values, norms, oral traditions, and ways of life sustained within local communities. In language education it can be integrated through folktales, proverbs, traditional songs, and community narratives — resources that can support students' literacy, intercultural awareness, and communicative competence.

This integration is supported by culturally responsive teaching, which uses students' cultural knowledge to make learning more relevant (Gay, 2002) and should support academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995), extended by culturally sustaining pedagogy's argument that education should sustain linguistic and cultural pluralism (Paris, 2012).

It also aligns with translanguaging pedagogy, in which flexible bilingual practices support learning in multilingual classrooms (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) and multilingual speakers negotiate meaning across social repertoires (Canagarajah, 2013) — so local-language use should not be seen as interference but as a resource for deeper meaning-making.

Integrating local wisdom is not simple, however: used only as decoration it may result in tokenism, whereas integrating it through reading, speaking, writing, and assessment can strengthen both linguistic and cultural learning.

Previous studies have examined culturally responsive pedagogy and textbook representation, but empirical studies combining quantitative and qualitative evidence on teachers' strategies for integrating local wisdom remain limited. This study uses a mixed-method design to address: (1) What pedagogical strategies do teachers use to integrate local wisdom? (2) How are

these strategies related to engagement and intercultural awareness?
(3) What challenges do teachers face?

B. Method

This study employed a mixed-method convergent parallel design: quantitative and qualitative data were collected within the same phase, analyzed separately, and integrated at interpretation. The quantitative component identified dominant strategies and their relationship with engagement and intercultural awareness; the qualitative component explored how teachers designed and reflected on local wisdom-based learning — appropriate when both numerical tendencies and contextual explanation are needed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013).

The study was conducted in eight multilingual school contexts. The quantitative sample included 48 language teachers and 192 students; the qualitative sample included 12 teachers selected purposively for their experience integrating local culture. In addition, 8 classroom observations and 24 teaching documents were analyzed for richer information.

Four instruments were used: a teacher questionnaire measuring frequency of local wisdom integration across six dimensions on a five-point Likert scale; a student questionnaire measuring engagement and intercultural awareness; semi-structured teacher interviews; and classroom observation sheets and document analysis.

Reliability was acceptable: Cronbach's alpha was 0.89 for the teacher questionnaire, 0.86 for the student engagement scale, and 0.88 for the intercultural awareness scale, with the interview guide validated through expert review.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis; qualitative data were analyzed thematically and compared with quantitative findings to identify convergence, complementarity, and divergence.

Integration occurred at the interpretation stage, with quantitative findings identifying general patterns and qualitative findings explaining how and why they occurred. Trustworthiness

was supported through triangulation and member checking; ethical considerations included participant consent, confidentiality, and academic-only data use.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

The findings are presented in three parts. The first part describes teachers’ pedagogical strategies for integrating local wisdom into language education. The second part explains the relationship between local wisdom-based strategies, student engagement, and intercultural awareness. The third part presents qualitative themes related to implementation benefits and challenges.

Teachers’ Use of Local Wisdom-Based Pedagogical Strategies

The quantitative data showed teachers used several strategies. The most frequent was contextualizing teaching materials with local cultural content; the second most frequent was local narratives and oral traditions — folktales, legends, proverbs, and songs used to teach reading, speaking, and writing.

Translanguaging practices were also used, with variation across teachers, while reflective intercultural assessment received the lowest score, indicating inconsistent assessment of cultural interpretation.

Table 1. Teachers’ Pedagogical Strategies for Integrating Local Wisdom

No.	Strategy	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Contextualized teaching materials	4.32	0.51	High
2	Local narratives and oral traditions	4.15	0.57	High
3	Cultural resource mapping	3.82	0.66	Moderate to high
4	Translanguaging	3.64	0.71	Moderate

	practices			
5	Community-based language tasks	3.41	0.74	Moderate
6	Reflective intercultural assessment	3.08	0.79	Moderate to low

Source: Processed from teacher questionnaire data.

Descriptive statistics show contextualized teaching materials had the highest mean ($M = 4.32$), followed by local narratives and oral traditions ($M = 4.15$), while reflective intercultural assessment had the lowest mean ($M = 3.08$), indicating continued difficulty designing assessment tools for cultural interpretation.

The qualitative data supported these tendencies: contextualized materials were easiest to implement since they could be inserted into existing lesson plans — describing local food in descriptive lessons, using folktales as reading material, or presenting local traditions in speaking lessons — connecting vocabulary with familiar local contexts.

Cultural Resource Mapping as the Initial Strategy

Cultural resource mapping appeared as an important initial strategy: teachers who implemented local wisdom-based instruction more systematically began by identifying relevant cultural resources — oral stories, traditional games, local ceremonies, culinary traditions, ecological practices — obtained from students, parents, and community members.

In classroom practice, mapping was sometimes conducted as a learning activity itself: students interviewed family members or documented traditions, using language for questioning, describing, and presenting — so mapping supported both teacher preparation and students' language learning process.

Teachers considered mapping useful because it prevented random cultural insertion, making them more aware that local wisdom includes values such as mutual assistance, respect, and community solidarity — values then transformed into themes for reading, speaking, and writing tasks.

Local Narratives and Oral Traditions in Literacy Learning

Local narratives and oral traditions were widely used to support literacy learning — folktales, legends, proverbs, and songs as resources for reading comprehension, storytelling, vocabulary, and writing, with students identifying story structure, retelling stories, or adapting them into short narrative texts.

Observation data showed students participated more willingly when stories were familiar, contributing prior knowledge and comparing versions — making interaction more dialogic, with students negotiating meaning from their own cultural knowledge rather than merely answering teacher questions. Teachers also reported that narratives required careful adaptation, since some oral stories were too long, linguistically complex, or contained stereotypes needing simplification and critical mediation.

Translanguaging and Comparative Language Awareness

Translanguaging was used to connect local language, Indonesian, and English, particularly when local cultural concepts lacked direct English equivalents — students compared local terms, Indonesian explanations, and English translations, for example creating bilingual glossaries of local cultural terms, which supported metalinguistic and intercultural understanding.

Translanguaging also helped lower-proficiency students participate by expressing ideas in a familiar language before reformulating them, reducing anxiety — though teachers emphasized clear instructional boundaries so local-language support leads toward, rather than replaces, target-language production.

Local Wisdom-Based Strategies, Engagement, and Intercultural Awareness

The quantitative analysis indicated a positive relationship between local wisdom-based strategies and classroom engagement: teachers who frequently used contextualized materials, local narratives, and dialogic cultural tasks reported higher participation,

and students felt more interested when lessons involved familiar cultural topics.

Table 2. Relationship between Local Wisdom-Based Strategies and Student Learning Indicators

Variable	Student Engagement	Intercultural Awareness
Contextualized materials	0.52**	0.47**
Local narratives and oral traditions	0.49**	0.55**
Translanguaging practices	0.41**	0.58**
Community-based tasks	0.44**	0.51**
Reflective assessment	0.38*	0.62**

*Source: Processed from teacher and student questionnaire data. Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.*

Contextualized materials correlated positively with student engagement ($r = 0.52$, $p < .01$) and intercultural awareness ($r = 0.47$, $p < .01$), as did local narratives ($r = 0.49$, $p < .01$ and $r = 0.55$, $p < .01$) — indicating that familiar content and stories helped students participate and reflect on cultural meanings.

The strongest correlation with intercultural awareness was reflective assessment ($r = 0.62$, $p < .01$), despite low frequency of use, and translanguaging also correlated positively with it ($r = 0.58$, $p < .01$) — suggesting that cultural comparison and reflective tasks strengthen intercultural understanding.

Qualitative findings explained this: students were more engaged because local topics were familiar and connected to everyday life, allowing them to speak from experience, and local wisdom-based tasks created opportunities to involve family and community members.

Intercultural awareness developed when teachers guided students to compare local, national, and global perspectives — local proverbs with English expressions, or traditional with modern practices — helping students see that cultures differ but can be discussed through language learning.

Challenges Faced by Teachers

The qualitative data revealed four main challenges: limited teaching resources, since teachers often created their own local wisdom-based materials and struggled to obtain accurate documentation; curriculum pressure, since completing textbook units and preparing for assessments left local wisdom integration supplementary rather than central; teachers' uneven cultural knowledge, requiring collaboration with parents and community elders; and assessment design, since vocabulary and grammar were easier to assess than cultural interpretation and intercultural reflection, explaining reflective assessment's lower quantitative score.

Table 3. Qualitative Themes on Benefits and Challenges

Theme	Evidence from Classroom Practice	Pedagogical Meaning
Meaningful language input	Students described local food, cultural sites, traditional markets, and community events in English and Indonesian	Local context supported vocabulary comprehension and text understanding
Increased participation	Students were more active when discussing familiar folktales, proverbs, and traditional games	Cultural familiarity encouraged classroom engagement
Multilingual meaning-making	Students compared local language terms, Indonesian explanations, and English translations	Translanguaging supported deeper cultural and linguistic understanding
Critical cultural reflection	Students discussed changes in local traditions, youth language practices, and environmental values	Culture was treated as dynamic and open to interpretation
Resource limitation	Teachers created local stories, worksheets, and vocabulary lists independently	Institutional support and local material banks were needed
Assessment difficulty	Teachers lacked rubrics	Evaluation needed

for assessing cultural interpretation and intercultural reflection	broader indicators beyond grammar and vocabulary
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Source: Synthesized from interview, observation, and document data.

The qualitative findings further explain the quantitative results: students became more active with familiar cultural topics, describing local food or markets using simple English in descriptive lessons, and participating better in narrative lessons using local folktales since prior knowledge of characters and settings helped them construct meaning before producing responses.

Interview data revealed that teachers viewed local wisdom as a bridge between everyday experience and formal learning, reducing students' hesitation to speak on familiar topics — though such instruction required additional preparation to adapt oral stories, simplify explanations, and design vocabulary and assessment activities balancing linguistic accuracy and cultural understanding.

2. Discussion

The findings show that integrating local wisdom requires more than inserting cultural symbols into materials; teachers need to transform it into pedagogically meaningful activities supporting language competence, intercultural awareness, and engagement — supporting Gay's (2002) and Ladson-Billings' (1995) view that culturally relevant pedagogy connects academic learning, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

Contextualization must go beyond replacing generic content with local names or objects, however; used only at the surface level it may become tokenistic, whereas discussing cultural meaning and historical background alongside vocabulary produces deeper learning, consistent with Weninger and Kiss's (2013) view of culture as a semiotic process rather than fixed information.

The use of local narratives has strong implications for literacy development: reading, retelling, dramatizing, or rewriting them develops reading comprehension, speaking fluency, writing organization, and cultural awareness — supporting culturally sustaining pedagogy, in which local stories and languages are

sustained as valid learning resources (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Translanguaging can support local wisdom-based education since students often need local languages to explain untranslatable cultural meanings (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), needing purposeful design, however: local language should activate prior knowledge and support initial discussion before students reformulate ideas in Indonesian or English — a bridge toward, not a substitute for, target-language production (Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

The positive relationship between local wisdom-based strategies and engagement indicates cultural relevance matters: students participate more when learning content connects to their own lives, consistent with culturally responsive teaching's emphasis on cultural frames of reference (Gay, 2002; Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Intercultural awareness development is another important contribution: education should help students compare local, national, and global perspectives rather than focus only on their own culture, aligning with English as an international language pedagogy taught appropriately to local contexts (Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2012).

The challenges identified show that teachers need institutional support — resources, professional development, and curriculum flexibility — which schools can provide through local resource banks and community collaboration.

Assessment remains critical: if it focuses only on grammar and vocabulary, teachers may avoid deeper cultural learning. Assessment should include cultural explanation, intercultural comparison, and reflective thinking alongside accuracy, with rubrics making local wisdom-based education more academically rigorous.

The findings also respond to critiques of multicultural education: Banks (1993) emphasized its multidimensional nature, Sleeter (2012) warned it is often marginalized in formal schooling, and Kubota (2016) cautioned that multicultural discourse can become superficial when ignoring power and inequality — so local

wisdom-based education should examine how culture changes, not merely celebrate it.

Overall, teachers' pedagogical strategies can be organized into six connected practices which, implemented critically, can strengthen language competence, cultural identity, participation, and intercultural awareness.

D. Conclusion

This study examined teachers' pedagogical strategies for integrating local wisdom into language education through a mixed-method design involving 48 teachers, 192 students, 12 interviews, 8 classroom observations, and 24 teaching documents. Teachers integrated local wisdom through contextualized materials, local narratives, cultural resource mapping, translanguaging, community-based tasks, and reflective intercultural assessment. Contextualized materials were most used ($M = 4.32$; $SD = 0.51$), followed by local narratives ($M = 4.15$; $SD = 0.57$), while reflective assessment was least used ($M = 3.08$; $SD = 0.79$) despite the strongest correlation with intercultural awareness ($r = 0.62$; $p < .01$). These strategies made learning more meaningful and increased engagement and intercultural awareness, though teachers faced challenges of limited resources, curriculum pressure, uneven cultural knowledge, and assessment design. The study concludes that local wisdom should be a pedagogical foundation for culturally responsive language education, not decorative content; future research should test its effectiveness through classroom intervention.

Declaration of AI-Assisted Technologies

In preparing this manuscript, the authors used AI-assisted tools only to improve English language quality and readability. The tools were not used to generate data or draw conclusions. All conceptual arguments remain the authors' responsibility, and all AI-assisted outputs were reviewed for accuracy and originality.

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