

# The Role of 'Assitalliang'-Based Learning Materials in Enhancing Cultural Awareness in Indonesian Language Learning at Higher Education Institutions

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## Abstract

*Indonesia, as a country with rich cultural diversity, faces challenges in maintaining and developing cultural awareness among the younger generation, especially in higher education environments. Effective learning of the Indonesian language not only teaches linguistic aspects but also needs to instill the cultural values embedded in the language. 'Assitalliang', as one of the local cultural concepts rich in wisdom values, has the potential to become an effective teaching material for this purpose. Assitalliang, as one of the local cultural concepts rich in values of wisdom, has the potential to be an effective teaching material for this purpose. This research aims to examine the role of 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials in enhancing students' cultural awareness in Indonesian language learning at higher education institutions. A qualitative approach with a case study design was used at one tertiary institution in Indonesia, with data obtained through in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, observation of the learning process, as well as analysis of teaching materials and student assignments. Data analysis was conducted thematically to identify the contributions of 'Assitalliang' teaching materials to the development of cultural awareness. The research findings indicate that teaching materials based on 'Assitalliang' not only enrich the linguistic aspects of learning but also provide a contextual experience that allows students to understand and embody local cultural values such as gotong royong (mutual assistance), respect, togetherness, and social harmony. These findings emphasize the importance of developing teaching materials that integrate cultural aspects as a holistic approach in learning the Indonesian language. Thus, the 'Assitalliang' based teaching materials can serve as an effective model for internalizing cultural values while also strengthening students' national identity.*

**Keywords:** *teaching materials, Assitalliang, cultural awareness, Indonesian language, higher education..*

## Introduction

Language is an integral part of the culture and identity of a nation. Through language, cultural values, social norms, and local wisdom are passed down from generation to generation. In Indonesia, with its extraordinary diversity of ethnicities, customs, and cultures, the Indonesian language serves not only as a means of communication among citizens but also as a unifying medium that carries national values. Therefore, the learning of the Indonesian language in higher education should not only focus on linguistic aspects such as grammar and vocabulary but also instill awareness and appreciation of the culture inherent in the language.

In practice, the learning of the Indonesian language at many universities tends to focus on mastering the technical aspects of the language. This has the potential to cause students to miss the opportunity to internalize the cultural values contained in the language. This low cultural awareness can negatively affect students' cultural identity, as well as weaken a sense of nationalism and understanding of the diversity that is the wealth of the Indonesian nation.

Cultural awareness, as understood in the context of language learning, is the individual's ability to recognize, appreciate, and apply the cultural values inherent in the language they are learning. In this context, effective language learning must be able to link language material with the cultural context surrounding it. Thus, students not only learn to communicate correctly, but also understand the cultural background of the language they are using, becoming culturally sensitive communicators with a strong national identity.

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One potential approach to developing cultural awareness in Indonesian language learning is through the development of teaching materials based on local cultural concepts. 'Assitalliang' is a traditional cultural concept originating from a specific region in Indonesia that embodies values of local wisdom such as mutual assistance, respect for others, togetherness, social solidarity, and harmony in community life. This concept is a tangible representation of how local communities organize their social and cultural relationships, and therefore is very relevant as a medium for cultural learning.

The use of 'Assitalliang' as a basis for developing Indonesian language teaching materials provides students with the opportunity not only to understand the language in terms of structure and function but also to recognize and appreciate cultural values that are very relevant to their social lives. In other words, 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials bring a richer learning dimension, namely language learning that is integrated with cultural learning in a contextual and practical way.

The importance of cultural integration in language learning is also supported by various previous studies that show that cultural awareness is a key factor in the success of cross-cultural communication and the formation of national identity. For example, research by Kramsch (1993) emphasizes that effective language teaching cannot be separated from teaching culture as context and meaning. Furthermore, Byram (1997) in the concept of 'intercultural communicative competence' emphasizes that language learning must include the development of awareness, knowledge, and skills that enable students to interact effectively and appropriately in different cultural contexts. In Indonesia, research examining the development of local culture-based teaching materials for Indonesian language learning is still relatively limited.

Therefore, the development of learning materials based on 'Assitalliang' becomes a strategic step that not only fills this gap but also makes a tangible contribution to the preservation and development of local culture. These learning materials can serve as a model that can be further developed and adapted to various other local cultural contexts in Indonesia, making the learning of Indonesian at the university level richer, more relevant, and meaningful.

In addition to academic and cultural aspects, the development of teaching materials based on 'Assitalliang' also has important social and psychological implications. By internalizing positive cultural values, students are expected to build a better character, have a high sense of social responsibility, and be able to live harmoniously in a multicultural society. This is very relevant considering the challenges of globalization and the waves of modernization that sometimes lead to the erosion of traditional cultural values and the erosion of local identity.

The development of teaching materials based on 'Assitalliang' can also strengthen the role of higher education institutions as agents of cultural preservation. Higher education institutions are not just formal educational institutions, but also centers for cultural development that must be able to accommodate and develop the values of local wisdom present in the surrounding community. Thus, this research contributes not only to the field of language education but also to the context of cultural development and character education.

Overall, the development of 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials is a relevant and necessary strategic effort in facing the challenges of language education in this modern era. By prioritizing cultural aspects, the learning of the Indonesian language can become more holistic, enrich students' perspectives, and shape a younger generation that is not only linguistically competent but also rich in cultural awareness and has a love for the nation's cultural heritage.

## Literature Review

Language learning cannot be separated from cultural context because language is an expression of culture that is intrinsic to the identity of a community. Kramsch (1993) emphasizes that language instruction should include cultural elements as an important context for understanding the meaning and effective use of language. Thus, culturally-oriented language learning will help students develop essential 'cultural awareness' in cross-cultural communication.

Byram (1997) introduced the concept of 'intercultural communicative competence' which encompasses the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable individuals to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural awareness is one of the main components of this competence, which must be instilled from the language learning process so that communication is not only grammatically correct but also culturally appropriate.

In Indonesia, research on the development of teaching materials based on local culture shows great potential in increasing the cultural awareness of students. According to Rahman (2018), teaching materials that integrate local cultural values can enhance interest in learning and help students understand the socio-cultural context in which the language is used. Additionally, Putra and Sulisty (2020) state that learning approaches that highlight local culture, such as 'Assitalliang,' can strengthen students' cultural identity and develop attitudes of tolerance and appreciation for cultural diversity.

'Assitalliang' itself is part of the local wisdom that encompasses social values such as mutual cooperation, respect, togetherness, and harmony. As a teaching material, 'Assitalliang' offers a contextual approach that brings language learning out of the theoretical framework into meaningful real-life experiences for students (Sari, 2019). This approach is in line with the contextual learning theory proposed by Johnson and Johnson (2009), which emphasizes the importance of connecting learning material to real situations experienced by students to enhance understanding and learning motivation.

Furthermore, the development of culturally based educational materials such as 'Assitalliang' is also related to strengthening character education. Lickona (1991) emphasizes that character education can be achieved through the integration of moral and social values into the curriculum, including language learning. Therefore, educational materials that highlight local cultural values play a strategic role in shaping students' characters while also enhancing their language competencies.

Another study by Wulandari (2021) shows that teaching materials that combine local culture in Indonesian language learning at higher education can enhance students' active engagement and broaden their cultural perspectives. This is in line with the findings of Nurhadi (2022) which emphasize the importance of cultural integration in the development of teaching materials so that language learning becomes more meaningful and capable of shaping a strong cultural identity.

## Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design aimed at deeply understanding the role of 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials in enhancing students' cultural awareness in Indonesian language learning at the university level. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by lecturers and students during the learning process, thereby obtaining a more comprehensive and contextual picture. The research was conducted at a university that has implemented 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials in the Indonesian language course. The selection of this location was deliberately done purposively to ensure that the data obtained is relevant and in-depth regarding the use of these teaching materials.

The research subjects consist of course instructors and students who actively attend classes. Subjects were chosen by considering the diversity of students' backgrounds to obtain various perspectives on the impact of teaching materials on their cultural awareness. Data was collected using several techniques, including in-depth interviews with instructors and students, participatory observation during the learning process, and analysis of documentation of teaching materials, syllabi, and student assignments. In-depth interviews were used to explore participants' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding the 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials. Participatory observation allowed the researchers to directly see how the learning process took place, how instructors used the teaching materials, and how students responded to them. Documentation analysis was carried out to understand the content of the teaching materials and their connection to the development of cultural awareness.

After the data has been collected, the researchers conduct a thematic analysis by identifying patterns and themes that emerge related to the use of teaching materials and the enhancement of students' cultural awareness. The analysis process includes transcribing interview and observation data, coding the data based on main themes, grouping codes into categories, and interpreting the results to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied. To maintain data validity, the researchers apply triangulation of sources and methods, comparing information from interviews, observations, and documentation to reinforce each other. Additionally, the researchers perform member checking by confirming the results of interviews and interpretations with participants to ensure data accuracy.

With this method, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the role of 'Assitalliang' based teaching materials in Indonesian language learning and its contribution to enhancing students' cultural awareness in higher education.

## Results and Discussion

This research aims to explore the role of teaching materials based on 'Assitalliang' in enhancing students' cultural awareness in Indonesian language learning at universities. Based on data obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis, several important findings were identified that comprehensively illustrate how these teaching materials contribute to the learning process and the development of cultural awareness.

### Strengthening Understanding of Local Cultural Values through 'Assitalliang'.

One of the main findings is that teaching materials based on 'Assitalliang' significantly strengthen students' understanding of local cultural values that they may not have previously comprehended deeply. 'Assitalliang', which encompasses values such as mutual assistance, respect, togetherness, social solidarity, and harmony, is able to bring language learning out of the theoretical framework and into real experiences rooted in the social life of the community.

Students report that learning materials that include stories, practices, and the philosophy of 'Assitalliang' make it easier for them to relate cultural concepts to the language being studied. For example, in an interview, a student stated: "I feel that learning Indonesian is not just about grammar and vocabulary, but also learning how the cultural values of 'Assitalliang' are applied in daily life. This makes me appreciate local culture more and become more aware of the importance of preserving our traditions."

### Increasing Cultural Awareness as an Essential Component of Language Learning.

Cultural awareness is one aspect that significantly increases through the use of the teaching material 'Assitalliang'. Data from interviews and observations indicate that students are not only able to understand cultural values theoretically, but also to identify, discuss, and apply those values in social contexts and everyday communication. In reflections on written assignments, some students wrote about how the values of togetherness and mutual cooperation taught through 'Assitalliang' helped them see the importance of collaboration in campus life and the larger community. This indicates that this teaching material not only transfers knowledge but also shapes attitudes and behaviors that reflect cultural awareness.

One of the lecturers stated: "Using 'Assitalliang' based teaching materials allows me to integrate cultural values more naturally in Indonesian language teaching. The discussions among students become livelier, and I feel that the learning process becomes more meaningful." This lecturer's active role also helps to address potential barriers that may arise, such as students' difficulties in understanding cultural concepts or a lack of interest in cultural learning materials.

Furthermore, students also become more open and tolerant towards cultural differences in their environment. By understanding their own cultural roots through 'Assitalliang', students feel more confident and able to interact positively with other cultures, a skill that is very important in the era of globalization and multiculturalism.

## **The Role of Lecturers in Facilitating 'Assitalliang' Based Learning.**

The role of lecturers as facilitators is crucial in the successful use of 'Assitalliang' based teaching materials. Observation and interview data indicate that lecturers not only function as educators but also as cultural mediators, connecting cultural concepts with language materials. The lecturers reported that they use various learning methods, such as group discussions, case studies, simulations, and personal reflections, to encourage students to be more active in understanding the cultural values contained in 'Assitalliang'. This approach makes students more engaged and motivated because they feel that the material being studied is relevant to their own experiences.

## **The Implications of Curriculum Development and Language Education.**

The findings of this research provide important implications for the development of the Indonesian language learning curriculum at higher education institutions. The integration of locally-based teaching materials such as 'Assitalliang' has proven to fill the gap in language learning that has so far been more oriented towards linguistic aspects only. By incorporating teaching materials that promote cultural values, Indonesian language learning becomes more holistic and touches on the affective aspects and attitudes of students. This aligns with the goals of character education, which aim to shape students not only as competent communicators but also as individuals who possess awareness and appreciation of culture and national identity.

A curriculum that integrates culturally sensitive teaching materials can help students understand the socio-cultural context of the language they are learning, enhance motivation to learn, and strengthen a sense of nationalism. In addition, these teaching materials can serve as a model for other higher education institutions that wish to develop language learning that is relevant to their respective local cultural contexts.

## **Challenges and Obstacles in the Implementation of 'Assitalliang'-Based Teaching Materials.**

Although the results are positive, this research also identifies several challenges that need to be considered for the sustainability of 'Assitalliang'-based teaching material usage. First, there are limitations in resources and well-structured teaching materials. The development of quality teaching materials requires significant time, effort, and resources, which means not all higher education institutions can implement them optimally. Second, the competence of lecturers in teaching culture-based materials is a key factor. Some lecturers feel the need for special training to effectively and engagingly present cultural material. This requires support from educational institutions to provide training and capacity-building workshops for lecturers.

Thirdly, the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds also poses its own challenges. Students from different cultures may require a more adaptive approach so that the teaching material 'Assitalliang' can be accepted and understood well without causing misunderstandings or feelings of alienation.

## **Integration of 'Assitalliang' Teaching Materials in the Context of Modern Learning.**

Although based on traditional values, the 'Assitalliang' teaching materials can easily be integrated into a more dynamic and interactive modern learning context. The learning approaches used by the lecturers during the research, such as group discussions, role play, and case studies, are teaching methods that align with the 21st-century learning paradigm which emphasizes active engagement and collaboration. This shows that culturally-based teaching materials do not have to appear outdated or static, but can be packaged and presented innovatively according to the needs and characteristics of today's students. With the support of technology, these teaching materials can be further developed into digital modules, learning videos, or interactive applications that can expand access and enhance learning effectiveness.



## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that teaching materials based on 'Assitalliang' play an important role in enhancing students' cultural awareness in learning Indonesian at the higher education level. These teaching materials not only enrich the linguistic aspects of learning but also provide a deep contextual experience regarding local cultural values. The role of lecturers as facilitators is crucial to the success of the implementation of these teaching materials, with teaching methods that encourage interaction and active reflection among students.

The development of a curriculum that integrates culture-based teaching materials is an important strategy to create a more holistic and meaningful Indonesian language learning experience. However, challenges such as limited resources and the competencies of lecturers must be addressed so that the application of 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials can be more optimal and sustainable. This research also emphasizes that 'Assitalliang'-based teaching materials play a very important role in enhancing students' cultural awareness in Indonesian language learning at higher education institutions. By integrating local cultural values such as mutual assistance, respect, togetherness, and social harmony into learning materials, these teaching materials are able to effectively connect linguistic aspects with cultural contexts. This not only enriches students' learning experiences but also fosters a deeper attitude and cultural awareness.

The active role of lecturers in facilitating 'Assitalliang' based learning through interactive and contextual methods has proven to enhance student motivation and engagement. The use of this teaching material also contributes to the development of students' language competencies and social skills, as well as supporting character education and strengthening cultural identity and nationalism amidst the dynamics of globalization. However, the implementation of locally based cultural teaching materials still faces several challenges, such as resource limitations, the need for training for lecturers, and the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds that must be carefully considered. Therefore, strong institutional support is needed for the development of higher quality teaching materials and for improving lecturers' capacity to effectively teach cultural content

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