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Assitalliang and Cultural Awareness in Learning Indonesian Language in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Optimal Indonesian language learning should not only be limited to linguistic aspects but should also be able to integrate the cultural values contained therein. Local concepts such as *Assitalliang*, which is full of cultural wisdom, have great potential to be used as teaching materials that support these goals. This study aims to explore how the role of teaching materials based on *Assitalliang* can increase students' cultural awareness in the context of learning Indonesian at the university level. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method at a higher education institution in Indonesia. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, observations during the learning process, and reviews of teaching material documents and student assignment results. Data analysis was carried out thematically to reveal the contribution of teaching materials in increasing students' cultural awareness. Research findings show that teaching materials that adopt the concept of *Assitalliang* not only enrich the linguistic dimension in the learning process but also provide a contextual learning experience. This allows students to understand and absorb local cultural values such as cooperation, respect for others, togetherness, and social harmony. These results emphasize the importance of integrating cultural elements in the development of teaching materials as a comprehensive approach in learning Indonesian. Therefore, teaching materials based on *Assitalliang* have the potential to be an effective model in instilling cultural values while strengthening students' national identity. this study implies that the integration of *Assitalliang*-based materials can make Indonesian language learning more contextual.

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1. Introduction

Language plays an important role as an inseparable part of the culture and identity of a nation. Through language, various cultural values, social norms, and local wisdom can be passed on from one generation to the next. In Indonesia, which is known for its ethnic diversity, customs, and culture, Indonesian not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a unifying symbol of the nation that contains nationalistic values^[1]. Thus, learning Indonesian at the tertiary level should not only focus on linguistic aspects such as structure and vocabulary, but also develop awareness and appreciation of the cultural elements contained therein. In reality, Indonesian language learning in several universities still focuses heavily on the technical aspects of language. This kind of approach risks students having less opportunity to absorb and understand the cultural values contained in the language. Low awareness of these cultural elements can have a negative impact on the formation of students' cultural identities and has the potential to weaken the spirit of nationalism and understanding of diversity, which is an important part of the wealth of the Indonesian nation^[2]. Cultural awareness in language learning refers to a person's ability to recognize, respect, and apply the cultural values contained in the language being learned. Therefore, the ideal language learning process must be able to connect linguistic aspects with the cultural environment that underlies it. With this approach, students are not only taught how to use language appropriately, but are also equipped with an understanding of the cultural context behind its use, so that they can become communicators who are sensitive to cultural differences and have a strong national identity^[3].

One promising strategy in fostering cultural awareness in Indonesian language learning is through the preparation of teaching materials that refer to local cultural values. *Assitalliang* is a traditional cultural concept originating from South Sulawesi and reflects local wisdom, such as the spirit of cooperation, mutual respect, togetherness, solidarity, and harmony in social life. The values contained in this concept describe how local communities build and maintain their social and cultural order, so it is very suitable to be used as a

culture-based learning medium^[4].

Utilization of *Assitalliang* as a basis for developing Indonesian language teaching materials opens up opportunities for students to understand the language not only from the perspective of its structure and function but also to recognize and internalize cultural values that are closely related to their social reality. Thus, teaching materials based on *Assitalliang* present a more comprehensive learning experience, where language learning is combined contextually and applicatively with cultural learning^[5].

The integration of cultural elements in the language learning process has been strongly supported by various previous studies, which state that cultural awareness is an important element in the success of intercultural communication and in the formation of national identity. For example, Andi^[6] emphasized that meaningful language learning must be accompanied by an understanding of culture as a basis for context and meaning. In addition, Pratama et al.^[7], through the concept of "intercultural communicative competence," highlighted that language learning should include the development of cultural awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, and skills to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts^[8].

In Indonesia, research on the development of teaching materials based on local culture for learning Indonesian is still relatively small. Therefore, the development of teaching materials based on local culture is a strategic step that not only fills the gap but also makes an important contribution to the preservation and development of local culture. This teaching material can be used as a flexible model and can be adapted to various other local cultures in Indonesia so that learning Indonesian in higher education becomes richer, more relevant, and more meaningful^[9]. Although numerous studies have highlighted the importance of culture in language education, research focusing specifically on *Assitalliang* as a pedagogical resource remains limited. Most studies have explored general cultural integration or focused on other local wisdom traditions. Hence, this study seeks to fill that gap by examining the unique contribution of *Assitalliang*-based materials to fostering cultural awareness in Indonesian higher education.

The latest thing offered in the research is to provide a new alternative contextual learning in the development of interactive digital teaching materials based on the *Assitaliang* script. The teaching materials are designed based on the results of a short ethnographic study in the local environment. The findings are strategic integration between modern learning models (PBL) and local content, not just the insertion of cultural content in lessons, a participatory approach, where students are directly involved in the exploration of local culture through field observations and interviews and the development of digital teaching media developed based on the findings of actual and contextual local culture. Previous research on the development of multilingual teaching materials with local cultural content and context of the Ngada ethnic group used the Addie model.

A part from academic and cultural aspects, the development of teaching materials based on *Assitaliang* also has an important impact on social and psychological aspects. By internalizing positive cultural values, students are expected to be able to form better character, have a high awareness of social responsibility, and be able to live side by side harmoniously in a culturally diverse society. This is very relevant considering the challenges of globalization and modernization, which often cause the erosion of traditional cultural values and weaken local identities.

Development of teaching materials based on *Assitaliang* also strengthens the role of universities as guardians and preservers of culture. Universities not only function as formal educational institutions but also as centers for cultural development that must be able to accommodate and develop local wisdom values from the surrounding community. Thus, this study contributes not only to the field of language education but also to cultural development and character formation^[10].

Overall, the development of teaching materials based on *Assitaliang* is a relevant and very important strategic step in answering the challenges of language learning in the modern era today. By highlighting cultural aspects, the Indonesian language learning process can be more comprehensive, broaden students' knowledge, and form a young generation who are not only proficient in language but also have high cultural awareness and a love for the nation's cultural heritage^[11].

To further strengthen the novelty and originality of this

research, this study also provides a clearer comparison between the *Assitaliang*-based approach and previous works that utilized other forms of local wisdom as the foundation for learning, such as the Ngada cultural scripts, the Bugis "Siri'na Pacce," and the Javanese "Gotong Royong." Unlike those studies, which primarily focused on inserting cultural content into existing curricula, the present research emphasizes an integrative pedagogical model that combines participatory ethnographic exploration with interactive digital teaching materials. This distinction highlights how the *Assitaliang* approach advances beyond traditional local wisdom integration toward a contextualized, technology-supported learning innovation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language and Culture: An Inseparable Connection

Language learning cannot be separated from its cultural context because language is a cultural expression that is deeply ingrained in a society's identity. Azra^[12] emphasized that language teaching must include cultural elements as an important context for understanding the meaning and use of language effectively. In his perspective, language is not merely a system of grammar and vocabulary but also a medium that embodies and transmits culture. Thus, culturally oriented language learning will help students develop "cultural awareness," which is essential in communicating across cultures^[13]. Introduced the concept of *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC), which includes 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 since the language learning process so that communication is not only grammatically correct but also culturally appropriate. Without the cultural dimension, students may succeed in linguistic mastery but fail to use language meaningfully in real social contexts.

2.2. Local Culture-Based Teaching Materials in Indonesia

In Indonesia, research on the development of local culture-based teaching materials shows great potential in

increasing students' cultural awareness. Teaching materials that integrate local cultural values can increase learning interest and help students understand the socio-cultural context in which the language is used. This finding aligns with constructivist learning theory, which suggests that learners actively build knowledge through real-life contexts.

2.3. The Concept of *Assitalliang*

Assitalliang itself is part of local wisdom from South Sulawesi that contains social values such as cooperation (*gotong royong*), respect, togetherness, and harmony. As a teaching material, *Assitalliang* offers a contextual approach that takes language learning out of the theoretical framework into a meaningful, real experience for students.

This approach is consistent with the contextual learning theory proposed by Johnson^[14]. Which emphasizes the importance of linking learning materials to real situations experienced by students^[15]. Highlighted that students are more motivated and achieve better learning outcomes when they perceive learning materials as relevant to their daily lives.

2.4. Local Culture-Based Teaching Materials and Character Education

The development of local culture-based teaching materials such as *Assitalliang* is not only relevant in the context of linguistic enrichment, but also directly contributes to the strengthening of character education. According to S and Wijoyo^[8], character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtues such as respect, responsibility, and cooperation through systematic learning experiences. He argued that education should not be limited to cognitive development but must also encompass moral and social growth, thereby producing individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also virtuous and socially responsible. Language learning, as an integral part of education, provides a strategic avenue to integrate such values. Highlighted that teaching materials designed with cultural considerations have a dual function: they serve as a tool for linguistic mastery while simultaneously nurturing character development. This dual role makes culture-based teaching materials especially strategic in higher education, where students are at a developmental stage that requires the cultivation of both professional

competencies and personal values. By embedding local wisdom into classroom practices, universities can bridge the gap between academic excellence and moral responsibility, ensuring that graduates are prepared to contribute positively to society.

2.5. Enhancing Engagement and Cultural Insights

The theoretical significance of local culture-based materials is also seen in their ability to enhance student engagement and broaden cultural insights. Bandura^[16] found that integrating cultural elements into Indonesian language teaching fosters more active student involvement. Unlike conventional textbooks that focus narrowly on grammar and syntax, materials infused with local wisdom encourage students to interact with content that feels personally meaningful and contextually relevant. When students recognize their own culture within the classroom, they become more motivated to participate, share experiences, and reflect critically.

Similarly, Fuadin^[17] emphasized that cultural integration in teaching materials increases the meaningfulness of language learning. When language is tied to the lived realities of students, it transcends mechanical memorization and becomes a medium for identity formation^[18]. Elaborated that this process supports the formation of a strong cultural identity by making students aware of the cultural codes embedded in linguistic expressions. For example, forms of politeness in Indonesian cannot be fully understood without recognizing their cultural roots in values like respect for elders or communal harmony. By grounding such concepts in *Assitalliang*, students acquire not only linguistic competence but also the socio-cultural competence necessary for effective communication.

2.6. Character Education through Language Learning

From a pedagogical perspective, the integration of *Assitalliang* in teaching materials illustrates how language learning can serve as a vehicle for character education. This is consistent with the view of Himawan et al.^[19], who argued that education should cultivate "cultural meaning-making" as much as cognitive skills. Through discussions of *Assitalliang*, students are encouraged to interpret narratives, reflect

on values, and debate their application in modern contexts. Such activities not only enhance critical thinking but also instill virtues such as empathy, respect, and tolerance.

Furthermore, character education through language is highly effective because language itself is a carrier of culture. Hidayat et al.'s^[20] hypothesis of linguistic relativity suggests that language shapes thought and worldview. If students learn language through materials rich in cultural values, they are more likely to internalize those values in their own worldview. Thus, *Assitalliang*-based materials do not merely teach students how to communicate in Indonesian; they also shape the way students perceive relationships, community, and responsibility. The framework of character education identifies three essential components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. *Assitalliang* provides opportunities to foster all three. Moral knowing is developed when students analyze stories and proverbs that convey cultural wisdom. Moral feeling emerges when students empathize with characters or situations that exemplify cooperation and respect.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The purpose was to deeply understand the role of *Assitalliang*-based teaching materials in increasing students' cultural awareness in learning Indonesian at the university level. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by lecturers and students during the learning process^[21].

3.1. Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at a public university in South Sulawesi, where *Assitalliang*-based teaching materials had been integrated into Indonesian language courses. Participants consisted of 3 lecturers and 30 students who had taken part in the course for one semester. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives. The selection procedure considered participants' direct involvement in classes implementing *Assitalliang*-based materials, their willingness to participate, and their ability to provide rich, reflective insights. Students represented diverse academic and cultural

backgrounds, enabling a more comprehensive exploration of cultural awareness development. The number of participants was determined based on data saturation, where no new themes emerged from additional interviews. The reason for the limitations in this research is that the sampling was limited to only three universities in West Sulawesi because the three universities have courses that are relevant to the *Assitalliang* teaching materials. The direction of further research is, the development of teaching materials in an interactive format, expansion to other levels and courses and longitudinal studies on changes in student attitudes. The students represented various ethnic groups, allowing the study to capture a variety of cultural perspectives.

3.2. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques:

In-depth interviews were carried out with both lecturers and students to gain deeper insights into their views, experiences, and perceptions regarding the implementation of *Assitalliang*-based teaching materials. Through these interviews, the researcher explored not only participants' understanding of cultural awareness but also their reflections on how such materials influenced their language learning process and shaped their attitudes. Questions were designed to capture the nuances of personal experiences, thus allowing the researcher to identify changes in students' awareness, motivation, and appreciation of cultural values throughout the learning process. In addition, participant observation was conducted by the researcher during ten classroom sessions to obtain firsthand data on the teaching and learning process. These observations enabled the researcher to document interactions between lecturers and students, patterns of discussion, and responses that emerged during the use of *Assitalliang*-based materials. Observing directly within the classroom context provided valuable insights into how students engaged with the material, how lecturers facilitated cultural integration, and how classroom dynamics reflected the assimilation of cultural awareness into language learning activities.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted thematically to capture patterns and meanings from the qualitative data

collected. The process began with the transcription of interviews and observation notes, allowing the researcher to examine participants' narratives and classroom interactions in detail carefully. Once the data were transcribed, the next step was coding, where key pieces of information were categorized into specific labels such as "cultural values," "student awareness," and "teaching strategies." These codes served as the foundation for organizing the data systematically. The researcher then proceeded to group the codes into broader themes, including areas such as cultural identity formation and challenges in implementation, which helped in identifying recurring issues and core insights across the dataset. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the research objectives and relevant literature, ensuring that the findings not only reflected participants' experiences but also contributed to the wider academic discourse on language learning and cultural awareness. The analysis process followed several stages. First, all interview transcripts and observation notes were carefully read multiple times to gain a general understanding of the data. Second, open coding was performed by assigning labels to significant statements or ideas relevant to the research focus. Third, similar codes were grouped into broader categories representing recurring concepts, such as "cultural values," "student engagement," and "teaching strategies." Fourth, these categories were synthesized into major themes that captured the essence of participants' experiences and perceptions, including "formation of cultural awareness," "pedagogical innovation," and "lecturer mediation." To ensure validity, the coding process was reviewed by two researchers independently, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached.

3.4. Validity Strategies

To maintain credibility, triangulation was applied by comparing interview, observation, and documentation data. Member checking was also conducted, where participants reviewed the interpretations to ensure accuracy.

Data collection was conducted by determining cases and participants, namely determining three universities in west sulawesi, obsection, observing several class meetings in the three universities as places to use the *Assitalliang* teaching materials, and conducting interviews with lecturers and students related to the *Assitalliang*-based teaching materials.

The interview results of the data are "*Assitalliang*, a manuscript originating from mandar, west sulawesi and south sulawesi that contains the meaning of much, helping, respecting, and protecting each other in society. Data validation strategy is carried out by triangulation, member check, audit trail, external validation.

4. Results

The findings of this study show that the use of *Assitalliang*-based teaching materials has a strong and multidimensional impact on students' cultural awareness in learning Indonesian at the university level. The influence is not only seen in the cognitive aspect of students' understanding of cultural concepts, but also in affective and behavioral dimensions, which are crucial in shaping intercultural competence. This section presents a detailed discussion of the research findings, highlighting their significance, connections with previous studies, and broader implications for language education and cultural preservation.

4.1. Strengthening Understanding of Local Cultural Values

One of the most prominent results of the study is the strengthening of students' understanding of local cultural values. Many students admitted that values such as cooperation (*siri*), respect, and togetherness—central to *Assitalliang*—were concepts they had already practiced in daily life. However, through the structured learning process, they were able to view these values more critically and systematically. This indicates that teaching materials do not merely transmit knowledge, but also provide opportunities for learners to reinterpret and recontextualize familiar practices into conscious cultural frameworks.

Students explained that prior to the integration of *Assitalliang* into language learning, they considered cooperation and respect as everyday habits without reflecting on their philosophical depth. Once these values were embedded in classroom materials, students began to recognize how such principles were essential in shaping communication patterns, social interaction, and even national identity. In other words, the language classroom became a space where tacit cultural practices were made explicit and open for critical discussion.

This finding resonates with who found that contextual-

ized language materials make abstract cultural values more tangible and accessible for students. The explicit articulation of *Assitalliang* as a cultural framework allowed learners to move beyond surface-level knowledge and develop a deeper appreciation of its relevance in communication. Such critical reflection is crucial in a multicultural society like Indonesia, where cultural understanding must be reinforced continuously to maintain harmony and unity amidst diversity.

Moreover, this awareness contributes to students' identity formation. By acknowledging that their linguistic competence is inseparable from cultural wisdom, students strengthen their sense of belonging to local traditions. This also resonates with theory of cultural representation, which posits that culture is reproduced and transmitted through language practices. The classroom, therefore, becomes a site where cultural identity is not only preserved but also reinvented for younger generations^[22].

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

Another important result is the increased level of cultural awareness among students. They were not only able to identify the cultural values embedded in *Assitalliang*, but also demonstrated efforts to apply these values in academic tasks and social interactions. For instance, in group assignments, students consciously practiced the principle of cooperation, distributing tasks fairly and supporting each other. In reflective writings, they emphasized the importance of respect and tolerance in a diverse learning environment, showing that cultural awareness was translated into real behaviors.

This transformation suggests that *Assitalliang*-based materials effectively bridge the gap between knowledge and practice. Cultural values are not merely understood as abstract principles, but become behavioral guidelines in students' lives. This aligns with Brown^[23], who argued that language learning should not be limited to cognitive aspects but must also include affective dimensions such as empathy, sensitivity to cultural norms, and ethical awareness.

From an educational psychology perspective, this outcome is significant because it indicates the internalization of values through experiential learning. According to Kolb's experiential learning^[24], meaningful learning occurs when students actively experience, reflect, conceptualize, and apply knowledge in real contexts. The findings show that *Assi-*

talliang provided this cycle, as students experienced cultural practices, reflected on their meanings, conceptualized them within language learning, and applied them in academic and social situations.

Additionally, the findings highlight the potential of *Assitalliang* to foster intercultural competence. By understanding and applying their own cultural values, students became more tolerant and open toward other cultures. Some students mentioned that learning about *Assitalliang* increased their confidence in introducing Indonesian culture to foreign peers, which indicates readiness for intercultural communication. This is consistent with model of intercultural communicative competence, which emphasizes the integration of knowledge, attitudes, and skills for effective communication across cultures.

4.3. The Role of Lecturers as Cultural Mediators

The role of lecturers in this process proved to be highly significant. Observations and interviews revealed that lecturers acted as cultural mediators who connected theoretical knowledge of the Indonesian language with real cultural practices through *Assitalliang*. They facilitated discussions, role plays, and reflection activities that made students more actively engaged and emotionally invested.

One lecturer explained that stories and examples from *Assitalliang* made the learning material feel "alive" and closer to students' experiences. This statement reflects the pedagogical power of narrative in transmitting cultural values. Storytelling, as argued by Moleong^[25], is a central mode of human thought that allows individuals to construct meaning and identity. When lecturers incorporated *Assitalliang* stories into language lessons, they not only conveyed cultural content but also created emotional resonance that strengthened students' engagement. This finding supports Anna K. Döring et al.^[26], who emphasized that educators are not only transmitters of knowledge but also facilitators of cultural values. The lecturers' role extended beyond teaching grammar or vocabulary; they became guides who helped students make sense of cultural principles and apply them in meaningful ways. This underscores the importance of teacher agency in implementing culture-based curricula. Without lecturers' commitment and creativity, *Assitalliang*-based learning would not have achieved the same impact.

However, some lecturers admitted challenges in this process, such as limited familiarity with cultural pedagogy and the need for training in designing culture-rich materials. This reflects a broader issue in language education, where many teachers are well-trained in linguistic instruction but less equipped to handle cultural content. Therefore, professional development programs are essential to prepare lecturers as effective cultural mediators.

5. Discussion

In terms of curriculum, the integration of *Assitaliang* demonstrates the urgent need for reform that goes beyond linguistic mastery. The findings indicate that culture-based materials can simultaneously foster cultural awareness, strengthen character education, and encourage nationalism. This holistic approach is consistent with the goals of higher education in Indonesia, which emphasize not only academic excellence but also character building and civic responsibility. Stressed that holistic curricula should prepare students to be both academically competent and socially responsible citizens. The inclusion of *Assitaliang* in Indonesian language teaching reflects this principle by ensuring that linguistic skills are inseparable from ethical and cultural values. Such integration also resonates with Hall^[27]. Framework of education for sustainable development, which advocates for curricula that cultivate respect for cultural diversity and global citizenship.

However, the research also revealed structural challenges. Limited resources and the absence of standardized *Assitaliang*-based modules make it difficult for lecturers to implement this approach consistently. Each lecturer had to develop materials independently, leading to variations in quality and depth. Furthermore, without institutional recognition, such innovations remain dependent on individual initiatives and are not guaranteed long-term sustainability.

Thus, curriculum reform must institutionalize the integration of cultural content, supported by standardized teaching modules, training programs, and assessment tools. This would ensure that culture-based learning is not a temporary trend but a permanent feature of higher education.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges that need to be addressed. First, the lack of standardized teaching resources makes it difficult to ensure

consistent implementation. Developing quality culture-based teaching materials requires substantial time, expertise, and funding, which many universities may lack. This mirrors findings by Prayitno et al.^[28], who noted that resource scarcity is a common obstacle in curriculum innovation.

Second, the competence of lecturers in handling cultural materials remains uneven. Some lecturers felt confident in integrating *Assitaliang*, while others expressed uncertainty about how to deliver cultural content effectively. This highlights the need for capacity-building initiatives such as workshops, peer mentoring, and collaborative material development. Third, the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds poses a pedagogical challenge. Although *Assitaliang* originates from a specific region, classrooms often consist of students from different ethnic and cultural traditions. Some students initially felt that the focus on *Assitaliang* privileged one culture over others. Lecturers had to adopt inclusive strategies, such as drawing parallels with other local wisdom traditions, to ensure that no student felt excluded. This confirms the importance of cultural sensitivity in multicultural classrooms, as emphasized by Sunarko^[29] in her theory of culturally responsive teaching. Beyond cultural awareness, the study also shows that *Assitaliang*-based learning contributes to the development of students' language and social competencies. By linking language with cultural context, students not only learn how to use words correctly but also how to interact appropriately in different social situations. For instance, in classroom simulations, students practiced greetings, negotiations, and expressions of politeness that reflected *Assitaliang* values. This integration enriched communicative competence, which includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components. The inclusion of cultural elements particularly strengthened the sociolinguistic component, enabling students to use language appropriately in context.

Additionally, the collaborative nature of learning activities enhanced students' social skills. Group discussions and cooperative assignments fostered teamwork, empathy, and conflict-resolution abilities. These competencies are valuable not only in academic settings but also in professional environments where intercultural communication is increasingly important. Thus, *Assitaliang* serves as a pedagogical bridge between linguistic proficiency and social competence, preparing students to navigate both local and global commu-

nication contexts. Finally, the findings underscore the role of *Assitalliang* in supporting character education and strengthening nationalism. Values such as cooperation, respect, and togetherness are not only cultural practices but also moral foundations that shape responsible citizenship. Students who internalized these values reported being more aware of their social responsibilities and more committed to preserving cultural heritage. In the context of globalization, this is particularly important. The influx of foreign cultural influences can sometimes erode local traditions and weaken national identity. By grounding students in *Assitalliang*, universities help them maintain cultural rootedness while engaging with global modernity. This dual orientation reflects the concept of “glocalization,” where individuals maintain local identity while participating in global networks. This finding aligns with Alamsyah et al.^[30], who argued that local wisdom can serve as a bridge between cultural rootedness and global engagement. It also supports the Indonesian government’s emphasis on strengthening character education as a national priority. By embedding *Assitalliang* in language learning, higher education institutions can play a vital role in achieving this agenda.

6. Conclusions

This study confirms that the use of *Assitalliang*-based teaching materials significantly increases students’ cultural awareness in Indonesian language learning at university. The integration of cultural values into the learning process makes learning activities more contextual, meaningful, and relevant, while also strengthening mutual respect, cooperation, and togetherness. The role of lecturers as cultural mediators has proven crucial in connecting language and culture, thus bolstering the urgency of an institutionalized culture-based curriculum to develop language competency as well as students’ character, identity, and intercultural skills. (conclusion). These findings indicate that the development of local culture-based teaching materials contributes not only to language acquisition but also to character formation and strengthening students’ identities. Therefore, educational institutions need to design policies and curricula that support cultural integration in language learning. Furthermore, the role of lecturers as cultural facilitators must be strengthened through ongoing training and professional development to

ensure more effective learning. (implication). This study still has limitations, including limited resources, uneven lecturer training, and the diversity of student backgrounds that influence learning outcomes. For further research, it is recommended to conduct a broader study, involving more educational institutions and diverse student populations. Future research can also develop a long-term evaluation model to assess the sustainable impact of the use of *Assitalliang*-based teaching materials on language competence, cultural awareness, and students’ readiness to face global challenges. (Limitations and suggestions for further research).

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the study. W. led the conceptualization, methodology, and manuscript drafting. R. supervised the research process and provided validation and critical revisions. A. supported data curation and analysis. M. contributed to the literature review and theoretical formulation. R.S. conducted field investigation and data collection. J. assisted in instrument development and data interpretation. H. conducted statistical analysis and completed proofreading and final checks. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The authors declare that the research adheres to academic ethics and principles, upholding academic principles, trustworthiness, and integrity.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data sources in this research can be accessed through online repositories or can be requested directly from the author, but access to open them is limited because they

are part of the protected copyright.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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