

Strengthening Javanese Cultural Literacy among Indonesian Non-Formal Education Students in Malaysia through Community-Based Cultural Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

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The preservation of Indonesian cultural identity among migrant communities has become increasingly important in the era of globalization. Indonesian students enrolled in non-formal education programs abroad often experience limited access to cultural learning, particularly regional cultural heritage. This community engagement program aimed to strengthen Javanese cultural literacy among Indonesian students in Kuala Lumpur and Johor, Malaysia, through participatory cultural education activities. The program involved students from non-formal educational institutions, Indonesian migrant communities, and cultural organizations in Malaysia. Activities were conducted through lectures, demonstrations, guided practices, cultural performances, and collaborative learning focusing on Javanese language, Javanese script, traditional songs, etiquette (unggah-ungguh basa), and karawitan. Data were collected through participatory observation, documentation, attendance records, and reflective evaluations. The results demonstrated increased participant engagement, improved understanding of Javanese cultural practices, stronger appreciation toward traditional arts, and enhanced awareness of Indonesian cultural identity. Approximately 85% of participants actively engaged in cultural practices, while 78% demonstrated improved understanding of Javanese language etiquette and cultural expressions after the program. The initiative also generated sustainable institutional collaboration between Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesian community organizations, and higher education institutions in Malaysia. The novelty of this program lies in integrating cultural diplomacy, community empowerment, and heritage-based education within Indonesian diaspora communities abroad. The findings indicate that community-based cultural engagement can effectively contribute to cultural preservation, intercultural understanding, and international educational networking.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. This cultural richness is reflected in the existence of hundreds of ethnic groups, local languages, oral traditions, performing arts, customs, and various forms of indigenous knowledge that continue to flourish within society. Such diversity serves not only as a marker of national identity but also as a valuable social and cultural asset that contributes to social cohesion, cultural resilience, and national competitiveness in the global era. Within the framework of sustainable development, culture is increasingly regarded as a source of values capable of shaping individual character, strengthening collective identity, and ensuring intergenerational continuity. Consequently, cultural preservation efforts must be systematically implemented through formal, non-formal, and informal educational pathways.

In the context of globalization and increasing transnational mobility, the preservation of local cultures faces significant challenges. The rapid circulation of global information and popular culture has enabled younger generations to engage more intensively with international cultural products than with their own cultural heritage. This phenomenon is particularly evident among Indonesian diaspora communities living abroad. Diaspora

youth frequently experience identity negotiations resulting from interactions between their ancestral culture and the dominant culture of their host country. Without adequate cultural reinforcement, such circumstances may gradually reduce their cultural knowledge, emotional attachment, and sense of belonging to their cultural roots.

Malaysia is one of the primary destinations for Indonesian migration. Historical, geographical, social, and cultural proximity has encouraged the formation of a substantial Indonesian diaspora community throughout the country. Indonesian residents in Malaysia include migrant workers, students, academics, entrepreneurs, and families who have settled for generations. The presence of these communities creates an urgent need for educational services that not only focus on academic achievement but also strengthen cultural identity and national consciousness. In this regard, education plays a strategic role as a medium for transmitting cultural values and sustaining cultural heritage among younger generations.

To address the educational needs of Indonesian citizens abroad, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuala Lumpur has developed various formal and non-formal educational programs. Non-formal education, in particular, plays an essential role in reaching Indonesian children who have limited access to formal schooling. However, educational programs focusing specifically on regional cultural literacy remain relatively limited. Most educational initiatives prioritize fundamental academic competencies and general national identity development. As a result, exposure to local cultural traditions, particularly Javanese culture, has not yet received sufficient attention despite its significance as one of Indonesia's most influential cultural traditions.

Javanese culture occupies a prominent position within the broader landscape of Indonesian culture because it embodies a wide range of philosophical values relevant to contemporary society. Principles such as *unggah-ungguh* (social etiquette), *tepa selira* (empathy), *andhap asor* (humility), mutual cooperation, and social harmony constitute important elements of Javanese cultural philosophy that can contribute significantly to character development among young people. Moreover, Javanese culture encompasses diverse forms of cultural expression, including language, literature, script, performing arts, rituals, and traditional knowledge systems. These cultural elements position Javanese culture not merely as an ethnic identity but as an important component of Indonesia's cultural heritage that deserves continuous preservation and revitalization.

Among the various elements of Javanese culture, language plays a particularly important role in maintaining cultural identity and transmitting cultural values. The hierarchical speech system consisting of *ngoko*, *madya*, and *krama* levels teaches speakers to adapt their language use according to social relationships, age, and status. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this linguistic system functions as an embedded form of character education that promotes respect, politeness, and social sensitivity. Nevertheless, the use of Javanese language among diaspora communities faces considerable challenges due to the dominance of national languages, host country languages, and global languages such as English. The sustainability of local languages within transnational communities largely depends on the availability of social and educational spaces that encourage their active

use and transmission. In addition to language, the Javanese script represents another significant cultural heritage that faces sustainability challenges. More than a writing system, the Javanese script symbolizes the intellectual history and cultural achievements of Javanese civilization. However, the ability to read and write Javanese script has declined considerably, even among younger generations living in Indonesia. The situation becomes even more critical among diaspora communities where access to cultural learning resources is often limited. Therefore, introducing Javanese script through educational and community engagement activities constitutes an important strategy for preserving this valuable cultural heritage.

Effective cultural education requires approaches that extend beyond theoretical instruction. Contemporary educational perspectives emphasize the importance of experiential and participatory learning models that actively engage learners in cultural practices. Heritage-based learning significantly strengthens cultural identity because it enables learners to interact directly with cultural artifacts, traditions, and practices. Through authentic cultural experiences, participants acquire not only cognitive knowledge but also emotional connections with their cultural heritage. Participatory cultural learning enhances cultural awareness while encouraging active involvement among young people in cultural preservation initiatives.

Within diaspora contexts, cultural preservation cannot be separated from the role of community organizations as primary agents of cultural transmission. Community participation is a crucial determinant of successful cultural preservation programs among migrant populations. Community organizations provide social spaces where cultural practices can be maintained, shared, and transmitted across generations. Furthermore, they function as platforms for collective memory and cultural continuity. Therefore, the involvement of organizations such as *Persatuan Jawa Parit Bugis* in Johor represents an important social asset that can support efforts to introduce and sustain Javanese culture among younger diaspora generations.

The introduction of Javanese culture to Indonesian diaspora communities can also be understood within the broader framework of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy refers to efforts aimed at fostering international understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect through cultural exchange and cultural representation. Unlike political diplomacy, which focuses primarily on state interests, cultural diplomacy emphasizes people-to-people connections and intercultural dialogue. Wulandari et al. (2022) argue that educational diplomacy conducted through Indonesian educational institutions abroad plays a strategic role in strengthening national identity while simultaneously promoting a positive image of Indonesia internationally. Community engagement programs rooted in cultural activities serve as effective instruments of cultural diplomacy because they encourage direct participation and intercultural interaction.

The relevance of cultural literacy within migrant communities further reinforces the importance of such initiatives. Cultural literacy extends beyond knowledge of cultural symbols and traditions; it encompasses the ability to understand, interpret, appreciate, and apply cultural values within everyday life. Enhancing cultural literacy among

migrant communities strengthens their capacity to preserve cultural identity while facilitating adaptation within multicultural environments. Consequently, cultural literacy programs contribute not only to cultural preservation but also to community empowerment and social integration.

Cultural education can become more meaningful when it incorporates local cultural elements that are familiar and relevant to learners' everyday experiences. Budiawan (2017) demonstrates that integrating local cultural wisdom into educational activities effectively enhances learners' understanding of cultural identity and national heritage. Cultural symbols such as traditional foods, regional languages, performing arts, and local traditions provide accessible and engaging entry points for cultural learning. In the present community engagement program, Javanese language, Javanese script, traditional songs (*tembang dolanan*), and *karawitan* were utilized as educational media to facilitate meaningful cultural experiences among participants.

Beyond its educational benefits, community-based cultural engagement also supports the internationalization agenda of higher education institutions. Heryanto (2021) argues that culture functions as an important arena for the construction of identity and national representation in global contexts. Therefore, university involvement in cultural diplomacy through education and community engagement contributes not only to cultural preservation but also to the expansion of international academic networks. Collaborative programs involving lecturers, students, cultural organizations, and educational institutions abroad exemplify how universities can implement the principles of community engagement while simultaneously strengthening their international presence.

Based on the foregoing discussion, strengthening regional cultural literacy among diaspora communities emerges as both a cultural necessity and a strategic educational endeavor. Although previous studies have examined diaspora education, cultural diplomacy, language preservation, and cultural literacy, research and community engagement initiatives specifically focusing on Javanese cultural education among Indonesian non-formal education students in Malaysia remain limited. This gap highlights the need for innovative community engagement models capable of integrating cultural preservation, educational empowerment, and international collaboration. Therefore, this program offers a novel approach by combining Javanese language learning, Javanese script instruction, traditional songs, *karawitan*, and community participation within a comprehensive cultural engagement framework. Accordingly, the objective of this community engagement initiative is to enhance Javanese cultural literacy among non-formal education students in Kuala Lumpur and Johor, Malaysia through participatory learning approaches involving community organizations, higher education institutions, and educational stakeholders as strategic partners in preserving Indonesian cultural heritage abroad.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHOD

Target Community and Participants

The target participants consisted of Indonesian students enrolled in non-formal education programs in Kuala Lumpur and Johor, Malaysia. Participants also included members of Indonesian migrant communities, descendants of Javanese families residing in Malaysia, teachers, parents, and community leaders. The program involved approximately 40–50 participants across several learning activities conducted in Muar and Johor.

Community partners included *Persatuan Jawa Parit Bugis Muar*, Indonesian Community Center (ICC) Johor, and representatives connected with the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. These institutions facilitated participant recruitment, venue preparation, logistical support, and community outreach.

Program Design and Implementation Procedures

The program employed a participatory community engagement approach emphasizing collaborative learning and cultural immersion. Activities were implemented through the following stages:

Preliminary Assessment and Coordination

The team conducted preliminary communication with community partners to identify participant needs, cultural learning gaps, and logistical requirements. Previous collaborations with Indonesian educational institutions in Malaysia served as the basis for program development.

Preparation of Educational Materials

- Javanese language varieties (*ngoko* and *krama*)
- *Ungguh-ungguh basa* (language etiquette)
- Introduction to Javanese script
- Traditional songs (*tembang dolanan*)
- Karawitan and gamelan appreciation
- Javanese cultural heritage and traditional values

Community Engagement Activities

The implementation consisted of several interconnected activities summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Community engagement activities, main materials, and participants.

Activity	Main Materials	Participants
Cultural Workshop	Javanese Language and Culture	Students and Community Members
Karawitan Demonstration	Gamelan Instruments and Traditional Music	Students
Tembang Dolanan Session	Lesung Jumengglung	Students
Script Writing Practice	Javanese Script Introduction	Students
Cultural Heritage Tour	Wayang, Rejog, Jaran Kepang	Students and Parents
International Networking Session	Academic Collaboration Discussion	University Representatives

Reflection and Evaluation

Participants engaged in discussions and reflective sessions to assess learning outcomes and gather feedback regarding program effectiveness.

Tools, Materials, and Instruments

- Educational handouts and learning modules.
- Gamelan instruments available at Kraton Mbah Anang.
- Cultural heritage collections including *wayang kulit* and traditional artifacts.
- Observation sheets and participation records.
- Documentation tools including photographs and videos.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using participatory observation, attendance documentation, field notes, interviews, and reflective discussions. Qualitative analysis was employed to examine participant engagement, learning experiences, and cultural responses. Quantitative evaluation was conducted through attendance data and simple participation indicators measured before and after the program.

Expected Outcomes and Justification

The program expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase participant understanding of Javanese culture.
- Strengthen awareness of Indonesian cultural identity.
- Encourage active community participation in cultural preservation.
- Develop sustainable partnerships between Indonesian and Malaysian institutions.
- Promote internationalization of higher education through community engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Community Engagement Program was carried out collaboratively by lecturers and students of the Javanese Language and Literature Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Surabaya. The students' community engagement activities were integrated into a Humanitarian Community Engagement Program conducted over a one-month period. The program had been carefully planned in advance through thorough preparation and coordination with various stakeholders.

The program was officially opened by the Javanese Association of Parit Bugis, Johor Bahru, represented by Mr. Johar Paimin, the head of the association. In his opening remarks, he expressed his gratitude for the partnership with Universitas Negeri Surabaya, particularly with the Javanese Language and Literature Education Study Program, which has demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving and promoting the Javanese language in Malaysia. Efforts to preserve Javanese culture are regularly carried out at Kraton Mbah Anang in Johor Bahru through performances of Reyog Ponorogo and various other traditional arts. He expressed his hope that the community

engagement activities conducted by the university would further strengthen the preservation and development of local arts and cultural traditions within the community.

The opening ceremony was followed by remarks from the Head of the Humanitarian Community Engagement Program, Sugeng Adipitoyo, who introduced the university's community engagement team to the students, teachers, and parents attending the event at Kraton Mbah Anang. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the Javanese Association of Parit Bugis and all parties who had warmly welcomed and supported the program. He emphasized the importance of sustaining collaborative programs between the university and its community partners as a meaningful form of international community engagement and cultural exchange.

The session continued with an interactive introduction conducted in Javanese, providing an opportunity for the participants to become acquainted with one another. The students demonstrated great enthusiasm throughout the activities. The university students performed the traditional Malaysian Zapin dance, which was enthusiastically followed by the participating students. In addition, they presented a Javanese gamelan performance while introducing the various gamelan instruments available at Kraton Mbah Anang. This activity provided participants with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for Javanese musical heritage.



Figure 1. Community Engagement Team with Participants at Kraton Mbah Anang

The photograph illustrates the collaborative nature of the community engagement program, involving university lecturers and students, local community members, and representatives of the Javanese Association of Parit Bugis. The interaction demonstrates that cultural preservation was carried out through direct partnership with the Javanese diaspora community rather than through one-way instruction. This community-based participation positioned local organizations as active partners in the transmission and preservation of Javanese cultural knowledge.

After enjoying the gamelan performance presented by the university students, the participants were invited to explore and observe various Javanese cultural collections

displayed at Kraton Mbah Anang. These collections included *wayang kulit* (Javanese shadow puppets), antique wooden beds, traditional horse-drawn carriages, paintings and sculptures reflecting Javanese aesthetic traditions, as well as *Jaran Kepang* and *Reyog Ponorogo* performance artifacts. This activity provided the students with a valuable opportunity to experience Javanese cultural heritage firsthand and deepen their understanding of the artistic, cultural, and historical significance of these traditional objects.



Figure 2. Participants In the Javanese Cultural Introduction Activity at Kraton Mbah Anang

The participation of children, parents, and other community members shows that cultural learning at Kraton Mbah Anang took place in an intergenerational environment. Such participation enabled Javanese cultural knowledge to be experienced collectively through direct observation, interaction, and shared cultural activities. The setting therefore functioned not only as a venue for the program but also as a community-based learning space that supported the continuity of cultural identity among Indonesian communities in Malaysia.



Figure 3. Javanese Gamelan Performance by University Students and Lecturers at Kraton Mbah Anang

The *karawitan* activity provided participants with direct exposure to Javanese musical practices through the performance and introduction of gamelan instruments. This experiential process enabled participants to encounter traditional music as a living cultural practice rather than merely as theoretical information. Direct interaction with the performance also supported participants' understanding and appreciation of Javanese musical heritage.



Figure 4. Community engagement team and participants at Kraton Mbah Anang

The group photograph taken after the cultural activities reflects the social interaction established between the community engagement team and participating community members. Beyond documenting attendance, the activity created a shared social space where participants, facilitators, families, and cultural practitioners interacted directly through their engagement with Javanese cultural heritage. Such participation fostered a collective cultural experience and strengthened community involvement throughout the program.



Figure 5. *Karawitan* Performance at Kraton Mbah Anang

This documentation of the *karawitan* performance highlights the active role of lecturers and students as cultural facilitators who demonstrated performance practices while introducing the sound, function, and form of gamelan instruments. The combination of demonstration and direct cultural experience made the learning process more concrete and accessible to participants. Traditional arts therefore functioned as an educational medium within the community engagement activity.



Figure 6. Lagon Lesung Jumengglung Learning Material

On the same day, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., lecturers and students conducted a community engagement activity at ICC Johor Bahru. The activity was led by Sugeng Adipitoyo, accompanied by four university students. The main learning material was the Javanese traditional song *Lagon Lesung Jumengglung*, which was introduced to approximately 15 students. The participants demonstrated great enthusiasm throughout the session by actively participating and singing the song together.

In addition to the musical activity, the students delivered instructional material on *Unggah-Ungguh Basa*, or Javanese language etiquette, with a focus on the appropriate use of *ngoko* and *krama* speech levels in everyday communication. Through interactive discussions and practical examples, the participants developed a deeper understanding of Javanese linguistic politeness and the cultural values embedded in language use.

The students also introduced the basics of Javanese script (*Aksara Jawa*) and guided the participants through writing exercises. The participants practiced writing Javanese characters together under the guidance of the facilitators, creating an engaging and collaborative learning environment. This activity not only enhanced their knowledge of the Javanese language but also fostered greater appreciation for an important element of Javanese cultural heritage.

The next activity took place from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., when the community engagement team visited the Pagoh campus of the International Islamic University Malaysia. The

delegation was welcomed by the Dean of the Kulliyyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd Azrul Azlen Abd Hamid, who was represented during the meeting by Dr. Shahrul Nizam Mohd Basari, Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs and Internationalization.

The meeting served as a strategic platform for strengthening academic cooperation between Universitas Negeri Surabaya and the International Islamic University Malaysia. Discussions focused on opportunities for future collaboration in education, research, publications, and community engagement. The meeting resulted in several mutual agreements aimed at strengthening international academic partnerships and promoting cross-cultural learning experiences for students and academic staff from both institutions.

The areas of cooperation agreed upon during the meeting included:

- Collaborative Research Projects – Developing joint research initiatives involving lecturers and researchers from both institutions.
- Collaborative Community Engagement Programs – Developing and implementing community engagement activities that address social, cultural, and educational needs.
- Student and Faculty Publications – Encouraging collaborative scholarly publications involving students and academic staff from both institutions.
- Scientific Journals – Exploring opportunities for cooperation in journal publication, editorial activities, and research dissemination.
- International Conferences – Encouraging joint participation in and organization of international conferences, seminars, and other academic forums.
- Student and Faculty Exchange Programs – Developing academic mobility initiatives to facilitate knowledge exchange, intercultural understanding, and international exposure for students and lecturers.

The visit marked an important step toward establishing a sustainable international partnership between Universitas Negeri Surabaya and the International Islamic University Malaysia. The collaboration is expected to create opportunities for continued cooperation in teaching, research, publication, academic mobility, and community engagement.



Figure 7. Community Engagement Team Visit to The Pagoh Campus of The International Islamic University Malaysia

The visit to the International Islamic University Malaysia expanded the community engagement program from cultural education to broader institutional and academic collaboration. The meeting created opportunities for cooperation in research, community engagement, scholarly publication, international conferences, and academic mobility. The documentation therefore captures the institutional networking component that complemented the cultural engagement activities.

The next activity involved a supervision visit to university students undertaking their Humanitarian Community Engagement Program in Muar, Malaysia. The purpose of the visit was to monitor and evaluate the activities carried out by the students throughout their placement. Overall, the students' programs were progressing successfully through close collaboration with the Javanese Association of Parit Bugis. Together, they participated in various educational and cultural activities, including visits to universities and community institutions.

During the program, the students actively engaged in cultural exchange activities with students from institutions such as Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and the International Islamic University Malaysia. They also participated in community-based activities designed to strengthen social interaction and intercultural understanding. In addition to introducing aspects of Javanese culture, the students had opportunities to learn about Malay culture, including its language, customs, and traditional arts. One of the most memorable experiences was learning and practicing the traditional Malay Zapin dance, which enriched their understanding of Malaysia's cultural diversity.



Figure 8. Supervision Visits to University Students Participating in The Humanitarian Community Engagement Program in Muar

The supervision visits to university students undertaking the Humanitarian Community Engagement Program in Muar demonstrates the integration of community engagement, student learning, and international cultural exchange. Through collaboration with the Javanese Association of Parit Bugis, the students applied their academic knowledge while participating directly in community-based educational and cultural activities. The

supervision process also provided an opportunity to monitor program implementation and ensure that the students' activities remained aligned with the objectives of cultural preservation and intercultural engagement.



Figure 9. Community Engagement Team, Students, and Community Members in Muar

The group photograph with community members represents the reciprocal relationship developed between university students and their community partners during the international Humanitarian Community Engagement Program. The interaction extended beyond the introduction of Javanese culture, as the students also encountered Malay language, customs, traditional arts, and Zapin dance. This reciprocal exchange demonstrated a process of mutual learning between the Indonesian students and their community partners in Malaysia.

The Community Engagement Program entitled “Introduction to Javanese Culture for Nonformal Education Students in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru, Malaysia” was implemented through both online and offline activities. The online activities were conducted in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Malaysia, particularly through virtual Javanese language learning sessions facilitated by lecturers from the Javanese Language and Literature Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Surabaya. These online classes aimed to promote Javanese language learning among Malaysian participants while strengthening cultural ties between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Meanwhile, the offline activities were organized in partnership with the Javanese Association of Parit Bugis and held at Kraton Mbah Anang and the International Cultural Centre in Johor Bahru. The program also involved several nonformal educational institutions in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru as strategic partners throughout its implementation. These partners provided venues, facilities, and logistical support that contributed to the successful implementation of the activities.

The collaboration between the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Malaysia and the Javanese Language and Literature Education Study Program has developed into a strong and sustainable partnership through various educational and cultural initiatives. These initiatives have included *wayang* performances hosted by the embassy, community

engagement activities at the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur, and online Javanese language courses designed specifically for Malaysian learners. Such initiatives have contributed to the preservation and promotion of Javanese language and culture beyond Indonesia's borders.

DISCUSSION

Taken together, the implementation indicates that the program functioned not merely as a sequence of cultural demonstrations but as a participatory cultural literacy process. The direct involvement of participants in singing *Lagon Lesung Jumengglung*, practicing Javanese script, using *ngoko* and *krama*, observing cultural heritage objects, and engaging with gamelan created experiential learning situations in which cultural knowledge was encountered through practice. This finding is consistent who argue that heritage-based learning strengthens cultural identity through direct interaction with cultural artifacts and practices, who emphasize the importance of active participation in heritage preservation. In this program, participation enabled cultural literacy to move beyond the recognition of cultural symbols toward their interpretation, appreciation, and contextual use.

From a cultural literacy perspective, the language and etiquette activities were particularly important because they connected linguistic competence with social meaning. The practice of *ngoko* and *krama* introduced participants to the selection of speech levels according to social relationships, while the Javanese script and traditional song sessions connected language learning with written and musical heritage. This pattern supports that cultural literacy in migrant communities includes the capacity to understand, interpret, appreciate, and apply cultural values in everyday life. Thus, the program did not merely transmit information about Javanese culture but also provided a social setting in which participants could practice and experience cultural norms.

The role of the Javanese Association of Parit Bugis, the International Cultural Centre in Johor Bahru, parents, teachers, and local cultural spaces also demonstrates that cultural preservation in diaspora settings depends on community mediation. Identify community participation as a key determinant of cultural preservation among migrant populations. In this program, community organizations served not simply as logistical partners but also as cultural intermediaries connecting university-based knowledge, family memories, and everyday cultural practices. This community-based structure increases the potential for cultural learning to continue beyond a one-time intervention.

The reciprocal element of the program is also significant. The university students introduced Javanese cultural practices while simultaneously learning and performing the Malay Zapin dance. This two-way exchange positions the activity as a form of cultural diplomacy rather than unilateral cultural promotion. Consistent with Wulandari et al. (2022), the program illustrates people-to-people diplomacy, in which cultural exchange strengthens mutual understanding while maintaining cultural identity. The subsequent academic dialogue between Universitas Negeri Surabaya and the International Islamic University Malaysia further expanded this community-level interaction into institutional

networking, demonstrating how cultural engagement can serve as a bridge between heritage preservation and the internationalization of higher education.

Evaluation records further reinforce this interpretation. Approximately 85% of participants were actively involved in cultural practices, while 78% demonstrated improved understanding of Javanese language etiquette and cultural expressions after the program. These indicators should be interpreted as practical evidence of engagement rather than as measures of experimental effect, as the evaluation relied on attendance records, observation, reflective discussion, and simple before-and-after participation indicators. Together with the qualitative observations, the results indicate that participatory learning can support cultural awareness, community participation, and appreciation of cultural heritage.

Despite the overall success of the program, one of the primary challenges encountered during its implementation was the need for continuous and intensive communication with partner institutions. Effective coordination across different locations, schedules, and organizational structures required consistent communication to ensure that planned activities could be implemented smoothly and achieve their intended objectives. Nevertheless, the strong commitment demonstrated by all stakeholders enabled the program to be implemented successfully and established a foundation for future international community engagement initiatives.

Based on these findings, the overall community engagement process can be conceptualized as an integrated pathway that begins with needs assessment and partner coordination, continues through preparation and participatory cultural learning, develops into community-based intercultural exchange, and concludes with reflection, evaluation, and sustainable networking. The scheme below summarizes the relationship between the stages of implementation and the broader outcome of community-based cultural diplomacy.

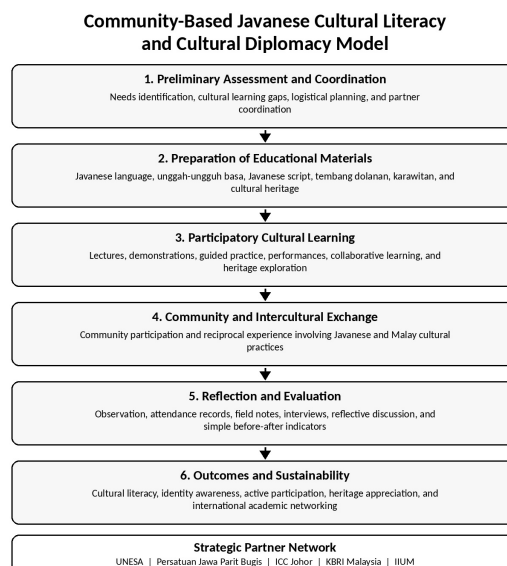


Figure 10. Scheme of the Community-Based Javanese Cultural Literacy Program

Figure 10 summarizes the program as a connected sequence from needs assessment and partner coordination to participatory cultural learning, intercultural exchange, reflection, evaluation, and sustainable networking. The scheme visually links the implementation stages with the broader outcomes of cultural literacy, community participation, cultural diplomacy, and international collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The community engagement program successfully strengthened Javanese cultural literacy among Indonesian non-formal education students in Malaysia. Through participatory learning activities involving language education, traditional arts, cultural performances, and heritage appreciation, participants developed stronger understanding of Javanese cultural values and practices.

The results indicate significant improvements in cultural awareness, language understanding, community participation, and appreciation of traditional arts. Furthermore, the initiative expanded international academic collaboration between Indonesian and Malaysian institutions, demonstrating the broader potential of cultural diplomacy through community engagement. The program therefore demonstrates that participatory cultural learning, community mediation, intercultural exchange, and institutional networking can operate as an integrated pathway of community-based cultural diplomacy.

Future programs should incorporate digital learning platforms, increase participant diversity, and establish long-term cultural learning communities to ensure sustainability. Expanding collaborative partnerships with educational institutions and diaspora organizations will further strengthen cultural preservation efforts among Indonesian communities abroad.

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