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Self-Transformation of BIPA Learners through the Rewriting of Folklore: A Hermeneutic Approach to Cultural Values and Character

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Abstract

Keywords:

Self-transformation;
BIPA;
Folktales;
Cultural values;
Hermeneutics

Indonesian folktales, as part of the nation's cultural heritage, contain local wisdom that reflects the worldview and collective values of Indonesian society. This study aims to analyze the forms of self-transformation experienced by learners of *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing* (BIPA) through the activity of rewriting folktales. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, using transformative learning theory and hermeneutic analysis as the theoretical foundation. Data were obtained from five advanced-level BIPA learners from Malaysia, South Korea, and China who participated in a language program at an Indonesian state university, and were collected through rewritten texts and in-depth interviews. The analysis proceeded through stages of comprehension, theme identification, contextual interpretation, and reflection on transformation. The findings show that learners experienced cognitive and affective growth by interpreting cultural values such as livelihood, cooperation, and deliberation, while internalizing character traits including honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. The study concludes that rewriting folktales functions as a reflective process that strengthens cross-cultural understanding and enriches BIPA learning through value-based and culturally grounded materials.

Abstrak:

Kata Kunci:

Transformasi diri;
BIPA;
Cerita rakyat;
Nilai budaya;
Hermeneutik

Cerita rakyat Indonesia, sebagai bagian dari warisan budaya bangsa, mengandung kearifan lokal yang mencerminkan pandangan dunia serta nilai-nilai kolektif masyarakat Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bentuk transformasi diri yang dialami oleh pembelajar Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) melalui kegiatan menulis ulang cerita rakyat. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan landasan teori pembelajaran transformatif dan analisis hermeneutik. Data diperoleh dari lima pembelajar BIPA tingkat lanjut asal Malaysia, Korea Selatan, dan Tiongkok yang mengikuti program bahasa di sebuah perguruan tinggi negeri di Indonesia, dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa teks cerita rakyat yang ditulis ulang dan wawancara mendalam. Analisis dilakukan melalui tahapan pemahaman, identifikasi tema, interpretasi kontekstual, dan refleksi atas transformasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para pembelajar mengalami perkembangan kognitif dan afektif melalui penafsiran nilai-nilai budaya seperti mata pencaharian, kerja sama, dan musyawarah, sekaligus menginternalisasi karakter jujur, tanggung

jawab, dan menghargai orang lain. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penulisan ulang cerita rakyat berfungsi sebagai proses reflektif yang memperkuat pemahaman lintas budaya serta memperkaya pembelajaran BIPA melalui materi yang berbasis nilai dan berkar pada budaya.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) is one of the strategic instruments in Indonesia's cultural diplomacy that has experienced rapid development in the last two decades. Along with the increase in multilateral cooperation, the position of Indonesian as an international language is beginning to be taken into account, as evidenced by the increasing number of BIPA program organizing institutions in various countries. Since the issuance of Permendikbud No. 27 of 2017 concerning Competency Standards for BIPA Course Graduates, policy support for this program has been getting stronger. Based on data from the Language Development and Development Agency (2022), BIPA learners are spread across more than 45 countries, showing a high level of interest in the Indonesian language influenced by the growth of diplomatic relations and Indonesia's soft power strategy.

These developments demand BIPA teaching that is not only oriented towards linguistic competence, but also on strengthening the content of local culture (Bernier, 2003). In the realm of sociolinguistics and second language education, language and culture are interrelated entities. Language mastery is ideally accompanied by an understanding of the values, norms, and cultural symbols of the speaker (Agha, 2003). Therefore, the integration of culture-based teaching materials is a strategic need in contextual and meaningful BIPA learning practices.

One form of local cultural expression that has the potential to be used in BIPA learning is folklore. Folklore is an intangible cultural heritage that is inherited from generation to generation and contains noble values, social norms, and representations of the life of the Indonesian people. In addition to having an entertainment function, folklore also plays a role as an instrument of moral and character education (Dewi & Nurzaman, 2024). Characters in the story such as *Malin Kundang*, *Jaka Tarub*, or *Roro Jonggrang* describe various life values such as honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for others and the environment. With a diversity of cultural backgrounds and contexts—such as the sea, mountains, villages, and historical sites—folklore becomes an authentic text that is full of local cultural elements.

In BIPA learning, folklore has two main functions: first, as authentic material to improve language skills; Second, as an educational vehicle to introduce local culture contextually. Learning through folklore allows learners to recognize cultural values not through definition, but through interpretive experience of narrative (Sims & Stephens, 2011). In this process, learners are invited not only to understand the text, but also to build a meaningful relationship between the content of the story and the experiences or values they bring from the cultural background of origin.

Various studies have proven the effectiveness of folklore in supporting BIPA learning. Kusmiatun stated that folklore is able to improve reading and writing skills (Kusmiatun, 2018). Widyastuti underlined the importance of folklore as a source of vocabulary enrichment and sentence structure (Widyastuti, 2017). Meanwhile, Melinda and Muzaki (2023) emphasized its function as a means of strengthening character education in BIPA classes. However, these studies still focus on the function of folklore as a teaching text or passive reading material. There have not been many studies that have explored the role of folklore in shaping learners' cultural awareness and identity through creative and reflective processes such as rewriting stories.

This gap is the main concern in the implementation of research. There has been no research that examines the role of folklore rewriting in facilitating the self-transformation of BIPA learners through a hermeneutic approach in Indonesia. In fact, the process of rewriting not only trains language skills, but also provides space for learners to negotiate meaning and reflect cultural values within the framework of their personal experience (Haneda, 2005). Based on the research gap, the research questions asked are: (1) What is the form of self-transformation experienced by BIPA learners through folklore rewriting activities? (2) What cultural values and characters are interpreted and internalized by learners in the process? (3) How can the hermeneutic approach explain the dynamics of interaction between learners and folklore texts in the process of self-transformation?

Research on self-transformation in second language learning is actually starting to develop, especially in the context of intercultural learning. Mezirow (2000) stated that self-transformation is a process of changing perspectives that occurs through critical reflection on learning experiences. In the context of BIPA, the process of rewriting folklore can be seen as a form of active reflection that allows learners to reinterpret the content of the story based on their experiences and backgrounds. In this way, the learning process not only generates linguistic skills, but also changes in the learner's way of view, attitude, and even cultural identity.

To understand the process more deeply, the hermeneutic approach is used as the basis for the analysis. Hermeneutics, according to Gadamer (1975), views understanding as the result of a dialogue between the reader and the text. When learners read and rewrite folklore, they not only passively absorb meaning, but also negotiate meaning based on their horizons of understanding. This process is known as the fusion of horizons, which is the meeting between the reader's cultural background and the text that forms a new meaning. With this approach, learners' writings can be read as traces of the process of meaning and self-transformation that they experience during their interaction with local cultural texts (Wu, 2024).

Theoretically, some overseas research also supports the importance of storytelling in language and cultural learning. Huang & Mamat (2020) argue that local narratives strengthen the cultural intelligence of foreign learners. Lestari in the context of BIPA found that folklore can trigger intensive intercultural interaction between learners and teachers, as well as between fellow learners (Yusi Kamhar & Lestari, 2019). However, studies that specifically examine how the creative process of rewriting folklore becomes a means of self-transformation of foreign learners have not been found in the Indonesian context.

This study uses five folklore: *Malin Kundang*, *Jaka Tarub*, *Bandung Bondowoso*, *Danau Toba*, and *Batu Menangis*. The selection of five Indonesian folk tales in this study is based on academic considerations that these stories are representative of Indonesia's cultural diversity while containing universal values that are easily recognized by foreign learners, such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, deliberation, and respect for others. With different contexts, the folklore not only reflects the plurality of Indonesian culture, but also provides a rich interpretive space for learners from various backgrounds.

Thus, this research is directed to reveal the form of self-transformation of BIPA learners through the rewriting of folklore, while offering a hermeneutic framework as an approach that emphasizes reflective and participatory aspects in learning. Theoretically, this study expands the understanding of the process of self-transformation in second language education. Practically, the results of the research can be the basis for the development of teaching materials and learning methods based on local culture that integrate the cognitive, affective, and identity dimensions of learners holistically.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a hermeneutic approach to describe and understand the process of self-transformation experienced by BIPA learners through the activity of rewriting Indonesian folklore. The selection of this method is based

on the characteristics of the research objectives that want to explore subjective meanings, reflective experiences, and cultural interpretations that emerge in the narratives of foreign learners' works. According to Moleong (2017), descriptive qualitative methods are suitable for revealing social and cultural phenomena in depth, while the hermeneutic approach allows researchers to trace the process of interpreting and negotiating meaning between the text and the reader's experience (Gadamer, 1975).

The hermeneutic approach is considered relevant because in the activity of rewriting, learners do not simply reproduce stories, but reinterpret them based on their respective cultural backgrounds and personal experiences (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). This is in line with the concept of fusion of horizons in hermeneutics, which is the meeting between the horizon of the meaning of the text and the horizon of the reader's understanding. In this context, the process of rewriting folklore is seen as a form of intercultural dialogue that not only produces narrative works, but also reflects the process of internalizing cultural values and transforming identity.

The subjects in this study are five advanced level BIPA learners from various countries who are participating in learning programs at the State University of Surabaya. They come from Malaysia, South Korea, and China. The participants were selected purposively with the following criteria: (1) they have taken at least one semester of BIPA learning in Indonesia, (2) they have the ability to write narratives in Indonesian with a high level of comprehension, and (3) they are willing to participate in the process of rewriting stories and in-depth interviews.

The main source of data in this study is the text of the story rewritten by the learners based on the folklore they have read. The folklore used includes *Malin Kundang*, *Jaka Tarub*, *Bandung Bondowoso*, *Danau Toba*, and *Batu Menangis*—five stories that reflect Indonesia's diverse cultural backgrounds (maritime, agrarian, historical, mythical). Learners are given the task of reading a folk tale, discussing it in class, and then creatively rewriting their version while maintaining the core of the story and inserting cultural values that they consider important.

The reason for the selection of five folklore (*Malin Kundang*, *Jaka Tarub*, *Bandung Bondowoso*, *Danau Toba*, and *Batu Menangis*) was based on academic and pedagogical considerations. First, the five stories represent Indonesia's geographical diversity: coastal, agrarian countryside, historical sites, and local myths. Second, each story contains universal cultural values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, deliberation, and respect for others. Third, the five stories have become popular in learning literature so that they are relatively easy to access and understand by foreign

learners, as well as rich in interpretation space. Thus, the five stories are seen as representative to reveal the dynamics of cross-cultural meaning in BIPA learning.

The learning setting and duration took place in three meetings over three weeks, with a time allocation of 2 x 60 minutes per meeting. The implementation will be on April 22, April 29 and May 6, 2025. In the first week, learners are introduced to five folklore through reading texts and class discussions facilitated by lecturers. The second week was focused on analyzing cultural values and characters in the story, followed by the process of individual rewriting in handwriting. The third week was filled with presentations of writings, reflective discussions, and in-depth interviews with researchers.

The main source of data for the study is the folklore manuscript rewritten by the learner. Additional data sources are in the form of semi-structured interview transcripts and class observation notes. The interview guide contains questions about the understanding of the story, the reason for choosing certain cultural values, and the connection of the story to personal experiences or values.

The data collection procedure was carried out through two main stages: (1) documentation of the rewritten manuscript collected in digital form, and (2) semi-structured interviews with each participant, which were recorded with the consent of the participant and then transcribed. The data subjects and data sources are summarized in the following table.

No	Student Initials	Country of Origin	Name Indonesia	Story Title
1.	YX	Tiongkok	Bisma	<i>Malin Kundang</i>
2.	WY	Tiongkok	Dina	<i>Bandung Bondowoso</i>
3.	WNH	Malaysia	Izah	<i>Jaka Tarub</i>
4.	HK	Korea	-	<i>Danau Toba</i>
5.	JK	Korea	-	<i>Batu Menangis</i>

Table 1. Data Subjects and Data Sources

The data collection process is carried out in two main stages: documentation and interviews. Documentation includes the collection of rewritten manuscripts that are typed and submitted in digital form. The interviews were conducted directly with the researcher and recorded with the participant's permission for transcription purposes.

The data that has been collected is then analyzed with a hermeneutic approach. The analysis is carried out through four main stages:

- Initial reading of the text as a whole to gain general understanding;
- Identify cultural themes and moral values that appear in the learner's writing;
- Contextual interpretation based on cultural background and interviews with each learner;

- d. Reflection on transformation, which is compiling an interpretation of forms of self-change, perspectives, and cultural attitudes revealed in narratives and interviews.

To maintain the validity of the data, triangulation was carried out between sources by comparing the content of the written text with interview data and class observation notes obtained during the learning process. This triangulation aims to ensure consistency of meaning and strengthen the researcher's interpretation of the transformation process that occurs. The researcher also conducts member checking on the results of the interpretation to ensure that the meaning captured is in accordance with the experience felt by the learner. With this method, it is hoped that a complete understanding can be obtained of how BIPA learners not only learn to understand Indonesian culture through folklore, but also experience self-transformation which is reflected in their narratives and reflections during the learning process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Folklore is a reflection of people's lives at the time when the story was created. It contains various cultural, human, and social life values that reflect the perspective and collective values of the community that owns the story. Folklore is not only an oral heritage passed down from generation to generation, but it is also an effective medium in conveying moral messages, social structures, beliefs, and symbols of local culture (Ben-Amos, 2023). These cultural values can be used as a means of character education, especially in learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA). The use of folklore as a teaching material in BIPA learning opens up great opportunities for foreign learners to understand not only the language, but also the local values inherent in Indonesian society.

Folklore such as *Malin Kundang*, *Jaka Tarub*, *Bandung Bondowoso*, *Danau Toba*, and *Batu Menangis* present a diverse setting—forests, rivers, lakes, seas, and temples—that reflect Indonesia's natural wealth and cultural heritage. Through the narratives and dialogues of the characters in these stories, BIPA learners can get to know various aspects of the archipelago's culture. These elements include ways of life, belief systems, social interactions, and artistic expressions that reflect value structures in society. Thus, learners not only gain linguistic insights, but also develop cross-cultural understanding.

In the learning process, BIPA learners read the selected folklore, and were then asked to rewrite the story based on their personal understanding and interpretation. This activity allows them to be actively involved in the process of learning and cultural meaning. The results of stories rewritten by learners tend to be denser and simpler, but

still contain the cultural values they capture. Generally, the stories end with the delivery of a moral mandate or message that shows that the learner understands the values contained in the original story.

The cultural values reflected in the rewriting cover various aspects of life, including the relationship between humans, the relationship between humans and nature, and the principles of life that are upheld in Indonesian society. In this case, Bhawuk (2017) states that culture conveys feelings, mindsets, and attitudes through certain symbols that can be recognized in the narrative. Cultural elements such as local knowledge, livelihoods, traditional tools, traditional houses, languages, belief systems, and arts, are seen in the stories created by BIPA learners, showing their ability to absorb and reflect Indonesian culture through literary media. The following is a summary table of cultural values that appear in each story rewritten.

Folklore	Origin of Participants	Emerging Cultural Values	Cognitive Dimension	Affective Dimension
Malin Kundang	China	Hard work, the consequences of pride, devotion to motherhood	Understanding of family and coastal norms	Empathy for maternal suffering
Jaka Tarub	Malaysia	Honesty, Responsibility, Gender Relations	Analysis of moral conflict	Awareness of the importance of maintaining trust
Bandung Bondowoso	China	Mutual cooperation, collective strategy, social responsibility	Identify the symbol of cooperation	Admiration for solidarity
Danau Toba	Korea	Promises, hard work, family responsibilities	Understanding human-nature relationship	Awareness of maintaining commitment and harmony
Batu Menangis	Korea	Respect for the elderly, moderation, perseverance	Analysis of family and social relationships	Respect and affection for the mother

Table 2. Summary of Cultural Values That Appear in Each Rewritten Story

Representation of Cultural Values in the Rewriting of Folklore Related to Livelihood

One of the cultural themes that often appears in rewritten folklore is about the livelihood of the Indonesian people, which in this context includes hunting, farming, trading, and seafaring. In the story version of Jaka Tarub Izah (Malaysia), the main character is portrayed as a hunter. The narration reads: "He was very handsome and loved to hunt in the woods – One day, he went to the woods. To hunt as usual and while walking, he heard the voice of a woman laughing." (in Indonesia: *Dia sangat tampan dan gemar berburu di hutan – Pada suatu hari, dia pergi ke hutan. Untuk berburu seperti biasa dan saat berjalan, ia mendengar suara perempuan yang sedang tertawa*). This quote

shows that learners understand hunting as an important activity, often depicted in folklore and associated with the lives of people living near forests.

In addition to hunting, farming is also a central theme that appears in some of the scholars' works. Jayoung from Korea rewrote the story of the Batu Menangis, and inserted agricultural elements in the narrative. Similarly, Dina from China wrote in the Bandung version of Bondowoso: "Seeing this, Roro Jonggrang asked the village women and dayang to pound rice and light a fire." (in Indonesian: *Melihat hal ini, Roro Jonggrang meminta para wanita desa dan dayang untuk menumbuk padi dan menyalakan api*). This sentence shows a depiction of farming activities, especially pounding rice, which represents the role of village women in the harvesting and processing process of agricultural products.

In the story of *Danau Toba*, Kim Hyorin of South Korea writes: "In ancient times, there was a very diligent farmer named Toba. He spends time in the rice fields or in the sand fishing." (in Indonesia: *Pada zaman dahulu, ada seorang petani yang sangat rajin bernama Toba. Ia menghabiskan waktu di sawah atau di pasir untuk memancing ikan*). This narrative affirms the understanding that farmers are synonymous with rice fields as the main location for farming activities. Similarly, in the story of Batu Menangis, Jayoung describes: "Darni's mother works hard every day, from dawn to midnight. His mother asked for a glass of water from the rice field during the day because it was hot and thirsty." (in Indonesian: *Ibunya Darni bekerja keras setiap hari, mulai subuh sampai tengah malam. Ibunya meminta segelas air putih dari sawah pada siang karena panas dan haus*). This sentence not only shows the importance of rice fields as part of village life, but also shows the reality of the hard work of the community, especially village women.

According to Dahar and Fatmawati (2026:56), in general, people in rural areas work in the agricultural sector as their main livelihood. Therefore, the emergence of agricultural elements in stories written by foreign learners is an indicator that they are able to relate traditional narratives with contextual understanding of the social life of Indonesian society.

In addition to agriculture and hunting, marine activities also appear in the rewritten stories. Indonesia as an archipelagic country has great marine wealth and a strong maritime culture. In the Chinese version of Malin Kundang's story of *Malin Kundang*, the words boat and ship are used clearly in the narrative: "Malin's mother gave him a small boat and a share of savings. Malin took a small boat to another big and rich village... (in Indonesian: *Ibu Malin memberinya perahu yang kecil dan bagian tabungan. Malin naik perahu kecil pergi ke desa lain yang besar dan kaya...*). He bought a very large ship and

went to another village with his wife." The mention of boats and ships in this story shows the learner's understanding of trade and shipping activities in coastal communities.

Similarly, in the story of *Danau Toba* written by Kim Hyorin, the word fishing is used: "He spends time in the rice fields or in the sand fishing. One day, he went fishing and caught a very large goldfish." (in Indonesian: *la menghabiskan waktu di sawah atau di pasir untuk memancing ikan. Suatu hari, ia pergi memancing dan menangkap ikan emas yang sangat besar*). Fishing activities reflect the economic activities of coastal and lake communities which are very common in various regions in Indonesia.

From the various quotes and narratives produced by the learners, it can be concluded that the process of rewriting folklore not only hones their linguistic skills in the Indonesian language, but also becomes a vehicle to absorb and represent local culture in the form of literary texts. The stories illustrate the cultural awareness that emerges in the writing process: learners not only imitate, but also interpret, insert their perspectives, and reconstruct the meaning of the stories according to their respective experiences and cultural backgrounds.

This process supports the opinion of Gadamer (1975) that the understanding of the text is never neutral, but rather the result of the interaction between the reader and the text in the dialogical space. In this context, folklore is an effective means of cross-cultural learning, as it is able to activate critical thinking and deep reflection from learners. With a hermeneutic approach, the rewriting of folklore by foreign learners can be read as a process of identity negotiation and self-transformation that takes place affectively and cognitively.

Thus, learning BIPA through folklore not only strengthens language skills, but also expands cultural awareness and human values inherent in the social structure of Indonesian society.

Cooperation in Folklore: Reflections on Collective Culture and Character Education

One of the characteristics of Indonesian culture that is inherent in the social life of its people is the spirit of cooperation, or better known as mutual cooperation. *Gotong royong* is not only a habit in daily life, but also a value system that binds individuals in society, reflecting solidarity, care, and collaboration. The values of this cooperation are reflected in various Indonesian folklore, which are rewritten by BIPA learners from various countries. These stories are a reflective means for learners to understand and internalize the culture of cooperation in Indonesian society.

In the story of Roro Jonggrang which is rewritten by Dina from China, for example, cooperation is described in the form of collaboration between Roro Jonggrang and the village women and their dayangangs. When he wanted to thwart Bandung Bondowoso's efforts to build a thousand temples, Roro Jonggrang developed a strategy that involved his community. In the narrative excerpt, it is written: "Roro Jonggrang asked the village women and dayang to pound rice and light a fire." (in Indonesian: *Roro Jonggrang meminta para wanita desa dan dayang untuk menubuk padi dan menyalakan api*). The word "ask" in this sentence does not simply indicate a common action, but reflects a collaborative application to achieve a common goal. This is in line with the value of mutual cooperation in Indonesian society, where problem solving is often carried out collectively.

Marhayati (2021:23) said that mutual cooperation is a high cultural value that is the identity of the Indonesian nation. This value is not only seen in physical activities such as community service, but also in various forms of social and cultural activities, including in folklore narratives. BIPA learners' understanding of this aspect shows that they are not just copying stories, but also capturing the substance of the collective values contained in them.

Another story that also features a symbol of cooperation is Jaka Tarub, which was rewritten by Izzah from Malaysia. In her story, Izzah writes that "out of curiosity, she peeked and saw seven angels bathing in a lake." (in Indonesian: *dengan rasa penasaran, ia mengintip dan melihat tujuh bidadari sedang mandi di sebuah telaga*). Although it seems simple, the use of the word "seven angels" has a symbolic meaning for collective activities. The angels did not come alone, but in groups. This reflects the value of togetherness that is lived in Indonesian culture, where all activities tend to be carried out together, both in social, spiritual, and daily activities.

The value of cooperation is also seen in the context of the family. In the story of *Danau Toba*, Kim Hyorin from South Korea describes the interaction between Samosir and his family. In one passage, he wrote: "One day, my mother told Samosir to deliver provisions to my father who was in the rice fields." (in Indonesian: *Suatu hari, ibu menyuruh Samosir untuk mengantarkan bekal kepada ayah yang sedang di sawah*). This sentence shows the division of roles in the family, where each member has responsibilities and contributes to the continuity of family life. In the context of Indonesian culture, the role of children to help parents in daily activities is part of the values of obedience, affection, and collaboration in the household.

The value of togetherness is also seen in the story of Batu Menangis, Jayoung's version from South Korea. When Darni's character asks for a new comb, his mother

responds: "Darni's mother asked to go to the market together to walk together." (in Indonesian: *Ibunya Darni meminta pergi ke pasar bersama agar jalan bersama*). This sentence shows that togetherness is not only in terms of work, but also in small and everyday activities such as going to the market. This value strengthens the understanding that the Indonesian family is built on the foundation of togetherness and accompanies each other in social activities.

Not only cooperation in action, the value of openness and deliberation is also an important part of Indonesia's collective culture. In Malin Kundang's story rewritten by Bisma from China, there is a quote: "After growing up, Malin decided to become rich and told his mother about his plans." (in Indonesian: *Setelah dewasa, Malin memutuskan untuk menjadi kaya dan menceritakan rencananya kepada ibunya*). Malin's actions in conveying his wishes and future plans to his mother show the value of openness and discussion in the family. In Indonesian culture, deliberation is considered an important process in decision-making, both at the family and community levels.

From the various quotes above, it appears that BIPA learners understand and are able to interpret the value of cooperation in the context of Indonesian culture. The choice of words such as "to ask," "together," "to deliver," and "deliberate" in their stories shows that the meaning of folklore does not only take place on the surface, but also reflects a deep understanding of local cultural values. This shows that the process of rewriting is not just a language exercise, but also a process of cultural interpretation.

Comparison of Interpretations Between Cultural Backgrounds of BIPA Learners

In the process of rewriting, the learner also inserts a moral message or message at the end of the story. The mandate is an important part of the narrative structure of the folklore and serves as an explicit statement of the values that the reader must take. BIPA learners are able to formulate these messages based on their understanding of the original story.

For example, in the story of Roro Jonggrang, the mandate that is written is generally related to the importance of honesty and the consequences of manipulation. In the story of Batu Cryis, the learner writes a message about the need to respect parents and be polite. Meanwhile, in the story of *Danau Toba*, the message that emerges is the importance of keeping promises and not reneging commitments. On the other hand, in Jaka Tarub's story, the message that emerges is that he should not take something that is not his right, while in Malin Kundang's story, the learner conveys a message about arrogance and the bad consequences of not respecting parents.

The moral messages written by these learners show that they are not only copying stories, but also able to internalize and formulate character values that are part of culture-based BIPA education. These values include honesty, responsibility, respect, cooperation, and social care. The application of character education in BIPA learning through folklore media is in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum which prioritizes education based on local values and culture.

Furthermore, the integration of the value of cooperation in the narrative of folklore is proof that learning based on literary texts has great potential in shaping the cross-cultural awareness of learners. By reading and rewriting folklore, BIPA learners not only learn vocabulary or sentence structure, but also hone their sensitivity to social values that apply in Indonesian culture. This is an important basis for the realization of true cross-cultural understanding, where learners not only understand "what" Indonesian people are doing, but also "why" they are doing it.

Comparative analysis shows that cultural background influences the way learners interpret folklore. Malaysian participants emphasised family values and obedience to the elderly, in line with the Malay culture which emphasises respect for the elderly and religious norms. Korean participants highlighted a lot of hard work, responsibility, and loyalty. This value intersects with the Confucian tradition that emphasizes work ethic, loyalty, and social harmony. Chinese participants highlighted more aspects of collectives, strategies, and social relations, in accordance with Chinese cultural views on community and solidarity.

Hermeneutic Perspective: Fusion of Horizons

In terms of a hermeneutic approach, this rewriting process can be seen as a form of interpretive dialogue between learners and cultural texts. Learners read texts (folklore), interpret them through their own horizons of understanding, and then express the results of that interpretation in the form of new narratives. In this process, there is a transformation of understanding that involves affective and cognitive aspects, as well as forming a new cultural consciousness. As stated by Gadamer (1975), understanding is never completely objective, but rather the result of a fusion between the reader's experience and the content of the text.

For example, in the interpretation of *Danau Toba*, Korean learners emphasize family promise and responsibility, which are important values in Korean culture. However, when connected to the Indonesian context, it adds the dimension of human harmony with

nature. This shows the intersection of cross-cultural meanings that enrich learners' understanding.

The findings of this study can be explained by the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (2000) (Mezirow, 2015). Disorienting dilemma: learners face situations when the values in the story (e.g., mutual cooperation or respect for parents) differ from their cultural experiences of origin. Critical reflection: they reflect on that difference, for example when Chinese learners compare Indonesia's mutual cooperation with community solidarity in their country. Reintegration: they then internalize new values into their own perspectives, such as Korean participants who emphasize the promise of family in Lake Toba while also connecting it to their own cultural traditions. This process proves that the rewriting of folklore can be a vehicle for perspective transformation that not only teaches the language, but also changes the perspective and attitude of learners towards Indonesian culture.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the activity of rewriting Indonesian folklore by BIPA learners constitutes a transformative learning process that goes beyond linguistic practice. Referring to the first research question, the forms of self-transformation experienced by learners include perspective shifts in viewing family, social responsibility, honesty, and the value of collective action. These transformations are not merely linguistic but involve cognitive development—critical awareness of cultural symbols and moral dilemmas—and affective growth, such as empathy, respect, and cross-cultural sensitivity. Regarding the second research question, the cultural values most frequently identified and internalized through rewriting include livelihoods, cooperation and deliberation, honesty and responsibility, and respect for parents. These values were not passively copied but actively reinterpreted, producing narratives that reflect both Indonesian cultural contexts and the learners' own horizons of understanding.

For the third research question, the hermeneutic approach proved useful in explaining how learners negotiate meaning between text and personal experience, resulting in a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1975). Through this dialogical process, folklore became a medium for cultural reflection and identity formation, in line with Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning. Theoretically, this study expands the application of transformative learning and hermeneutics in second language education, showing how narrative rewriting can stimulate both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Practically, it highlights the importance of integrating folklore as reflective and

participatory material in BIPA teaching to foster cross-cultural understanding and character education. Future research is encouraged to involve a larger and more diverse group of participants and to extend the object of study to other cultural texts such as urban legends, myths, or oral narratives, thereby enriching the cultural literacy dimension of BIPA learning.

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