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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Integrating local cultural values into BIPA learning through reflective writing: The legend of the Kyai Upas Spear and pluricultural competence at the A1-A2 level

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**ABSTRACT**
BIPA (Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages) learning should integrate language and culture, yet few studies show how a local narrative's values can be identified systematically and turned into beginner-level tasks. This study examined the Tulungagung legend *The Origin of the Kyai Upas Spear* as a source of cultural values for CEFR A1-A2 learners. Qualitative content analysis of the legend and Jamasan Pusaka ritual identified four values: heeding advice, courage and the search for identity, respect for ancestry, and Javanese-Islamic syncretism. These were mapped chiefly onto affective and cognitive dimensions of pluricultural competence; legend comparison exercises the skill dimension. Japanese Kusanagi and Vietnamese Thuận Thiên legends shared a serpent-weapon pattern alongside differences: courage recurred in all three, inherited legacy was marked in two, and heeding advice and syncretism were not identified in the comparison versions. Findings informed a noticing-reacting writing sequence with sentence starters in a prototype 18-page flipbook with three worksheets. One expert rated content and language very valid (95%), with practice exercises lowest (81.25%). The contribution is a transparent procedure for identifying a narrative's values, relating them to pluricultural competence, and turning them into basic-level tasks. The prototype's effectiveness and contribution to learners' pluricultural competence require classroom testing.

**Keywords:** BIPA; folk legend; Kyai Upas; pluricultural competence; reflective writing.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA), or Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages, has become increasingly strategic as international interest in Indonesian grows. Indonesia's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education reported in 2025 that, over the preceding decade, its Language Development and Fostering Agency had assigned BIPA teachers to 772 institutions in 57 countries (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2025). Permendikbud No. 27 of 2017 sets graduate standards for the four language skills together with respect for cultural diversity and customs, while leaving specific cultural content to teachers (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2017), and recent BIPA research foregrounds cross-cultural orientation (Romadhon et al., 2026). This expansion places a corresponding demand on instruction, which is expected to move beyond language skills toward early sensitivity to Indonesian culture.

In practice, the integration of culture remains uneven. Asteria et al. (2023) found that BIPA teachers regard pluricultural competence as knowledge of Indonesian culture rather than as a competence, while folk narratives appear only sparingly in BIPA textbooks and mostly as reading passages (Kusmiatun, 2018). Folk narratives have been used to introduce Indonesian language and culture (Melinda & Muzaki, 2023), as enrichment for intermediate learners (Amandangi et al., 2020), in web-based materials for intermediate learners that were validated by experts and users (Yulianeta et al., 2022), in worksheets combining folktales, culture, and tourism (Sa'adah et al., 2024), and in comparisons of Southeast Asian folktales (Gultom & Mulyati, 2023). These studies establish the value of local narratives, but they rarely make explicit how narrative values are identified, related to the dimensions of pluricultural competence, and converted into tasks for learners with very limited linguistic resources. This is a methodological and pedagogical problem rather than the absence of studies on one narrative: without such a procedure, beginners tend to acquire culture as isolated facts.

Addressing this problem requires conceptual precision. *Cultural knowledge* refers to information about the products, practices, and beliefs of a group, such as the events of a legend or the steps of a ritual; *cultural awareness* is the conscious recognition that such practices are culturally shaped and may differ from one's own. *Intercultural communicative competence* is the ability to interact appropriately across cultures and is specified through the *savoirs* of knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2021). *Pluricultural competence*, by

contrast, foregrounds the learner's own repertoire: the capacity to draw on experience of several cultures, which are compared and interact to form an integrated competence (Council of Europe, 2001; Galante, 2022) that changes with the individual's life path (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009). Knowledge and awareness are preconditions for, but not equivalent to, pluricultural competence. Because these terms are often used interchangeably in BIPA research, it can be unclear what a given material can legitimately claim to develop; in this study, *pluricultural competence* is reserved for the capacity to relate and integrate cultural experiences, whereas knowledge of the legend alone is treated as cultural knowledge.

The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) provides the foundational description of this competence, and the Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020), through its scale *Building on Pluricultural Repertoire*, the level-specific reference point: at A1–A2, learners recognize differences in everyday conventions and respond in simple ways. Byram's (2021) *savoirs* and the FREPA framework (Candelier et al., 2012) inform the analytical dimensions, since both organize competences into knowledge, attitudes, and skills. These dimensions, namely cognitive, affective, and skill, allow narrative values to be related to distinct learner responses that can be elicited with limited language. For basic-level learners, each is restricted to its most elementary form: stating a concrete cultural fact, expressing a feeling or opinion with a reason, and, chiefly at A2, producing a one-sentence comparison with one's own culture. The last extends beyond the A1-A2 descriptors and is proposed here as a scaffolded pedagogical adaptation, not a CEFR descriptor. The Companion Volume's descriptors for plurilingual and pluricultural competence were developed to recognize the learner as a social agent who mobilizes a diverse repertoire (Piccardo et al., 2019), a view that makes even a beginner's brief reference to a home culture pedagogically meaningful.

The Tulungagung legend of the Kyai Upas Spear suits this purpose. In Bascom's (1965) terms it is a legend rather than a folktale, since its community regards it as true and anchors it to identifiable places and figures. It recounts the transformation of the dragon-child Baru Klinting into a sacred spear that became the heirloom of the regency, and it is still enacted through the annual Jamasan Pusaka ritual, recorded as Indonesian Intangible Cultural Heritage (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2019). Four features make it suitable for A1-A2 learners: its plot is short, linear, and concrete; its values are carried by actions rather than abstract argument; it is tied to an observable present-day practice; and its motif, a serpent or dragon associated with a sacred weapon, recurs in other Asian traditions and offers a point of comparison. Its visible transformations (a knife, a serpent child, a tongue that becomes a spear) can be retold in simple declarative sentences and supported by

pictures, its ritual gives cultural knowledge a real referent, and its motif allows learners from different backgrounds to begin from something familiar.

Learners also need an activity through which they process such content rather than merely receive it. In intercultural language teaching, reflection is what turns cultural exposure into learning, moving learners from noticing to comparing, reflecting, and interacting (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Guided reflective journals have raised awareness in L2 writing (Aliyu et al., 2023), guided reflection in online exchange has increased respect for the target culture (Flowers et al., 2019), and dialogue journals have given learners space for intercultural observation (Dressler & Tweedie, 2016) and have been used with upper-beginner and intermediate learners (Ghafar Samar & Parsaie, 2025). Reflection has also been built into beginner courses: an elementary Italian curriculum that included reflections was associated with gains in intercultural development (Aski et al., 2023); and intercultural reflection tasks were trialled in an A1–A2 Italian course, with individual differences in engagement (Bavieri & Beaven, 2021). Reading journals have been reported at A2 (Gonzalez-Torres & Vargas-Saritama, 2025) and reflective journals among EFL sophomores (Demera Macías & Fajardo Dack, 2023), yet low-proficiency learners remain under-researched, and none of these studies isolates intercultural reflection written in the target language at A1–A2. A case study of two secondary-school learners of Chinese found that, without explicit intercultural reflection during class, students were unlikely to develop intercultural competence (Kennedy, 2020). At A1-A2, such reflection must be simplified and scaffolded, which makes the choice of an accessible, concrete, and culturally rich text all the more important.

No prior study has examined the Kyai Upas legend as content for A1-A2 BIPA learning. Its novelty, however, lies less in the legend than in the procedure it demonstrates. The study asks: (1) what cultural values are embedded in the legend and its Jamasan Pusaka tradition, and how do they relate to the cognitive, affective, and skill dimensions of pluricultural competence; (2) how does the legend compare with two structurally similar heirloom legends from Japan and Vietnam in its recurring and locally specific values; and (3) how can these values be applied in reflective-writing tasks for A1-A2 learners? The first two questions constitute the principal analytical contribution; the third concerns pedagogical application and yields an expert-reviewed proposal, not evidence of learning outcomes. Theoretically, the study operationalizes the dimensions of pluricultural competence as learning-activity goals at the basic level; practically, it offers BIPA teachers a replicable route from local narrative to task. Accordingly, the study aims to identify the values in the legend

and its ritual, map them onto the three dimensions, compare the legend with two heirloom legends in order to distinguish recurring from locally specific values, and apply the findings in a reflective-writing design realized as a prototype whose content and language were validated by one expert.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design in two sequential phases. The principal first phase was a document and qualitative content analysis of the legend, suited to interpreting meaning in a text (Mayring, 2022). In the second, the findings were translated into a reflective-writing design and a prototype medium. The prototype is an output of the analysis rather than a separate development study, since each activity derives from a value, a dimension, or a comparative finding. With no learner trial, the study does not follow a full research-and-development model. The first two research questions are interpretive; the third operationalizes their findings for a specific level.

The primary data source was *Jamasan Pusaka Kanjeng Kyai Upas, Pusaka Berbentuk Tombak*, published by the Directorate of Heritage and Cultural Diplomacy (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2019). This Indonesian prose retelling, combining the legend with a description of the ritual, was adopted because it is publicly accessible, state-issued, and narrates the full sequence; it is treated as a retelling of an oral tradition, not a historical record. A study of the ceremony as a marker of local identity (Ramadhanty Putri et al., 2026) and a regional press retelling (Rofiq, 2022), together with a field study of the ritual (Rismana & Hendriani, 2022), were used for cross-checking. Accounts were aligned episode by episode to record divergences in characters, sequence, and details. The main divergences concern (a) the next holder, named Ki Ajar Mangir in the base text and Ki Ageng Mangir in Rofiq (2022); (b) the blade inscription, given in the base text once as "Allah" and "Muhammad" and once as "Allah" alone; and (c) the final transfer, to a son of the Mataram king serving as adipati of Ngrawa and to Raden Mas Tumenggung Pringgodiningrat. The base text was followed; where it varies internally, the analysis uses the word "Allah", common to both passages, and the named regent, also reported by Rofiq (2022). Versions not leading to the Tulungagung heirloom, such as the Rawa Pening lake-origin legend, were excluded, although the base text places Ki Wonoboyo near Rawa Pening. The base text was analyzed unabridged in Indonesian; English renderings are the authors' paraphrases. For the prototype, three rules applied: elements carrying the causal chain and the four values were retained, from the warning and the knife to the spear becoming an heirloom; the spear's

transfers were condensed into one step, its arrival in Ngrowo with Regent Pringgodiningrat; and details beyond what beginners can follow, such as the palm-rib token and Ki Ajar Mangir's role, were omitted. Ritual sources differ on the water: the base text lists seven sources and seawater, whereas a field study and a later press report describe nine springs (Muttaqin, 2024; Rismana & Hendriani, 2022). This is treated as variation; the prototype follows the nine-spring practice of more recent accounts.

The analytical framework combined Bascom's (1965) classification with the three-dimensional model set out in the Introduction. First, the text was segmented into narrative units carrying cultural meaning. Second, units were coded for values through inductive category formation (Mayring, 2022), with categories revised through repeated readings and checked against the cross-checking sources. Each value was classified by textual grounding as *explicit* (stated in the narrative), *implied* (conveyed through actions and consequences), *interpretive* (resting on the researchers' reading of a symbol), or *contextual* (deriving from surrounding ritual and community practice). Third, each value was mapped onto the dimension it most directly invites learners to exercise: cognitive when the primary task is to state a concrete cultural fact, affective when it is to respond with a feeling, opinion, or empathy, and skill when it is to relate a cultural element to another culture. Dimensions were treated as overlapping, so a value could have a primary and a secondary dimension. A dimension is primary only when the prototype contains an activity that elicits it; otherwise it is recorded as a proposed extension. Each decision was then checked against the A1–A2 descriptors of *Building on Pluricultural Repertoire* (Council of Europe, 2020) for whether the expected response fell within or beyond the basic level.

The comparative stage examined the Japanese legend of Kusanagi no Tsurugi and the Vietnamese legend of Thuận Thiên, selected because (1) a serpent or dragon is connected with a sacred weapon; (2) the weapon is associated with legitimate rule; (3) the legend persists through an object, ritual, or commemorated site; and (4) it is documented in accessible sources. These origins correspond to learner backgrounds well represented in BIPA classrooms. The comparison, structural and thematic with a pedagogical purpose, covered the five narrative elements in Table 2. Thematically, the four values were sought using the same coding criteria, with respect for ancestry coded as the handing down of an inherited legacy and the second value compared through its courage component. Values were compared by episode and character relations, not motif alone: heeding advice required a warning whose neglect shapes the plot, and syncretism required distinct religious traditions coexisting in the object or its documented ritual. Where no qualifying episode was

found, the value is reported as *not identified in the versions examined*; *locally specific* is used only in this sense. Narrative evidence came from the *Kojiki* in Chamberlain's (1882, sec. 18) translation for Japan and from Ủy ban Nhà nước về người Việt Nam ở nước ngoài (2007) for Vietnam; Weiss (2018) was used for interpretation only. Because each tradition is represented by one legend, no claims are made about Japanese or Vietnamese cultural values in general.

In the second phase, the findings informed a reflective-writing design guided by three principles: a noticing–reacting sequence simplified from Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), scaffolding through sentence starters (Wood et al., 1976), and comparison anchored in the shared narrative pattern. The design was realized as an 18-page digital Heyzine flipbook and three printable worksheets (*Lembar Kerja Peserta Didik*, LKPD). One content and language expert holding a master's degree in education reviewed the flipbook using a 25-item instrument in eight aspects (Table 4), each item rated on a four-point scale (4 = very good, 1 = poor; maximum 100). The validity percentage (score ÷ maximum × 100) was interpreted as very valid (85-100%), valid (70-84%), fairly valid (56-69%), less valid (40–55%), or not valid (0-39%), and written comments were analyzed qualitatively. This validation addresses expert-judged feasibility, not practicality or effectiveness for learners.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Narrative Structure of the Kyai Upas Legend

The story belongs to the category of legend (Bascom, 1965) and is treated here as a narrative tradition, not a verified account. In the base text it unfolds in three episodes. During a village cleansing ceremony (*bersih desa*), a cook borrows Ki Wonoboyo's knife and is warned not to place it on her lap; she forgets, the knife disappears, and she later gives birth to Baru Klinting in serpent form (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2019; Rofiq, 2022). Baru Klinting seeks his father's acknowledgment on Mount Merapi, loses the palm-rib token (*lidi*) that was to prove his identity, and is asked to encircle the mountain; falling short, he extends his tongue, which his father severs and which becomes a spear blade, while wood that appears after he vanishes becomes the shaft (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2019; Rofiq, 2022). The spear then passes to Ki Ajar Mangir and eventually to Raden Mas Tumenggung Pringgodiningrat, regent of Ngrowo, present-day Tulungagung, and becomes the regency's heirloom (*pusaka*) (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2019; Rofiq, 2022).

The narrative is re-enacted through the annual Jamasan Pusaka ceremony in the month of Sura, involving a procession, ritual cleansing, and a shadow-puppet performance (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2019; Ramadhanty Putri et al., 2026). Narrative and ritual thus sustain one another, and the ritual's place in the national heritage record marks it as a living tradition: cultural knowledge acquires a present-day referent that learners can observe, ask about, and compare with practices they know.

**Cultural Values Embedded in the Narrative**

Close reading yielded four values, which differ in how directly the text supports them (Table 1). Heeding advice is *implied*: the narrative states no moral, but the cook's neglect of the warning precedes Baru Klinting's birth and sets the story in motion. Courage and the search for identity are likewise *implied*, in Baru Klinting's journey to his father and his acceptance of the trial. Respect for ancestry is partly *implied*, through the transmission of the heirloom, and partly *contextual*, being most visible in the community's custodianship and annual cleansing of the spear. Javanese-Islamic syncretism is treated as an *interpretive* and *contextual* value rather than an explicit moral of the legend. Its interpretation draws not only on the Arabic inscription of the word "Allah" on the blade but also on documented ritual practices in which tahlil recited by *santri* coexists with Javanese ceremonial elements, including *monggang* gamelan, offerings, and all-night *wayang kulit* (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2019; Rismana & Hendriani, 2022). These features suggest cultural interaction within the documented tradition, although their meanings require contextual interpretation rather than being taken as self-evident evidence of syncretism. No value is stated explicitly as a moral. This accords with the legend genre, and it means that the values reported here are products of interpretation, which the coding procedure makes transparent. Similar folk-narrative analyses in BIPA name local values (Melinda & Muzaki, 2023) but seldom distinguish how each is grounded in the text.

This grading of textual grounding has two consequences for BIPA instruction. It tells the teacher which values learners can reach through the story alone (heeding advice, courage) and which require added cultural explanation (respect for ancestry, syncretism). It also guards against presenting a researcher's reading as the meaning of the legend, a risk in any value-based use of folklore. In addition, a single narrative can support language practice, cultural knowledge-building, and value-based reflection at once, rather than requiring separate materials for each purpose.

**Mapping the Values onto the Dimensions of Pluricultural Competence**

The cognitive dimension concerns knowledge of concrete cultural facts; the affective dimension concerns attitudes such as curiosity, openness, empathy, and respect; and the skill dimension concerns relating a cultural element to another culture (Byram, 2021; Candelier et al., 2012). At A1-A2, the descriptors of *Building on Pluricultural Repertoire* centre on recognizing everyday conventions and responding in simple, routine ways, whereas explaining or discussing features of one's own and other cultures is first described at B1 (Council of Europe, 2020). The present mapping extends recognition to concrete facts encountered in a narrative and adds a scaffolded one-sentence comparison chiefly at A2, adaptations proposed by this study rather than prescribed by the framework. Table 1 summarizes the results.

| **Cultural value (textual grounding)** | **Narrative evidence** | **Dimension** | **Reflective-writing prompt (A1–A2)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Heeding advice (implied) | The cook forgets Ki Wonoboyo's warning; the knife disappears and Baru Klinting is born in serpent form | Affective (primary); cognitive (secondary) | *Menurut saya, nilai ingat nasihat sangat penting karena ...* (In my opinion, heeding advice is very important because ...) |
| Courage and the search for identity (implied) | Baru Klinting's journey to Mount Merapi and his trial before his father | Affective (primary); cognitive (secondary) | *Saya merasa ... karena ...* (I feel ... because ...) |
| Respect for ancestry (implied; contextual) | Transmission of the heirloom to the regents of Tulungagung; the annual Jamasan Pusaka ritual | Cognitive (primary); affective (secondary) | *Saya tahu bahwa ...* (I know that ...) |
| Javanese–Islamic cultural syncretism (interpretive; contextual) | The inscribed word "Allah" on the spear blade within a Javanese heirloom tradition; tahlil alongside gamelan, offerings, and wayang kulit in the Jamasan ritual | Cognitive (primary); skill of comparing (proposed extension) | *Saya tahu bahwa ...* (I know that ...); proposed extension: *Di negara saya, ada ...* (In my country, there is ...) |

**Table 1.** Mapping of cultural values onto dimensions of pluricultural competence (Source: Authors' analysis)

Respect for ancestry is primarily cognitive because the narrative and ritual supply facts (the spear's origin, its arrival in Ngrowo, its annual cleansing) that learners can state with *Saya tahu bahwa ...*; its affective component appears when learners evaluate the custom. Heeding advice and courage are affective because the narrative invites a response to a character's choice rather than the learning of a fact. Recalling the events is their secondary, cognitive component. The cook's forgotten warning and Baru Klinting's search for his father's recognition offer accessible entry points for empathy and simple evaluation (*Saya merasa ... karena ...*; *Menurut saya, ...*). Such responses do not depend on advanced proficiency, and guided reflection has been associated with greater respect for other cultures among

first-year university students (Flowers et al., 2019). Syncretism is primarily cognitive in the present prototype because learners are asked only to recognize it as a cultural fact (pp. 9–10); relating it to hybrid practices at home would exercise the skill dimension, but this is a proposed extension rather than a task the prototype contains. Responses are differentiated by level to keep the linguistic demand within basic-level means: A1 learners recognize story elements and write one or two simple sentences with support, whereas A2 learners give a short response and, where possible, one simple comparison through a sentence frame. Comparing legends is a pedagogical adaptation proposed by the researchers rather than an A1–A2 descriptor (Council of Europe, 2020), and whether learners at this level can carry it out with sentence starters remains to be tested.

Bavieri and Beaven (2021) ask what degree of intercultural reflection can be reached when language competence is basic, and they report individual differences among students in an A1-A2 course. The present mapping responds by limiting the length of responses at each level and by separating what learners are asked to do culturally from what they are able to say linguistically. It also accords with evidence that intercultural aims need not wait for higher proficiency: elementary learners of Italian who received explicit intercultural instruction, including reflection tasks, showed gains in intercultural development (Aski et al., 2023). That curriculum, however, extended over three semesters, whereas the present proposal is a single narrative-based unit, so comparable growth cannot be assumed.

**Cross-Cultural Resonance: Comparative Mythological Parallels**

Table 2 summarizes the comparison. In the *Kojiki*, Susanoo slays the eight-headed serpent Yamata no Orochi and finds in its tail the sword later known as Kusanagi no Tsurugi, which he offers to the sun goddess Amaterasu and which later becomes one of the imperial regalia (Chamberlain, 1882; Weiss, 2018). In the Vietnamese tradition, Lê Lợi obtains the sword Thuận Thiên, lent by the Dragon King Long Quân, and uses it against Ming occupation; after victory, the golden turtle Kim Quy, Long Quân's messenger, reclaims it in the lake since called Hồ Hoàn Kiếm, the Lake of the Returned Sword (Ủy ban Nhà nước về người Việt Nam ở nước ngoài, 2007).

| Element compared | Kyai Upas (Tulungagung) | Kusanagi no Tsurugi (Japan) | Thuận Thiên (Vietnam) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Serpent or dragon figure | Baru Klinting, a dragon-child born in serpent form | Yamata no Orochi, an eight-headed serpent | Long Quân, the Dragon King (donor); the golden turtle Kim Quy is his messenger |
| How the object is obtained | The hero's own severed tongue becomes the blade | Found in the tail of the slain serpent | Lent by the Dragon King |
| Hero and creature | The creature is the protagonist seeking recognition | The creature is an adversary defeated by the hero | The creature is a benevolent donor |
| Link to rule | Heirloom of the regents of Tulungagung | One of the imperial regalia | Supports Lê Lợi's leadership against Ming occupation |
| Present-day presence | Annual Jamasan Pusaka ritual | Preserved among the imperial regalia | Hoàn Kiếm Lake in Hanoi |
| Courage | Present (Baru Klinting's trial) | Present (Susanoo's fight) | Present (resistance to occupation) |
| Respect for ancestry (as inherited legacy) | Present (object handed down) | Present (object handed down) | Weak (object returned; legacy carried by a place) |
| Heeding advice; syncretism | Both present | Not identified in the versions examined | Not identified in the versions examined |

**Table 2.** Structural and thematic comparison of the three legends in the versions examined (Source: Authors' analysis)

The three legends share a pattern in which a serpent or dragon is the source of a sacred weapon linked to rule and present in cultural memory, but their differences are as instructive. In the Kyai Upas legend the serpent is himself the protagonist and the weapon is formed from his body as the price of recognition; in the Kusanagi legend the serpent is an adversary; in the Thuận Thiên legend the dragon is a benevolent donor whose loan is reclaimed. The Kyai Upas spear and Kusanagi are handed down as regalia, whereas Thuận Thiên is returned, its legacy sustained by a commemorated place. Legitimacy also ranges from a regency, to an imperial line, to leadership in war. These are differences between particular legends in particular versions; they do not represent Indonesian, Japanese, or Vietnamese culture as a whole.

For learners, these contrasts matter as much as the shared pattern. They provide opportunities for guided noticing rather than serving as evidence of national cultural characteristics. For beginners, they can be introduced through visual prompts and short responses about characters, actions, and differences, without broader claims about the cultures represented. A learner who knows Kusanagi may expect the serpent to be an enemy and will find that the Indonesian story asks for sympathy with the serpent instead; a learner who knows the Hoàn Kiếm tradition may expect the weapon to be returned and will find that the Javanese spear is kept, cleansed, and honoured. Where each weapon comes from can likewise be noticed through simple statements, as on the comparison page (Figure 6). The differing links to rule offer a further contrast: with picture cues, learners can name who holds

each object (a regent, an emperor, or a war leader) without having to discuss political legitimacy. Such moments of unmet expectation are the kind of concrete cultural difference that A1–A2 learners can notice and name in a simple sentence.

Courage is present in all three narratives. Respect for an inherited legacy is strongly marked in the Kyai Upas and Kusanagi narratives but appears in the Vietnamese legend only as a commemorated site. Heeding advice and syncretism were not identified in the versions examined. Unlike Gultom and Mulyati's (2023) comparison of Southeast Asian folktales as alternative materials, this comparison is used to sort values by what learners may already recognize. It supplies a familiar entry point, which may ease the demands of comparison at the basic level (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), although this has yet to be tested. It identifies where explicit teaching is needed, since locally specific values cannot be inferred from learners' own traditions. It also provides content for one-sentence comparisons, consistent with evidence that regular comparative and reflective activity must be built into class if intercultural competence is to develop (Kennedy, 2020).

**Pedagogical Implications for Reflective-Writing-Based BIPA Instruction**

Full reflective cycles presuppose abstract reasoning and lexical range beyond A1-A2, so a simplified two-stage structure, *noticing* and *reacting*, was drawn from Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) cycle of noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting. Noticing is retained, reacting condenses comparing and reflecting into one manageable response, and interacting is left for higher levels. In the noticing stage, learners are guided towards the transformation of the spear and the Jamasan Pusaka ritual; in the reacting stage, they give a short response, scaled to level as described above, that may be a feeling, a question, or a link to a story from home.

Each stage uses sentence starters as scaffolding in Wood et al.'s (1976) sense, making a task otherwise beyond a learner's reach achievable. Starters such as *Di negara saya, ada juga cerita tentang ...* (In my country, there is also a story about ...) and *Saya merasa ... karena ...* (I feel ... because ...) are intended to let learners engage the affective and skill dimensions within their repertoire. An emphasis on frames can, however, interrupt sense-making when attention shifts to correct forms (Alvarez et al., 2023), so they are offered here as temporary supports to be withdrawn as proficiency grows. Task wording also shapes what learners write: university learners of Finnish recycled, negotiated, and reinterpreted phrases from reflection instructions in their portfolios (Räsänen, 2024), which suggests that starters should be read as models to adapt rather than formulas to copy. Evidence at this level is still

indirect. First-semester learners of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean reflected through journals and forums (Hwang et al., 2024), learners of German from beginning to advanced levels largely valued structured reflection (Crane & Sosulski, 2020), and first-semester learners of French reported planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning through guided reflections (Chiocca, 2025). At A2, structured reading journals with one strategy item and three open questions accompanied gains in EFL comprehension (Gonzalez-Torres & Vargas-Saritama, 2025), and, among EFL sophomores, reflective journals accompanied improved writing skills, although in a one-group design (Demera Macías & Fajardo Dack, 2023). The language of reflection is not always reported in these studies, so the sequence proposed here remains to be tested with BIPA learners writing in Indonesian. Narrative content of this kind also complements the interaction-based dimensions, such as norms, small talk, and implicature, more commonly studied in BIPA (Asteria et al., 2023).

The design also takes account of what recent beginner-level studies report. Hwang et al. (2024) report that first-semester learners' forum feedback focused more on language-related skills than on perspective changes, which suggests that open-ended prompts may drift towards language progress; here, each starter is therefore tied to a specific cultural element. Crane and Sosulski (2020) show that reflection tasks can be staged to the developmental needs of learners at different instructional levels, and that learners largely value such work, while Aliyu et al. (2023) report gains in metacognitive awareness among undergraduates who kept reflective journals. These studies support the principle of guided reflection, but they involved longer courses, in most cases more proficient writers, or reflection not necessarily in the target language. The present design, by contrast, asks for very short reflective writing in Indonesian itself, a demanding condition that classroom trials will need to examine.

**Illustrating the Integration: The Kyai Upas Reflective Writing Flipbook**

To illustrate how the mapping and the noticing–reacting structure translate into material, a prototype flipbook entitled *Asal-Usul Tombak Kyai Upas: Modul Menulis Reflektif* was developed for BIPA Levels 1-2 (A1-A2) (Figure 1). It is organized around the story, the Jamasan tradition, interactive exercises, and cultural reflection, moving learners from input through noticing to written reaction and comparison (Table 3).




**Figure 1.** Cover of the interactive flipbook *Asal-Usul Tombak Kyai Upas* for BIPA Levels 1–2 (Source: Authors' flipbook)

| **Flipbook component** | **Learning activity** | **Reflective stage** | **Dimension** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Three story episodes (pp. 6-8) | Illustrated panels in simple sentences with audio, QR codes, vocabulary cues (Episodes 1 and 3), and a quiz (Episode 1) | Input and noticing | Cognitive |
| Story elements and four values (pp. 9-10) | Identifying characters, setting, and plot; recognizing the four values | Noticing | Cognitive; affective |
| Jamasan Pusaka tradition (p. 11) | Observing the ritual, answering when and what questions, linking ritual to story | Noticing | Cognitive; affective |
| *Coba Ingat Ceritanya* (p. 12) | Recall items; emotion cards extended with "Saya merasa ... karena ..." | Noticing and reacting | Cognitive; affective |
| *Kalimat Refleksi* and *Tulis Refleksi Anda* (pp. 13-14) | Ordering sentences with word cards; a 3–5 sentence reflection with four starters and a model text (3–5 sentences as the A2 target; adapted for A1) | Reacting | Affective; skill |
| *Cerita Pusaka dari Berbagai Negara* (p. 15) | Comparing the three legends with one from the learner's own country | Reacting (comparing) | Skill |

**Table 3.** Correspondence between flipbook components, reflective stages, and dimensions (Source: Authors' analysis)

The narrative is retold in three short episodes so that the arc of the legend is preserved while its linguistic load is reduced. Each is a sequence of illustrated panels with short, simple sentences, an audio button, and a QR code; vocabulary cues accompany Episodes 1 and 3, and a short quiz accompanies Episode 1 (Figure 2). Learners recount concrete facts, such as where the cook placed the knife and what the tongue became, rather than interpret them historically. This keeps the cognitive dimension at a level appropriate to A1–A2 and follows the gradual awareness-building emphasized by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013).




**Figure 2.** Episode 1 of the narrative, with panels, audio and QR support, vocabulary cues, and a quiz (Source: Authors' flipbook)

A dedicated page presents the Jamasan Pusaka tradition (Figure 3): it is held every month of Sura at the Pendopo Kanjengan, using water from nine springs and flowers of seven kinds. The nine-spring detail follows recent accounts of the practice rather than the seven sources and seawater of the heritage record (see Method). The label *bunga tujuh rupa* simplifies the *kembang setaman* documented in the ritual (jasmine, kanthil, kenanga, and red and white roses, with no fixed count; Rismana & Hendriani, 2022) and will be aligned with this source in the next iteration. Boxes link the ritual to the story and name its values. The preservation of ancestral heritage and respect for local history correspond to respect for ancestry, whereas gratitude and communal togetherness arise from the ritual and are treated as ritual-specific additions. Observation questions such as *Kapan Jamasan dilakukan?* (When is Jamasan held?) and *Apa yang dipakai untuk membersihkan tombak?* (What is used to clean the spear?) keep the page within the noticing stage.




**Figure 3.** Page linking the Jamasan Pusaka ritual to the narrative (Source: Authors' flipbook)

The page *Coba Ingat Ceritanya* (Try to Remember the Story) is divided into panels labelled *Noticing* (*Mengenali*) and *Reacting* (*Menanggapi*) (Figure 4). The noticing panel contains recall items on narrative and cultural facts, including a picture-selection item on the

moment Baru Klinting encircles Mount Merapi and completion items on the body part that became the spear, the number of springs used in Jamasan, and the month of the ritual; the reacting panel invites learners to choose an emotion card, *kagum*, *tertarik*, or *terkejut* (amazed, interested, or surprised), and extend it with *Saya merasa ... karena ...*, anchoring the response in a reason. The next page bridges these choices to sentence production through word cards. A typical result is *Menurut saya, menghormati leluhur sangat penting* (In my opinion, respecting ancestors is very important).




**Figure 4.** The noticing and reacting stages in the flipbook (Source: Authors' flipbook)

The culminating task, *Tulis Refleksi Anda* (Write Your Reflection), asks for three to five sentences about the story and the learner's own culture (Figure 5). Because this length is an A2 target, A1 learners are expected to complete one or two of the starters; the printed instruction will be differentiated accordingly in the next iteration, given the individual differences reported for intercultural reflection at this level (Bavieri & Beaven, 2021). Four starters are aligned with the dimensions: *Saya tahu bahwa ...* (I know that ...) elicits cognitive recognition; *Saya merasa ... karena ...* and *Menurut saya, ...* (In my opinion, ...) elicit affective responses; and *Di negara saya, ada ...* (In my country, there is ...) prompts relating. The model moves from a fact about the spear to a feeling, a value judgment, and a comparison with a legend from the writer's own country, so that the expected text remains short while still touching all three dimensions.




**Figure 5.** Guided reflective-writing page with model text and four sentence starters (Source: Authors' flipbook)

Finally, *Cerita Pusaka dari Berbagai Negara* (Heirloom Stories from Various Countries) places the Kyai Upas spear alongside Kusanagi and Thuận Thiên and leaves a column open for a story from the learner's own country (Figure 6), with prompts on similarity and difference. The task is oriented chiefly to A2; A1 learners may name one element in the open column with teacher support. Presenting the shared pattern before asking for difference follows the noticing-then-comparing sequence (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Consistent with its cognitive mapping in Table 1, syncretism is introduced only at the level of recognition (pp. 9-10), while the relating skill is exercised mainly through this comparison; a task on syncretic practices in learners' own cultures is a direction for the next iteration. Three printable worksheets mirror the digital sequence where devices or connectivity are limited and allow teachers to collect written reflections as data for later evaluation. The worksheets are entitled *Kenali Cerita dan Tradisi* (Recognize the Story and the Tradition), *Ingat dan Refleksikan Cerita* (Remember and Reflect on the Story), and *Tulis dan Bandingkan Refleksi* (Write and Compare Reflections). The medium remains a design prototype, and its practicality and contribution to learners' pluricultural competence have not yet been tested.




**Figure 6.** Cross-cultural comparison page (Source: Authors' flipbook)

**Expert Validation of the Flipbook's Content and Language**

The validation described in the Method was carried out on 30 September 2026. The aspect on suitability to learning objectives included alignment with the BIPA Level 1-2 outcomes in the Graduate Competency Standards (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2017). Table 4 presents the results.

| Aspect assessed | Items | Score | Maximum | % | Category |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Suitability to learning objectives | 1–4 | 15 | 16 | 93.75 | Very valid |
| B. Accuracy of the material | 5–8 | 16 | 16 | 100 | Very valid |
| C. Depth and breadth of the material | 9–11 | 12 | 12 | 100 | Very valid |
| D. Integration of pluricultural values | 12–13 | 8 | 8 | 100 | Very valid |
| E. Suitability for reflective-writing instruction | 14–16 | 12 | 12 | 100 | Very valid |
| F. Practice exercises | 17–20 | 13 | 16 | 81.25 | Valid |
| G. Coherence of the material | 21 | 4 | 4 | 100 | Very valid |
| H. Language | 22–25 | 15 | 16 | 93.75 | Very valid |
| **Total (content and language)** | **1–25** | **95** | **100** | **95** | **Very valid** |

**Table 4.** Results of the expert validation of the Kyai Upas flipbook (Source: Validator's assessment)

The flipbook obtained 95 of 100 (95%), in the very valid category; the content aspects reached 95.24% and language 93.75%. Five aspects received the maximum score. The full score for accuracy, which covers fidelity to accountable sources, clear citation of the version used, and correctness of cultural and linguistic terms, suggests that, in the validator's judgement, simplifying the legend into three episodes did not distort its arc or cultural facts. The full scores for pluricultural integration, reflective-writing suitability, and coherence indicate that the validator regarded the mapping and the noticing–reacting sequence as carried through in the medium. The validator judged that the material prompts simple reflection through the two stages, helps learners write personal opinions with sentence starters, and presents cross-cultural understanding by comparing Indonesian culture with learners' own in a simple way. These judgements concern the design as it appears on the page and not what learners actually do with it.

The five items scored 3 cluster around two concerns. The first is linguistic calibration: vocabulary and sentence structure (item 4), exercise instructions (item 20), and unambiguous sentences (item 23). At A1-A2, simplifying instructions is itself scaffolding, because a task can be supported only if learners understand what it asks. The second concerns the practice exercises, the lowest aspect (81.25%, valid): their capacity to measure pluricultural competence (item 18) and the variety of their formats (item 19). This judgement is consistent with the limitation noted above, namely that syncretism is introduced only at the level of recognition and that the relating skill is exercised mainly through the heirloom comparison. The exercises therefore support recognition and simple reaction well but do not yet provide a sufficiently differentiated means of evidencing the skill

dimension. Assessment is a recognized difficulty in this area, as Hwang et al. (2024) also report for beginner courses.

The validator judged the flipbook well structured and generally easy for basic-level learners, noted that the narrative, the values, and the writing activities are clearly linked to the aim of the medium, and suggested revisions to presentation and usability: consistent typeface, larger explanatory text, better balance of illustration and text, simpler quiz instructions, and improved layout of multiple-choice exercises in web view. The validator's overall conclusion (valid, with these revisions) is read here as indicating that the flipbook is potentially suitable for classroom piloting following revision. As in comparable folklore-based BIPA development (Yulianeta et al., 2022), expert judgement establishes feasibility, not learning. It rests here on a single validator and does not involve learners, so the results offer initial, expert-based support only; the practicality of the flipbook and its contribution to pluricultural competence remain to be examined in class.

## CONCLUSION

This study identified four values in the legend of the Kyai Upas Spear: heeding advice and courage and the search for identity, both implied through action; respect for ancestry, implied in the transmission of the heirloom and visible in the Jamasan Pusaka ritual; and Javanese-Islamic syncretism, an interpretive and contextual value carried by the inscription and by the coexistence of Islamic and Javanese practices in the ritual. They were mapped primarily onto the affective (heeding advice; courage) and cognitive (respect for ancestry; syncretism) dimensions of pluricultural competence, with the skill dimension exercised through the heirloom comparison. Comparison with the Kusanagi and Thuận Thiên legends showed a shared serpent-weapon pattern with clear differences; courage recurs in all three and inherited legacy is marked in two, whereas heeding advice and syncretism were not identified in the comparison versions.

The contribution to BIPA pedagogy is primarily conceptual and methodological: the study shows how the values of a local legend can be identified transparently, distinguished by textual grounding, related to pluricultural competence through explicit criteria, and translated into A1-A2 tasks, here a noticing-reacting sequence scaffolded by sentence starters. The empirical evidence is limited to expert validation of content and language (95%), which identified the practice exercises (81.25%) as the weakest aspect. These results do not show that learners' pluricultural competence has been developed or improved. Compared with earlier folk-narrative work in BIPA, which has concentrated on introducing

culture or on the feasibility of products, the distinctive contribution lies in making the route from narrative to level-appropriate task explicit and therefore open to scrutiny and replication.

The analysis rests on particular versions of the legend, the validation on one expert, and the comparison on two legends known through translated or secondary accounts, so the pattern is indicative rather than general. The next step is to revise the medium by simplifying instructions, diversifying exercises, improving layout, and adding a task on syncretic practices, and to have it reviewed by additional experts. It should then be trialled with A1–A2 learners, using their written reflections, a rubric aligned with *Building on Pluricultural Repertoire*, and learner and teacher feedback. Such a trial would examine both the practicality of the noticing–reacting activities and the extent to which they elicit the cognitive, affective, and skill dimensions of pluricultural competence, including whether one-sentence comparisons are attainable at A1-A2 with sentence starters.

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**DECLARATIONS**

***Ethical considerations***

This study is primarily a document-based analysis of a publicly documented legend. Its only human involvement was one content and language expert who reviewed the instructional prototype in a professional capacity and participated voluntarily. The validator is not identified by name, no learners were involved, and no personal data were collected beyond the validator's academic qualification.

***Use of artificial intelligence (AI)***

Generative artificial intelligence tools, including Claude (Anthropic), were used for language editing, for condensing the manuscript to the journal's length, and for locating and checking published sources during revision. Several illustrations in the instructional medium shown

in Figures 1-6 were produced with the assistance of a generative AI image tool; the text, activities, and pedagogical design of the medium were developed by the authors. The authors reviewed all AI-assisted output, and the study design, data, interpretation, and conclusions are their own. Full responsibility for the content remains with the authors.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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