

Integration of Local Traditions in Language Teaching: A Case Study of the Sadranan Tradition in Klarisan as a Medium for Cultural Literacy

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Abstract

The wave of globalization poses significant challenges to the preservation of local traditions. One tradition that remains well-preserved is Sadranan in Dusun Klarisan, Tanduk Village, Ampel District, Boyolali Regency, which is held twice a year during the months of Ruwah and Safar. The series of activities includes grave cleaning, communal prayers, tumpeng feasts, and social gatherings, all of which embody values of gratitude, respect for ancestors, social solidarity, and belief in blessings. This tradition is highly relevant to be integrated into language learning in the Indonesian Language Education program as a medium for fostering cultural literacy. This study aims to describe the implementation and cultural significance of Sadranan and to outline strategies for its integration into Indonesian language teaching at the university level. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with community leaders and residents, and documentation. Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model, consisting of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that integrating Sadranan into contextual learning strengthens students' language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) while enhancing their cultural competence. Students not only acquire linguistic skills but also connect them with social and cultural contexts, in line with the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning. It is concluded that Sadranan serves a dual role as a cultural heritage that strengthens local identity and as an effective pedagogical tool for developing cultural literacy and language proficiency.

Keywords: *Sadranan, cultural literacy, contextual learning, language skills, local wisdom.*

Introduction

In the midst of the rapid pace of globalization, local communities face serious challenges in preserving their cultural identity. Traditional cultures are increasingly eroded by the flow of global information, modern lifestyles, and the dominance of external values. One tradition that has survived and continues to be practiced is *Sadranan*, a cultural and spiritual ritual held in Klarisan Hamlet, Tanduk Village,

Ampel District, Boyolali Regency. This tradition is not merely a spiritual activity performed before Ramadan or prior to the harvest season; rather, it also represents the preservation of communal values, respect for ancestors, and the expression of language within a cultural space. Uniquely, the Sadranan tradition in this region is held twice a year—unlike in Cepogo District, Boyolali Regency, where it is usually conducted once. In Klarisan Hamlet, Tanduk Village, Ampel District, it is held twice annually, during the months of Sha’ban and Safar.

Sha’ban is believed to be a time to pray for the spirits of ancestors before the arrival of Ramadan. Javanese communities usually hold *nyadran* or *ruwahan*, which involves cleaning graves, offering prayers, and sharing food. This activity reflects values of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), respect for ancestors, and readiness to welcome the holy month. Historically, in Islamic tradition, Safar is considered an ordinary month without any special significance. However, some Javanese communities—particularly those adhering to *kejawen* traditions—believe that this month is inauspicious for holding celebrations or starting new ventures, as it is thought to bring misfortune. Nevertheless, this view is more a cultural heritage than a religious teaching. In some regions, rituals such as *selamatan* or communal prayers are held to ward off misfortune and seek safety during Safar.

Despite its cultural richness, traditions such as Sadranan now face challenges. Younger generations tend to distance themselves from customary practices, considering them outdated, irrelevant, or simply unappealing. Within the context of education, especially in higher education, this serves as a crucial signal that there is an urgent need to integrate local wisdom into learning systems. One approach is to use local traditions as teaching materials in language learning, particularly within the Indonesian Language Education (*Tadris Bahasa Indonesia*) program. This ensures that students not only master language technically but also understand its social and cultural contexts.

Language learning that is oriented toward local cultural contexts not only helps students grasp the deeper meaning of language but also strengthens their

engagement in cultural preservation. By positioning Sadranan as a medium of cultural literacy, students learn not only about the structure and meaning of language but also about values, norms, symbols, and social practices within society. This approach aligns with Hirsch's (2002) view that "cultural literacy is the ability to understand and participate fluently in a given culture," underscoring the importance of cultural understanding in education.

Based on this phenomenon, the present study seeks to address two key questions. First, what are the forms of implementation and cultural meanings of the Sadranan tradition in Klarisan Hamlet, Tanduk Village? Second, how can the integration of this tradition be effectively applied in language learning within the Indonesian Language Education program? These questions are addressed through a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth observation of cultural practices and their implementation in the teaching and learning process.

The aim of this study is to describe the cultural and linguistic values of the Sadranan tradition as part of local cultural heritage. Furthermore, the study aims to examine how these values can be integrated into the teaching of Indonesian so that students acquire contextual, relevant, and culturally grounded understanding.

The theoretical benefit of this research is to enrich the study of local cultural integration in language education, particularly in the development of students' cultural literacy. Its practical benefit lies in providing a tradition-based teaching model that can serve as an alternative, meaningful, and engaging learning approach for lecturers. Such an approach is vital, as it fosters students' sense of belonging to their culture and strengthens their national identity in the face of external cultural influences.

This study is grounded in the theories of cultural literacy and contextual learning. According to Johnson (2002), "Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) enables students to connect the content they are learning to the context of their daily lives." Thus, the Sadranan tradition, which is alive within students' communities,

becomes a teaching resource that is not only interesting but also comprehensible and relevant to their lives.

One important aspect of culture-based learning is the reinforcement of social values, tolerance, and spirituality. The Sadranan tradition embodies all of these elements, ranging from communal prayers, shared meals of *tumpeng*, to pilgrimages and local art performances. These values can be transformed into lessons in narrative, descriptive, and speech practices, all of which are part of the language competencies in the Indonesian Language Education curriculum.

Moreover, such integration supports students in developing the cultural competence needed in today's global era. Beyond understanding language as a tool of communication, students are also expected to comprehend the cultural context in language use. As Kramsch (2009) asserts, "language is not a neutral code, but a cultural practice," meaning that language learning cannot be separated from the cultural contexts in which it is used.

Literature Review

Ilawati and Laily Nurlina (2024) conducted a study examining how cultural values—such as folklore, traditions, and social practices—can be integrated into Indonesian language teaching materials for foreign learners (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing* or BIPA). Ahmad Zاتمiko Ayatulloh and Ahmad Sulthoni (2025) found that the use of local history-based teaching materials can enhance student engagement, deepen literacy comprehension, and strengthen students' historical and emotional identity. Ilawati's research highlights how the inclusion of cultural elements—such as traditions and folklore—can enrich Indonesian language learning (particularly in BIPA). This aligns with the present study, which integrates the Sadranan tradition as cultural-linguistic teaching material. The second study underlines the importance of embedding local (historical) contexts into teaching materials to foster students' critical literacy and emotional connection. Similarly, this research emphasizes the role of local traditions in building cultural competence.

Ultimately, this study aims to ensure that the Sadranan tradition is preserved not only socially but also academically and pedagogically. The integration of local wisdom into learning is a strategic step to address the challenges of education in the global era without losing cultural roots. Thus, Indonesian language education becomes a means of cultural preservation, identity reinforcement, and a bridge toward a more inclusive and diverse civilization.

Research Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, as it aims to explore and describe in depth the meaning of the Sadranan tradition and its potential integration into culture-based literacy learning. This approach follows Moleong's (2017) view that qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena holistically and contextually through data presented in words.

The study was conducted in Klarisan Hamlet, Tanduk Village, Ampel District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java, from March to August 2025. It covered stages of observation, interviews, documentation collection, analysis, and report writing.

The research objects included the series of activities in the Sadranan tradition, the embedded values of community, tolerance, and spirituality, as well as strategies for integrating the tradition into the Indonesian Language Education (*Tadris Bahasa Indonesia*) curriculum. Data were collected through participatory observation to understand the processes and meanings of the activities (Spradley, 2016), in-depth interviews with community leaders, village officials, and residents, and documentation in the form of photos, recordings, and written archives.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with repeated verification. The results were presented narratively to

describe the chronology of the Sadranan tradition, the cultural values it embodies, and its application in teaching. This was supported by informant quotations, visual documentation, and flowcharts to reinforce the validity of the findings.

The Form and Meaning of the Sadranan Tradition in Klarisan Hamlet, Tanduk Village

The Sadranan tradition in Klarisan Hamlet, Tanduk Village, is held prior to



the month of Ramadan, specifically in the month of Ruwah (Sha'ban) in the Javanese calendar. A day before the event, villagers gather for *resik kubur* or grave cleaning. Wild grass is removed, tombstones are washed, and the area surrounding the cemetery is tidied. This activity involves people of all ages—from children and teenagers to the elderly. Beyond its practical purpose of maintaining cleanliness, it also symbolizes respect for the ancestors who have passed away.

Figure 1. Sadranan at the cemetery

On the day of the ritual, the atmosphere becomes lively right after the dawn (*Subuh*) prayer. Residents flock to the cemetery, bringing a variety of foods prepared at home. The offerings are diverse, including *tumpeng*, *nasi rasul* (seasoned rice), side dishes (such as *sambal goreng*, fried noodles, *rempeyek*, and others), traditional snacks, and produce such as vegetables and fruits. These foods are placed in large containers, neatly arranged around the cemetery as part of the preparations for communal prayers.

The Sadranan ritual begins with the recitation of *tahlil*, Surah Yasin, and prayers led by local religious leaders. The villagers solemnly follow the prayers, sitting in circles around the graves. After the prayers conclude, the food is opened and eaten together on the spot. The atmosphere is filled with warmth and

togetherness, as people shake hands, exchange forgiveness, and share food among



families. This practice of sharing meals not only allows everyone to taste dishes from other households but also strengthens social bonds among the community members.

Figure 2. Communal meal after prayers

After the activities at the cemetery, people return to their homes. However, the celebration continues throughout the day as families host visitors—ranging from distant relatives and neighbors from other villages to old friends. Food is prepared once again to welcome them, and the spirit of togetherness continues well into the evening.

From interviews, Mr. Supri (63 years old) stated:

“I have participated in Sadranan since I was a child. It is indeed tiring, especially when many guests come and we have to cook continuously. But my heart is happy, because this is the moment to gather with extended family and old friends. Our parents used to say that when guests are abundant, it is a sign of abundant blessings in the coming year.”

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ratna (36 years old) added:

“The expenses are considerable, but everyone here prepares for them well in advance. It feels joyful to see many people coming, eating together, and praying for one another. The children also learn the importance of respecting their ancestors.”

These testimonies reinforce the cultural meaning of Sadranan as a symbol of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), a means of strengthening kinship, and a form of cultural literacy passed down across generations. The belief that many guests bring blessings reflects a cultural value deeply embedded in the community.

Integration of the Sadranan Tradition into Contextual, Culture-Based Literacy Learning

The Sadranan tradition in Klarisan Hamlet, Tanduk Village, routinely held every Ruwah month before Ramadan, encompasses a series of activities such as *resik kubur* (grave cleaning), communal prayers, shared meals, and all-day social visits. Based on interviews with Mr. Supri (63) and Mrs. Ratna (36), although the tradition requires considerable effort, time, and expense, the community continues to carry it out joyfully. They believe it brings blessings, strengthens social relationships, and serves as a medium for passing cultural values to the younger generation.

This study is grounded in the theories of cultural literacy and contextual teaching and learning (CTL). According to Johnson (2002), “*Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) enables students to connect the content they are learning to the context of their daily lives.*” Based on this principle, the Sadranan tradition, which is part of the students’ own environment, can be used as relevant, comprehensible, and meaningful teaching material.

Culture-based learning, such as Sadranan, provides opportunities for students to explore values of community, tolerance, and spirituality embodied in the tradition. From communal prayers and Yasin recitations, to collective meals with *tumpeng*, ancestral pilgrimages, and local art performances, all of these activities carry profound cultural meanings. These values can be implemented in learning activities, for example, through writing narratives about the Sadranan experience, composing descriptive texts about the atmosphere and participants, or delivering speeches on cultural preservation.

Such integration not only enhances students’ language skills but also develops their cultural competence. In the context of globalization, language learning is not limited to grammar and vocabulary; it must also include the cultural contexts in which the language is used. As Kramsch (2009) emphasizes, “*language is not a*

neutral code, but a cultural practice,” which means that language learning cannot be separated from the social values and practices surrounding it.

Therefore, integrating the Sadranan tradition into language teaching, particularly in the Indonesian Language Education (*Tadris Bahasa Indonesia*) curriculum, brings dual benefits. Students not only gain language proficiency but also broaden their understanding of local culture, which constitutes their collective identity. The tradition thus serves not only as an object of study but also as a source of inspiration that enriches the learning process.

Discussion

The Sadranan tradition represents a number of cultural values that can be understood through the perspectives of cultural literacy and contextual teaching and learning (CTL). First, the value of gratitude is reflected in the collective recitations of prayers, *tahlil*, and Surah Yasin as an expression of thanks to God for sustenance, health, and the opportunity of life. In the framework of cultural literacy, this expression of gratitude constitutes a cultural text passed down across generations, while in the CTL concept, such practice becomes a meaningful and relevant learning medium as it is directly related to real-life experiences.

Second, respect for ancestors is an important part of the community’s social and spiritual identity. The cemetery pilgrimage emphasizes the attachment of the present generation to their historical roots and inherited values. The language used in prayers and interactions during Sadranan affirms Kramsch’s (2009) notion that language is not merely a neutral code, but a cultural practice laden with social meaning.

Third, Sadranan strengthens social solidarity through gatherings and *silaturahmi* among community members. This activity serves as a form of “social glue” that maintains communal harmony. In culture-based learning, the value of solidarity can be used as teaching material to train language skills, for example, through interviews or the preparation of observation reports.

Fourth, the belief in blessings that come from welcoming many guests reflects the view that social interaction brings both spiritual and material benefits. This belief encourages openness, generosity, and the sharing of resources. In the context of CTL, abstract concepts such as “blessing” can be used as material for students to practice their language skills through writing expository or argumentative texts that connect cultural values with concrete experiences.

Thus, Sadranan serves not only as a cultural heritage that strengthens the local identity of the Klarisan Hamlet community, but also as a contextual learning source that is close to students’ real-life experiences and rich with social, spiritual, and local wisdom values. Direct student involvement in observing, describing, and reflecting on this tradition makes the language learning process more meaningful. By integrating the values of Sadranan into teaching materials, students are able to sharpen both oral and written language skills while developing critical understanding of the cultural meanings behind them.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the application of culture-based literacy learning through the Sadranan tradition has a positive impact on the development of students’ language competence and cultural awareness. In addition to improving their ability to communicate ideas effectively, such learning also fosters tolerance, a sense of belonging to local culture, and the ability to link language to its socio-cultural contexts. In other words, Sadranan becomes an effective medium to connect linguistic theory with real-life practice, in line with the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning which emphasize the link between academic knowledge and everyday experience.

Conclusion

The findings of this research affirm that integrating the Sadranan tradition into language learning not only contributes to students’ mastery of language skills but also strengthens their cultural awareness and local identity. By utilizing cultural contexts that are close to students’ daily lives, learning becomes more meaningful,

relevant, and applicable. At the same time, this approach serves as a strategy for preserving cultural heritage amid the challenges of globalization, positioning language education as a medium for strengthening cultural literacy and character development.

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