

Integrating Local Wisdom-Based Character Education into Language Teaching: A Model for Cultural and Moral Development

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Abstract

Character is a positive trait reflected in a person's daily behavior. It is an essential part of one's personality and social life, although it is sometimes not systematically integrated into education. Therefore, this research aims: 1) To describe the process of integrating local wisdom-based character education values at Baitul Izzah Nganjuk Islamic Junior High School. This research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. There were three research subjects: headmaster of school, teachers and also and seventh grade students at Baitul Izzah Nganjuk Islamic Junior High School. Students were selected using purposive sampling method. Data collection was conducted through in-depth and open-ended interviews, observation, and document analysis. Data analysis was carried out with four steps, namely: collecting data, condensing data, presenting data and finally drawing conclusions. The results of this study show that the process of integrating the value of character education in Language learning used material book. The findings of this study indicate that teachers integrate language learning with materials rooted in local wisdom. Furthermore, throughout the learning process, teachers also model positive behavior that reflects the character values inherent in local wisdom. This integration not only enriches the content of language instruction but also fosters students' character development by embedding cultural values in everyday classroom practices. As a result, students not only improve their language skills but also internalize important moral and social values grounded in their own cultural heritage. This research is expected to be used as a model and cultural development and also can be used as a reference for other researchers who want to research the value of character education

Keywords: Integration, character education, local wisdom, language teaching

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central issue in the world of education in various countries, including Indonesia (Ahmad Saefudin & Al Fatihah, 2020; Albarracín et al., 2021; Arifin et al., 2022). This is in line with the challenges of globalization, which has an impact on shifting social, cultural and moral values in society (Munawir et al., 2023). Along with that, a more holistic approach to learning is needed to form a person who is not only smart, but also has character. One approach that is considered effective in supporting the internalization of character education values is by integrating these values in local wisdom-based language learning. Language learning that integrates local wisdom not only provides linguistic understanding, but is also able to instil strong character values needed in everyday life (Pamenang, 2021; Qushoy et al., 2023).

Character education, as explained by Lickona (2013) and Ramedlon et al (2023) is the understanding of goodness, the desire to do good, and actions that illustrate goodness. According to Lickona (2009) character education is an ongoing process to help individuals develop deep moral qualities, such as honesty, a sense of responsibility, compassion, and co-operation. In this case, character education must be implemented in an integrative manner, not only focusing on theoretical aspects or knowledge, but also on real behaviour in everyday life. Language learning can be a very effective means for internalizing these values,

considering that language is the main tool in communicating and understanding the world around us (Aljarelah, 2024).

There are various models and concepts that can be used to implement character education. According to Kevin Ryan, there are 6 models that can be applied in character education: (1) Example, in this example learners learn character education through direct example; (2) Ethos, in this ethos the school shapes the character of learners through creating an ethical environment that allows them to make their own decisions about what is not good and what is good; (3) Explanation, in explanation teachers discuss with learners and offer explanations about moral norms and rules about moral decisions; (4) Emotion, in this emotion is to appeal to learners' emotions and teach them to always "love the right things"; (5) Experience, in this experience, teachers provide opportunities for learners to take moral steps, one of which is through service-oriented learning methods; (6) Expectation of Excellence, in this Expectation of Excellence encourages and expects the best in all aspects of learners' lives (Singh, 2019). In addition, character education can also be integrated with local wisdom-based learning.

Local wisdom, which includes various cultural knowledge and values passed down from generation to generation in a society, has an important role in the formation of national character (Sumartias et al., 2020). Local wisdom contains values such as tolerance, mutual cooperation, respect for nature, and respect for each other (Choirudin, 2021). These values can be found in the form of folklore, oral traditions, and wise sayings that are part of local cultural heritage. Integrating local wisdom in language learning provides an opportunity to explore not only language as a means of communication, but also ways of thinking and acting in accordance with local norms and culture (Albantani & Madkur, 2018). This local wisdom-based learning offers a deeper experience for students to recognise their identity as part of a society with rich cultural traditions and values (Saputri et al., 2025). As revealed by Ardiansyah et al. (2024), local wisdom has great potential in introducing moral values that are very important in the formation of students' character, so that through this local wisdom-based language learning, students not only learn the language but also absorb the moral values contained in their own culture.

The novelty of this research lies in the effort to integrate character education values in language learning by using a more holistic local wisdom-based approach. Previously, language learning often only focused on linguistic skills such as speaking, writing, reading and listening skills, without giving enough emphasis on the character values contained in the language. This approach proposes to broaden the purpose of language learning by integrating character values contained in local traditions and wisdom as part of the learning itself. Thus, language becomes not only a tool to communicate, but also a means to internalize moral values that are important in social life. Besides, in today's era, character plays a crucial role in shaping individuals with integrity, making it necessary to conduct in-depth research on the integration of character values, particularly within the context of education (language education).

This local wisdom-based approach in language learning can be applied by using various media, such as folktales, poems, rhymes, or traditional expressions that are widely known in the community. For example, through folktales such as *Jayastamba*, students not only learn vocabulary or language structures, but are also taught about values, such as honesty, respect and responsibility. In this case, language learning becomes more contextualized and relevant to students' daily lives, as they learn through stories that are familiar and close to their culture.

Local wisdom-based language learning can make a significant contribution to student character building (Rahmawati et al., 2023). As explained by Hadi, S. (2017), language is one

of the important aspects in character education because language reflects the way of thinking, worldview, and values prevailing in a society. Therefore, language cannot be separated from the moral values prevailing in that society. Local wisdom-based language learning provides space for students to understand that language is not just a means of communication, but also a means of expressing and maintaining cultural values that exist in society (Murfiah et al., 2024). Local wisdom teaches students to better appreciate the traditions and norms that exist in their society, as well as foster a sense of love for the homeland and local culture. This is important given the challenges of globalization that are increasingly eroding local cultural values that have existed for centuries.

Local wisdom also teaches the importance of harmony between humans and nature, as well as the importance of living in harmony and mutual cooperation (Agung et al., 2024). These values are very important in shaping the character of students who are not only academically smart, but also have high social awareness. Suryana (2021) states that through language learning based on local cultural values, students can learn to respect differences, work together, and be responsible for society and the environment.

Local wisdom-based language learning has great potential in supporting the internalization of character education values among students. Local wisdom, which is rich in moral and cultural values, can be an effective tool in shaping student character with integrity, responsibility, and love for their culture and homeland. This approach not only teaches language as a linguistic skill, but also teaches students to live according to the norms that exist in their society. Therefore, it is important to develop language learning that not only focuses on cognitive aspects, but also integrates character values that can enrich students' personalities and shape them into better and more responsible individuals.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. The decision to choose the phenomenological approach is based on several factors, one of which is the relevance of the research title in detailing the experiences of the research subjects related to the process of integrating character education in Language learning. This research considers important elements such as school culture, teaching strategies applied by teachers, subject matter used, students' responses, principal's policies, school culture, as well as barriers that may arise in the effort to integrate character education in Language learning at Baitul Izzah Islamic Junior High School Nganjuk.

Phenomenological studies are intended to describe the common meanings of a number of individuals to their various life experiences related to concepts or phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This research is located at Baitul Izzah Nganjuk Islamic Junior High School. This research uses data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observation, and document analysis. The researcher was directly involved in collecting data related to the integration of character education values in English learning at Baitul Izzah Nganjuk Islamic Junior High School, so the researcher acted as the main instrument to ensure comprehensive and accurate data collection. In addition to the role of the researcher, this study also involved expert validators who were responsible for validating the research questions, observation results, and document analysis. Data validity in this study uses time extension, triangulation, using other references and member checking. The data analysis model in this study uses interactive analysis by Miles et al (2018).

This research was conducted at SMP Islam Baitul Izzah in Nganjuk. The selection of SMP Islam Baitul Izzah as the research site was based on several unique aspects of the school: SMP Islam Baitul Izzah is a private school designated as a "Driving School or *F Sekolah penggerak*", with a vision that emphasizes the development of Pancasila values and

character education, the school's vision and mission aim to cultivate strong Islamic character among its students. Baitul Izzah Islamic Junior High School provides English textbooks that incorporate character education values and the last son of English teacher at the school also develop her own teaching materials, which include character education elements.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers integrate character education values into English teaching, and one way of incorporating them is through inserting character values in teaching materials. The teaching materials applied by the teacher consist of two types, namely official teaching materials provided by the school and teaching materials designed by the English teacher by combining various sources of the teaching materials used from school provision, the teaching materials use pictures that have been adapted to character values in Indonesia. The pictures wear neat and polite clothes, and do not use harsh or dirty language. This is in accordance with what Mrs SW said when interviewed:

"We use two handbooks, one that is published in collaboration with BAIZ and the other is a compilation book I made myself. The contents of both have been adjusted to the value of character education here". (Code: SW/ 9-01-2023).

This statement was also supported by DN's statement when interview session who said that the compilation book also contains Islamic characters:

"..... We use two handbooks here, one from the publisher and the other is a compilation book that I made myself. The contents of the compilation book contain Islamic characters too, because at the end of the theme there are verses from the Qur'an. Code (DN/ 18 January 2023).

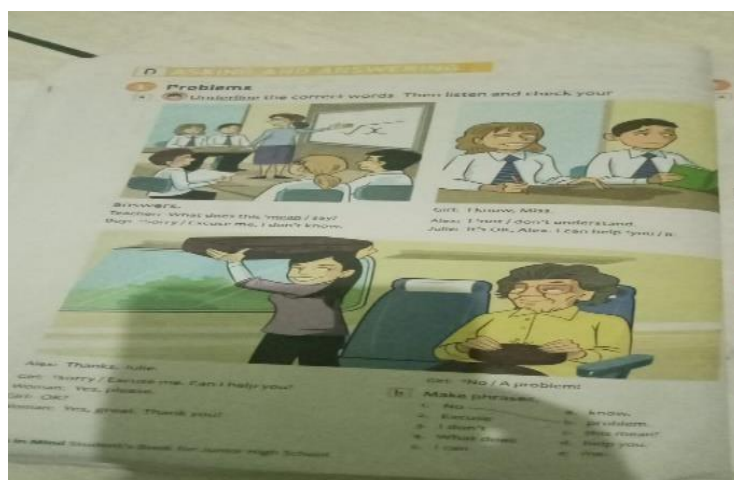


Figure 1: English Teacher Module

From the teaching materials made by the teacher, at the end of the theme, the teacher includes wise words related to character values. In addition to wise words, teachers also take verses from the Qur'an. The verses will be explained at the end of the lesson on a theme to learn the lessons.

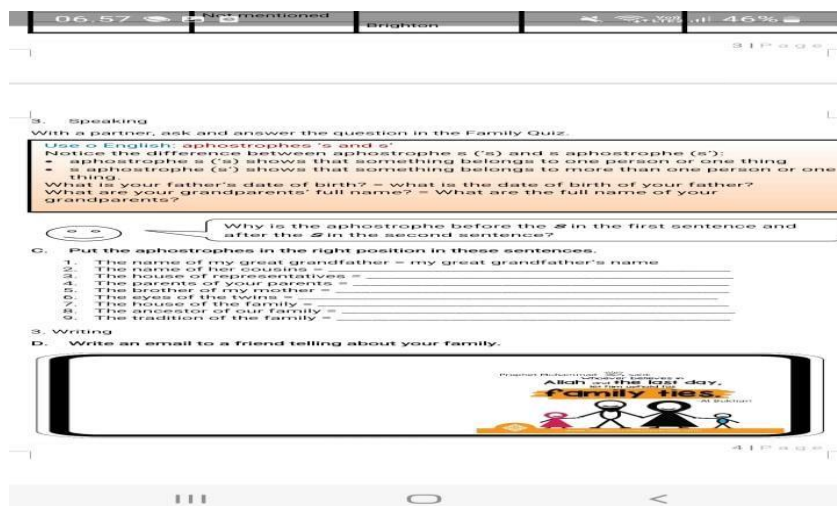


Figure 2: Teacher Module Book

The teaching materials made by the teacher also use pictures that are polite and Islamic.



Figure 3. Observation Stages

Teachers also use local wisdom in teaching materials used in learning, for example, teachers in reading lessons give reading texts about typical Nganjuk City food then the teacher discusses the text. Not to forget the teacher also discusses with students to discuss texts related to typical Nganjuk food then the teacher asks students about the content of character values from the text. For example, we must love regional specialties more.

In the modern era, many people favor foreign food, while regional specialties are no less nutritious, hygienic and environmentally friendly. For example, *pecel "godhong jati"* (teak leaf) is *pecel* rice wrapped in teak leaves. *Pecel* Nganjuk is different from *pecel* from other cities. *Pecel* Nganjuk is synonymous with "*rempeyek*" (food made from rice flour and mixed with small shrimp or soya). The character value that can be taken is the character value to be more environmentally friendly by not using food paper, so this food is arguably more environmentally friendly. *Pecel* food also does not last long, therefore it is healthier than junk food. In addition, there is also a food called *dumblek*. *Dumblek* is a Nganjuk specialty made from rice flour wrapped in "jambe leaves" (the name of a tree). *Dumblek* tastes sweet and

savoury because it is made from coconut sugar and coconut milk. The character value that can be taken from *dumplek* food is that it is more environmentally friendly because it is wrapped in jambe leaves, besides that it is an advice to always eat healthy food because *dumplek* is food made without preservatives. The character value that can be taken from *dumplek* food in addition to the things mentioned above is the value of always loving domestic food (loving Indonesian products, especially regional food) because in fact regional food is no less delicious than foreign food, so we must be proud of domestic products.

3. Project: The Signature food of my city

L. Read the text. Discuss with your friend.

My hometown is Nganjuk. It is in East Java. This city is famous as the windy city. There are some signature foods you can find in Nganjuk like Nasi becek, pecel, dumplek, and many more.

Nasi becek is very tasty. It is kind of spicy soup with mutton meat.



Pecel is also famous in our city. It is boiled vegetables with peanut sauce and rice flour cracker or peyek. We can eat pecel in the morning, afternoon, and even in the night. In other city, sometimes people only eat pecel as breakfast.



Dumplek is a from rice flour, package is unique. tree.

sweet traditional snack. It is made brown sugar, and coconut milk. The It is made of the leave base of palm

Those food are the asset of my city. They taste good! They are also not less than foreign food like pizza, hamburger, tonkiki or others. Let's be proud of our traditional food.



Figure 4 :Teacher Modul Book Overview

Another example is the reading text about the *Jayastamba* Monument. The monument, located on Ahmad Yani street in the center of Nganjuk City, is a very important icon for the city. The monument is not just a physical structure, but also a very significant historical inscription in Nganjuk. This inscription is known as the *Jayastamba* Inscription or more popularly as the Candilor Inscription, because it was found in Candilor Village, Loceret District. The name "*Jayastamba*" itself comes from Sanskrit. "*Jaya*" in the language means victory, glory, and invincibility, while "*Stamba*" refers to a monument, pillar, or milestone. The *Jayastamba* inscription became the starting point in determining the anniversary of Nganjuk Regency, which is now celebrated every 10 April. The *Jayastamba* monument is also a tourist attraction that is often visited by the public and has become one of the famous tourist attractions in Nganjuk.

B. Reading & Speaking

F. Have you heard about ecotourisme? Read the text about ecotourism and discuss with your partner about it.

Do you know the name of the monument at the intersection of Jalan Ahmad Yani Nganjuk



which is the icon of the Nganjuk City? The monument is known as the Jayastamba monument. The design of the monument is the adaptation of the Jayastamba inscription. You can find the origin or the history of Nganjuk from the Jayastamba Inscription or also known as the Candi Lor Inscription. Jayastamba comes from Sanskrit which is a combination of the words jaya which means glory, victory; and stamba which means monument, pillar and milestone. In other word Jayastamba means victory monument.

G. Creative Project

G. Make a poster that promote responsible tourism in your city.

"Once a year, go someplace you've never been before."
Dalai Lama

Figure 5: Teacher's English Learning Module

The reading text about *Jayastamba* teaches character values such as patriotism by remembering the birthday of a city, pride in regional tourism and also the attitude of remembering history and how we can maintain the glory of the times.

The process of integrating local wisdom-based character values into language learning

Data findings about the process of integrating character values in language learning at Baitul Izzah Nganjuk Islamic Junior High School, namely: in learning English at Baitul Izzah Islamic Junior High School, the beginning of learning always begins with greetings, apperception, introduction, core activities and also reflection. The teacher always starts with greetings. After greeting, the teacher leads the prayer to start the lesson (Code: Obs/GM/20-12). The teacher usually takes attendance one by one and asks them how they are that day. This is as stated by HS :

Mrs SW usually always takes our attendance one by one, asking how we are before starting the lesson. For example, as she did some time ago. Mrs SW asked me how I was: How are you today HS? When my face looked less enthusiastic, then Mrs SW asked about what happened, for example what's happening with you, you look pale today? Then I answered "I have problem miss". Then Mrs SW asked me, what problem do you have? Then I told her briefly about my problem and Mrs SW gave me feedback about the HS problem. Anyway, Mrs SW always asks about our condition every time she starts the lesson (Code: HS/19-01).

The teacher takes attendance one by one, after which the teacher informs students about the learning objectives that will be learned today. The teacher also mentions the profile of Pancasila that is expected through the learning, after that the teacher gives apperception about the topic that will be discussed today to the learners. The topic discussed is about traditional food.

During the lesson, there were some learners who asked questions. It turned out that a learner named TR asked before the question from the first learner who asked was answered, then the teacher told the learners not to ask questions while the initial question had not been answered until it was finished. The teacher told the learners to practice patience and discipline. Be patient in asking questions and disciplined in waiting for the queue to ask. (Code: Obs/GM/20-12-2022). When discussing traditional food (*pecel, dumblek and becek rice*), the teacher also discusses the ingredients used in making *pecel, dumblek and becek rice*. The teacher explains that *pecel, dumblek and becek rice* are made from natural ingredients. For example, *pecel* is made from vegetables (spinach, cassava leaves etc.) and cucumber pieces and doused with sambal *pecel* made from peanuts. Because *pecel* ingredients are natural then by eating *pecel*, the body will be healthier besides that *pecel* also no preservatives. The teacher explained that the character values that can be taken from the traditional food of *Pecel, dumblek and becek rice* are environmental care, healthy lifestyle and respect for nature. Wherever humans are, they must always respect nature because if nature is damaged, the world will also be damaged. We must also live a healthy life, avoiding junk food as much as possible. Besides that, *pecel rice* is a simple food (not luxurious) but *pecel rice* still tastes delicious. This teaches character values so that we always live simply, humble and not arrogant. Humbleness is a commendable attitude, which if implemented properly, many people will be happy and appreciate us. Traditional Nganjuk food (*dumblek, becek rice and pecel*) is part of the traditional Javanese culinary identity, especially in the Nganjuk area and its surroundings. Other character values that can be taken from traditional food are Nationalism, loving one's own culture, local identity because *pecel rice* is a local native food (Indonesian people).

During the lesson, there were several learners who asked questions. It turned out that a learner named TR asked before the question from the first learner who asked was answered, then the teacher told the learners not to ask questions while the initial question had not been answered until it was finished. The teacher told the learners to practice patience and discipline. Patience in asking questions and discipline in waiting in the queue to ask questions. (Code: Obs/GM/20-12).

The use of spin also makes students more enthusiastic. This is in accordance with the answer from HF

Today's learning task with the theme of traditional food typical of Nganjuk, then provide a reflection on the learning that has taken place. The teacher does not forget to inform students about the topics to be discussed next week, including the activities that will be carried out then the teacher closes the lesson by reading Alhamdulillah and greetings (Code: Obs/GM/20-12-2022). At the end of the lesson, the teacher gives a conclusion about traditional food, then gives a reflection about the learning that has taken place. The teacher does not forget to tell the learners about the topic that will be discussed next week, including the activities that will be carried out then the teacher closes the lesson by reading Alhamdulillah and greetings (Code: Obs/GM/20-12-2022).

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of local wisdom-based character education in Language learning is an effective pedagogical strategy in shaping learners' morality and cultural identity. Teachers not only rely on official textbooks, but also develop independent teaching materials that are full of character values and local wisdom. This is in accordance with the concept promoted by Lickona that character education should ideally be integrated in all subjects, including language, so that it becomes an integral part of the learners' learning experience (Lickona, 2009).

The use of teaching materials that contain character values such as language politeness, dressing according to norms, and the use of wise words and Qur'anic verses shows a transformative educational approach. Teachers consciously create a learning space that not only focuses on linguistic competence, but also on the formation of students' morals and spirituality. This is reflected in the teacher's statement that she uses "her own compilation of books that contain Islamic character values" (SW/9-01-2023; DN/18-01-2023). This strategy is in line with the ideas of Nucci and Narvaez, who emphasize the importance of cultural context-based character education for authentic moral development (Nucci & Krettenauer, 2014).

In addition, the utilization of local content such as texts about Nganjuk's typical food and the *Jayastamba* Monument reinforces the role of Language learning as a medium for preserving local culture. In reading lessons, for example, teachers not only deliver descriptive texts about local food, but also explore character values such as love for domestic products, environmental friendliness, and healthy lifestyles. As described in the text about "*pecel godhong jati*" and "*dumblek*", learners are invited to understand that local food is not only rich in nutrition, but also reflects noble cultural values (Documentation & Observation, 2023). This supports Gay's view of culturally responsive learning as a tool to empower learners academically and socially (Gay, 2018).

Furthermore, the use of descriptive text about *Jayastamba* Monument plays a role in instilling the value of nationalism and respect for history. The teacher does not just introduce vocabulary or sentence structure, but also builds learners' understanding of the importance of remembering history and loving the country. This is in line with the Ministry of Education and Culture character education framework which emphasizes the value of love for the country as one of the main character components (Suratinem, 2023).

This integration strategy also reflects the Contextual Teaching and Learning approach which focuses on the relationship between teaching materials and students' real lives (Munna & Kalam, 2021; Serasi et al, 2021). By promoting local themes, teachers create more meaningful and contextualized learning for learners who live in the area. They not only learn the language as a means of communication, but also as a medium of preservation and appreciation of their own culture. Thus, English learning is no longer foreign or disconnected from students' cultural reality, but rather becomes a means to internalise character values and strengthen local identity. This reinforces the idea that character education and language education can go hand in hand in order to create a generation with character, intellectually, spiritually and socially intelligent.

The Process of Integration Local Wisdom - Based in language learning

The integration of local wisdom-based character values into language learning at Baitul Izzah Nganjuk Islamic Junior High School shows the implementation of a curriculum that does not only emphasize cognitive aspects, but also shapes students' personality and character holistically. The strategies used by teachers in the learning process, such as opening the class with greetings, prayers, and personal attention to students' emotional conditions, reflect a humanistic approach that is in line with Lickona's theory of character education, which states

that building emotional relationships between teachers and students is an important part of strengthening character values (Lickona, 2009).

This approach also shows that the teacher does not only act as a teacher, but also as a facilitator and moral guide for students. For example, teachers asking about students' conditions personally, as Mrs SW did, is a practice that supports the development of empathy and social care values (Noddings, 2005). This shows that Language learning can be a space to foster affective values, not only linguistic skills. In addition, the delivery of learning objectives linked to the profile of Pancasila learners strengthens the direction of national character education. This is consistent with MoEC policy, which emphasizes the importance of integrating character values such as gotong royong, nationalism, independence and religiosity in every learning activity (Gunawan dkk., 2020).

The materials raised in the learning activities, such as reading texts about traditional foods (pecel, dumblek, and nasi becek), become strategic tools to instill the values of local wisdom and nationalism. By discussing local specialties, teachers not only introduce new vocabulary, but also explore cultural meanings and values such as healthy living, simplicity, care for the environment, and love for local culture. This is in line with Gay (2018) idea of culturally responsive teaching, which is a learning approach that integrates elements of learners' culture as part of the learning process. Another concrete example is when the teacher relates learning to the value of discipline and patience, when dealing with students who ask questions without waiting their turn. This is a form of implementing character values through classroom interactions that are educative and reflective. Narvaez stated that effective character education must integrate morality in the context of students' daily lives, including social interactions in the classroom (Narvaez, 2006).

The use of media such as projectors and interactive selection tools (spin) in practice activities also shows that teachers integrate character values with learning technology. This activity not only increases students' learning motivation, but also instils the values of fairness, responsibility and courage to perform in public. Spin as a random selection tool creates a fair and democratic atmosphere in the classroom, which is important in the development of the character values of fairness and participatory (Lickona, 2004).

Closing the lesson with reflection and greetings shows the continuity of spiritual and moral values in learning. By linking the learning theme (e.g. traditional food) with values such as being humble and caring for the environment, teachers have instilled ecological awareness and simple living ethics in students. This is in line with Tilaar's view that local culture-based education has the power to shape a strong and moral national identity (Tilaar, 2004). Overall, the process of integrating character values into language learning at this school not only enriches students' cognitive dimension, but also shapes their attitudes, values and moral behavior through contextual and meaningful learning activities. In this way, character education is not taught in isolation, but is brought to life in an active and reflective learning process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and analysis in this study, the conclusion that can be drawn is that: teachers integrate language learning with materials rooted in local wisdom. Furthermore, throughout the learning process, teachers also model positive behaviour that reflects the character values inherent in local wisdom. This integration not only enriches the content of language instruction but also fosters students' character development by embedding cultural values in everyday classroom practices. As a result, students not only improve their language skills but also internalize important moral and social values grounded in their own cultural heritage. This research is expected to be used as a model and cultural development and also

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