

CULTIVATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE INDONESIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING FOR MISAMIS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: This community service aimed to improve participants from Misamis University, Philippines' understanding of Indonesian culture, the Indonesian language and the position of English used in Indonesia. The program was conducted through two online training sessions via Zoom meetings. The implementation followed five stages: Training Needs Analysis, Planning, Training Implementation, Evaluation, and Documentation. The Training Needs Analysis identified participants' needs related to Indonesian cultural knowledge. Based on the findings, training materials and learning activities were designed during the planning stage. The implementation stage consisted of interactive sessions introducing Indonesian cultural diversity, traditions, and values. Evaluation was conducted through participant feedback and assessment of learning outcomes, while documentation recorded the entire process and results. The findings demonstrated that the program effectively enhanced participants' understanding of Indonesian culture. Evaluation results revealed that 92% of participants indicated that they were motivated, felt confident, and developed a positive self-image regarding their understanding and appreciation of Indonesian culture. These results suggest that online cultural training can be an effective way to promote cultural awareness and empower participants to engage more confidently with Indonesian cultural values.

Keywords: cultural understanding; indonesian language; intercultural communication; misamis university; philippines.

Abstrak: Pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman peserta dari Misamis University mengenai budaya Indonesia, bahasa Indonesia, serta posisi bahasa Inggris yang digunakan di Indonesia. Program ini dilaksanakan melalui dua sesi pelatihan daring menggunakan Zoom Meeting. Pelaksanaan kegiatan dilakukan melalui lima tahapan, yaitu: Analisis Kebutuhan Pelatihan (Training Needs Analysis), Perencanaan, Pelaksanaan Pelatihan, Evaluasi, dan Dokumentasi. Tahap Analisis Kebutuhan Pelatihan dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi kebutuhan peserta terkait pengetahuan tentang budaya Indonesia. Berdasarkan hasil analisis tersebut, materi pelatihan dan aktivitas pembelajaran dirancang pada tahap perencanaan. Tahap pelaksanaan terdiri atas sesi-sesi interaktif yang memperkenalkan keberagaman budaya, tradisi, dan nilai-nilai yang dimiliki Indonesia serta bahasa Indonesia. Selanjutnya, evaluasi dilakukan melalui umpan balik peserta dan penilaian hasil belajar, sedangkan dokumentasi digunakan untuk merekam seluruh proses dan hasil kegiatan. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa program ini berhasil meningkatkan pemahaman peserta mengenai budaya Indonesia. Hasil evaluasi mengungkapkan bahwa 92% peserta menyatakan termotivasi, merasa lebih percaya diri, serta mengembangkan citra diri yang positif terkait pemahaman dan apresiasi mereka terhadap budaya Indonesia. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan budaya secara daring dapat menjadi metode yang efektif untuk meningkatkan

kesadaran budaya serta memberdayakan peserta agar lebih percaya diri dalam memahami dan mengaplikasikan nilai-nilai budaya Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: bahasa indonesia; komunikasi antarbudaya; misamis university; pemahaman budaya; philippines

INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of higher education has intensified cross-border academic interaction, student mobility, and virtual collaboration, particularly within the ASEAN region. Universities are increasingly expected to equip students not only with disciplinary knowledge but also with intercultural communication competence to function effectively in global academic and professional environments (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2021). In this context, universities across ASEAN, including Amikom Purwokerto University from Indonesia and Misamis University from the Philippines, need to strengthen institutional partnerships and collaborative programs to enhance students' intercultural communication competence. Such collaborations can be implemented through student exchange programs, joint research initiatives, virtual intercultural projects, and language learning activities that promote meaningful interaction among students from different cultural backgrounds. By developing intercultural communication skills, students and future professionals will be better prepared to understand cultural values, social norms, and communication practices in neighbouring countries.

Furthermore, greater intercultural competence can facilitate stronger bilateral and regional cooperation in various sectors, including education, business, tourism, technology, and public policy. A deeper understanding of

each other's cultures, including proficiency in Indonesian, can contribute to more effective communication, mutual trust, and sustainable partnerships between Indonesia and the Philippines, thereby supporting the broader goals of ASEAN integration and regional development.

Preliminary needs analysis with Dr Lloyd Ranises, the Director of Linkages and International Affairs, Misamis University, indicates that although students demonstrate adequate English proficiency and digital literacy, they lack structured exposure to contextual intercultural communication, particularly regarding Indonesian culture and the use of English in Indonesia. Recent studies confirm that linguistic competence alone does not guarantee successful intercultural interaction; it requires cultural awareness, pragmatic understanding, and intercultural sensitivity (Qi, 2023).

Research in ASEAN educational contexts highlights that insufficient intercultural training remains a major barrier to meaningful regional integration and collaboration. The lack of structured, community-based international service-learning further limits students' readiness for global engagement (Hamid et al., 2025)

At the initial discussion stage, it was agreed that 40 students from Misamis University would participate in the community service program. It was also agreed that the number of participating students from Universitas Amikom Purwokerto would be the same, with a total of 40 students. This balanced participation

was intended to encourage active interaction, cultural exchange, and collaborative learning between students from both institutions throughout the program.

From an upstream-downstream perspective on educational empowerment, the partner's condition can be analysed across multiple aspects such as learning inputs and resources, learning process and capacity development, learning outcomes and dissemination. Partner students have access to digital devices, internet connectivity, English-based curricula, and learning management systems. However, up-to-date, region-specific learning materials on Indonesian culture and ASEAN intercultural communication remain limited. This condition reflects a broader gap identified in international education, where global perspectives are often underrepresented in local curricula. Instructional practices primarily emphasise theoretical learning, with limited experiential and interactive intercultural activities. Studies show that intercultural competence develops most effectively through experiential learning, dialogue, and reflection facilitated by international engagement (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

The absence of international guest lectures and intercultural simulations limits students' opportunities for applied learning. Although expected learning outcomes include intercultural awareness and communication adaptability, these competencies are not optimally achieved. Furthermore, learning outcomes are rarely disseminated beyond individual classrooms through publications or digital platforms, limiting their broader social impact (Higgins, 2024; Turistiati et al., 2026)

The primary objective of this community service program is to enhance the intercultural communication competence of Misamis University students through international guest lectures and interactive learning activities that focus on Indonesian culture, the use of English in Indonesia, and ASEAN intercultural practices. Specifically, the program aims to strengthen students' understanding of cultural similarities and differences between Indonesia and the Philippines; improve students' ability to communicate effectively in multicultural academic and digital environments; foster intercultural awareness, tolerance, and mutual respect among ASEAN youth; and establish sustainable international academic collaboration through PKM International.

This program is closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive and globally relevant learning, SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by minimising cultural and communicative gaps, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering intercultural understanding, and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) through international higher education collaboration. The central problem addressed in this community service program is the limited availability of structured, contextual intercultural learning opportunities in ASEAN higher education, particularly in Indonesian–Philippine university interactions. Addressing this issue is expected to contribute to the development of globally competent graduates and strengthen Indonesia's role in international educational cooperation.

Based on the situation analysis

and the international partner's existing conditions, several priority problems have been identified across educational, managerial, social, and systemic aspects, requiring structured intervention through the community service program. From an input and production perspective, partner students primarily rely on general English learning resources and conventional intercultural theories. Studies indicate that language proficiency alone is insufficient to ensure effective intercultural communication without contextual cultural understanding (Seregina et al., 2019; Turistiati et al., 2024). The limited availability of learning materials on Indonesian culture, English-language use in Indonesia, and ASEAN intercultural practices restricts students' exposure to authentic, applied intercultural knowledge.

In terms of learning processes and quality control, instructional practices at the partner institution remain predominantly theoretical, with minimal experiential or practice-based intercultural learning. Research emphasises that intercultural competence is best developed through interaction, reflection, and real-world engagement rather than classroom theory alone (Bao et al., 2017; Salih & Omar, 2021).

Amikom Purwokerto University is well-positioned to address these priority problems. As a higher education institution with expertise in communication studies, intercultural communication, and digital learning innovation, the university plays a strategic role in knowledge transfer, system development, and international academic facilitation. The priority problem, jointly agreed upon with the partner, is the lack of structured, contextual, and sustainable intercultural

communication learning focused on Indonesian–Philippine interaction. This issue was identified through mutual discussion and reflects both the partner's academic needs and the expertise of the implementing university.

The program produces an educational service product in the form of an international guest-lecture model supported by a digital learning system, including recorded lectures, intercultural learning materials, and dissemination via academic and social media platforms. This product is grounded in the university's research and scholarly contributions in intercultural communication, supporting institutional innovation and intellectual property development.

In the long term, the program is expected to generate national socio-educational benefits by enhancing ASEAN intercultural understanding, improving the quality of human resources, and supporting Indonesia's role in international education diplomacy, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015).

To overcome accessibility and financial constraints, the program uses a digital learning system that leverages online platforms, including video conferencing tools. This solution ensures inclusive access to international learning opportunities regardless of geographical limitations. Recorded lecture videos, digital materials, and discussion materials have been developed as reusable learning resources, allowing sustainable knowledge dissemination beyond the program duration. All training materials have been formally handed over to Misamis University. Therefore, participants can access the materials at any time and continue learning independently according to their own pace and needs. This ensures the sustainability of the training outcomes

and supports the continuous development of their language and intercultural communication competencies.

The program facilitates direct interaction between Philippine partner students and Indonesian communication studies students through moderated discussions and collaborative sessions. This approach enables experiential intercultural learning, encourages mutual cultural exchange, and enhances students' adaptability in communication. Such engagement directly addresses the lack of real intercultural interaction in existing learning processes.

To strengthen program sustainability, the community service program initiative includes capacity building in academic management and documentation. This involves establishing mechanisms for activity planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting in collaboration with the partner institution. The solution addresses managerial gaps by integrating community service-based

learning into institutional academic practices.

The program generates educational service products, including an international guest lecture video, intercultural learning materials, and digital dissemination content. These products are designed based on the university's academic expertise in communication studies and intercultural research, supporting institutional innovation and potential intellectual property development. The outputs also serve as tools for wider educational outreach and impact.

METHODS OF IMPLEMENTATION

In general, the implementation of the community service program includes procedures and stages of activities carried out by the Implementation Team (Lecturers and students). Methods of implementing activities are as follows:

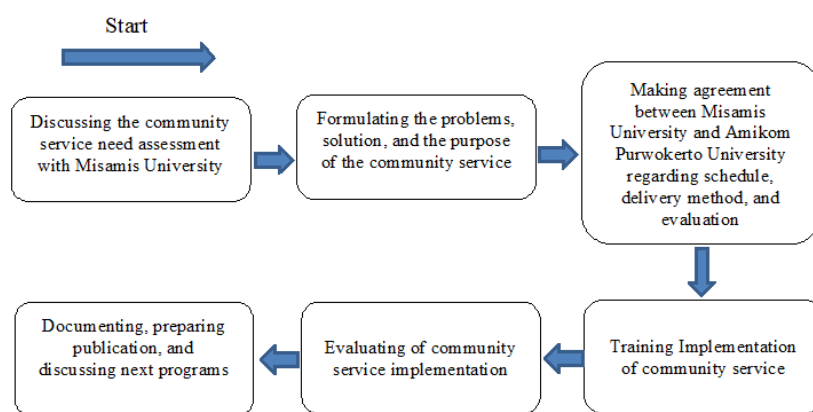


Figure 1. Steps of Community Service Program Implementation

This community service adopts a systematic and collaborative methodology to strengthen intercultural competence and sustainable international partnerships between Universitas

Amikom Purwokerto (Indonesia) and Misamis University (Philippines). The process begins with institutional coordination and a comprehensive needs assessment to identify students'

academic and intercultural learning requirements. Based on the findings, an innovative intercultural learning framework is developed, integrating Indonesian culture and the Indonesian language. The program is delivered via a Zoom meeting conducted in English, facilitating cross-cultural dialogue, experiential learning, and active student engagement. Evaluation is undertaken through participant feedback, reflective assessments, and learning outcome measurements to ensure program effectiveness and continuous improvement. Digital documentation, including recorded sessions and learning resources, supports knowledge sustainability and wider dissemination. Program outcomes are further amplified through academic publications, mass media exposure, conference presentations, and ongoing institutional collaboration, ensuring long-term impact and scalability.

Program Implementation

The implementation of this community service program highlights the importance of cultural and linguistic literacy in promoting intercultural communication. By increasing participants' understanding of Indonesian culture, the Indonesian language, and the sociolinguistic role of English in Indonesia, the program supports the development of intercultural competence, global citizenship, and meaningful academic engagement between Indonesian and Filipino students. These outcomes provide a foundation for sustainable international partnerships and collaborative learning in higher education.

The community service program was designed as a digital-first,

interactive, and scalable initiative that utilised established online learning and communication technologies to enhance intercultural competence and foster sustainable academic collaboration between Misamis University and Universitas Amikom Purwokerto. The program aimed to develop a practical model for cultivating intercultural communication through Indonesian language learning and cultural understanding among Filipino students. Such initiatives are increasingly recognised as effective approaches to internationalising higher education while providing equitable access to global learning experiences through virtual exchange and Collaborative Online International Learning.

During the opening session, Lloyd B. Ranises, Ph.D., Director of Linkages and International Affairs at Misamis University, expressed strong appreciation for the implementation of this collaborative initiative. He emphasised that contemporary business management students are expected not only to master business strategies and quantitative analytical skills but also to communicate effectively across cultures in a digitally connected world. Given Indonesia's strategic role as one of the Philippines' important partners in business, trade, and tourism, intercultural understanding and language competence have become increasingly relevant for future professionals.

The community service program consisted of two online training sessions conducted through Zoom Meetings on 10 and 17 April 2026. Each session lasted two hours, from 2:00–4:00 PM Philippine Time (1:00–3:00 PM Western Indonesian Time). Approximately 40 students from Misamis University and 40 students from Universitas Amikom

Purwokerto participated in the activities. The program commenced with welcoming remarks from representatives of both institutions, followed by the introduction of learning objectives and program expectations.

The training began with a diagnostic quiz designed to assess participants' prior knowledge of Indonesian culture, the Indonesian language, and the status of English in Indonesia. Participants from Misamis University completed the quiz using Google Forms by selecting the most appropriate answers to 10 questions. There were 40 participants from Misamis University who completed the quiz. The results revealed that approximately 65% of the participants answered all questions correctly, indicating a moderate level of prior knowledge regarding Indonesia. While the findings suggest that many participants already possessed basic awareness of Indonesian culture and language, they also highlight opportunities for further learning and intercultural development. This result aligns with previous studies indicating that virtual intercultural programs are particularly valuable when learners possess partial knowledge that can be expanded through guided interaction and reflection. After completing the quiz, the facilitator reviewed each question interactively. Students from Misamis University were invited to explain their answers and discuss their reasoning. Participants demonstrated high enthusiasm and active engagement throughout the discussion.

Intercultural Communication and Linguistic Similarities

One noteworthy finding was the participants' observation of lexical similarities between Indonesian and

Tagalog. Although most participants had limited proficiency in spoken Indonesian, similarities in vocabulary facilitated comprehension and participation. Examples included numbers from one to ten and everyday words such as *sepatu* (shoes) and *anak* (child), which share comparable pronunciation and meanings in both languages. "I was surprised to discover that many Indonesian words are similar to Tagalog words and even share the same meanings, although not all of them. This similarity makes learning Indonesian much easier and more enjoyable for me."

This finding supports intercultural communication theories suggesting that perceived linguistic and cultural similarities can reduce communication anxiety and enhance learners' willingness to engage in intercultural interactions. Virtual exchanges that encourage participants to identify commonalities while appreciating differences can significantly improve intercultural communicative competence.

Learning Outcomes of Session I

The facilitator delivered an interactive presentation covering Indonesia's geographical location, provinces, cultural diversity, local languages, religions, traditions, customs, culinary heritage, traditional clothing (including batik), tourist attractions, and the role of English within Indonesian society. Participants also learned basic Indonesian expressions commonly used in daily communication. The interactive format encouraged active participation and knowledge construction rather than passive information reception.

Learning Outcomes of Session II

The second meeting focused primarily on Indonesian language

learning. Participants learned Indonesian alphabet pronunciation, basic grammatical structures, self-introductions, numbers from one to ten, and simple conversational expressions. To create an enjoyable and memorable learning experience, participants also learned and sang the Indonesian children's songs “*Di Sini Senang, Di Sana Senang*” and “*Satu-Satu Aku Sayang Ibu.*”

The integration of language instruction with music and cultural content represents an innovative pedagogical strategy that supports both cognitive and affective learning. Such approaches help learners develop cultural familiarity while simultaneously improving language retention and engagement. This finding is consistent with studies showing that virtual intercultural learning becomes more effective when cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions are integrated into the learning process.

Intercultural Interaction and Collaborative Learning

Throughout the training, participants were encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussions regarding the presented materials. Students from Universitas Amikom Purwokerto actively responded to questions raised by their counterparts from Misamis University, creating authentic opportunities for intercultural communication. The peer-to-peer interaction component emerged as one of the most valuable aspects of the program. Rather than relying solely on facilitator-centred instruction, participants engaged directly with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This interaction facilitated the exchange of perspectives,

clarification of cultural assumptions, and development of mutual understanding.

Program Evaluation and Implications

Following the two training sessions, an evaluation was conducted to assess the program's effectiveness and collect participant feedback. The results indicated three main outcomes: (1) increased intercultural awareness of Indonesian culture, (2) improved familiarity with basic Indonesian language and communication, and (3) enhanced intercultural interaction between Indonesian and Filipino students through virtual engagement. These findings suggest that short-term virtual intercultural programs effectively promote global competence and international collaboration while supporting accessible and sustainable internationalisation through digital technologies.

17 UN SDGs Alignment

The data reveals that the majority of respondents have a positive perception of their abilities and engagement, with 80% feeling able to perform the task, 84% expressing that they learn the material, and 92% indicating that they see the relevance or importance of the content. The small percentages of 20% and 8% in the first two categories suggest some respondents may feel less confident or less engaged, but overall, the high percentages demonstrate a generally positive outlook and strong understanding among the group. The 0% responses in the last three categories indicate no respondents disagreed or expressed negative views, highlighting a favourable consensus on these aspects.

The findings can be linked to the achievement of the United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The data indicate that most respondents possess positive perceptions regarding their learning abilities and engagement, with 80% reporting that they are capable of performing the task, 84% stating that they understand and learn the material, and 92% recognising the relevance and importance of the content. These findings suggest that the learning process effectively fosters cognitive understanding, learner confidence, and meaningful engagement, which are key indicators of quality education.



Figure 2. Training via Zoom Meeting



Figure 3. Active Participation from Students at Misamis University

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, participants highly value the cultural insights, practical

language skills, and clear organisation of the online lectures, which collectively enhance their learning experience. The data underscores a predominantly positive outlook among students regarding the international significance, alignment with the UN SDGs, and overall impact of the activities. Most participants are engaged, motivated, and confident, with high percentages perceiving the content as relevant and impactful. The minimal presence of neutral or negative responses indicates that while the program effectively fosters engagement and a sense of purpose, there is still room for slight improvements to further enhance motivation, confidence, and engagement levels. Addressing these areas could strengthen the overall experience and maximize the positive influence on students' learning, self-perception, and global awareness, thereby contributing to more impactful and meaningful educational outcomes.

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