

# Pedagogical Integration of Ki Hajar Dewantara's *Neng, Ning, Nung, and Nang* Values in the Indonesian Language Learning

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**Abstract**—This study explores how Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophical concept of *Neng, Ning, Nung, and Nang*, rooted in Javanese cultural wisdom, can be applied to strengthen students' character through Indonesian language learning. The research aimed to interpret the meaning of these values, namely *Neng* (serenity), *Ning* (clarity of thought), *Nung* (steadfastness), and *Nang* (true accomplishment), and to identify effective strategies for their pedagogical integration at the junior high school level. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving three Indonesian language teachers, ten students, and three school principals from three schools in Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province. The findings revealed that integrating *Neng, Ning, Nung, and Nang* within Indonesian language learning enhanced students' emotional regulation, critical reasoning, resilience, and moral awareness. Instructional strategies such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and holistic approaches effectively connected linguistic competence with reflective character formation. The study concludes that the inclusion of local cultural wisdom in Indonesian language education fosters holistic character development, offers a contextual model that aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's humanistic vision, and contributes to revitalizing character education in Indonesia.

**Index Terms**—character education, Indonesian language learning, junior high school, local wisdom, *Neng Ning Nung Nang*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia is not merely intended to foster intellectual advancement, as mandated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, but also to cultivate individuals who are virtuous, dignified, and firmly grounded in cultural values (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, 2003). Ideally, education should nurture students' holistic potential, encompassing intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects, so that they grow as whole human beings capable of contributing to society in meaningful ways (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021). However, in practice, the learning process in many Indonesian schools, particularly at the junior high level, remains predominantly cognitive, with an emphasis on academic achievement as the primary indicator of success (Rais & Xuezhi, 2024). Teaching methods tend to be instructional and mechanistic, offering limited opportunities for students to internalize and reflect upon the essential values of life that underpin moral and character development (Heryati et al., 2022). Within this context, the Indonesian language subject holds a particularly strategic role. As one of the core subjects in the *Merdeka Curriculum*, Indonesian language learning is not only aimed at developing linguistic competence, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking, but also at cultivating a sense of national identity, empathy, and moral awareness (Wardani et al., 2023).

The Indonesian language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for cultural transmission, value formation, and social cohesion. Through its use in literature, discourse, and everyday communication, students can develop an appreciation for diversity, respect others, and express their thoughts in an ethical and responsible manner. Unfortunately, in many classrooms, the teaching of Indonesian still focuses largely on technical and grammatical mastery, while its affective and cultural dimensions remain underexplored. As a result, the transformative

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potential of the language to shape students into thoughtful, ethical, and culturally aware citizens is not fully realized. Thus, reinforcing the relevance of Indonesian language teaching means repositioning it as an integrative platform where students not only acquire linguistic skills but also engage with moral, cultural, and national values embedded in the language itself. By doing so, Indonesian language education can become a powerful medium to actualize the holistic goals of national education, namely developing individuals who are intellectually capable, emotionally mature, socially responsible, and spiritually grounded in Indonesian cultural identity.

Indonesia's cultural richness and wealth of local wisdom offer enormous potential to serve as the foundation of character education (Handoyo et al., 2020). One of the most significant legacies of educational philosophy stems from Ki Hajar Dewantara, the pioneer of Indonesian national education, who emphasized education as a process of humanization, aiming to educate the whole person. Dewantara not only laid the groundwork for Indonesia's national education system but also embedded a philosophical foundation deeply rooted in local culture and national virtues (Dewantara, 1967). He argued that education must go hand in hand with character cultivation, not merely the transmission of knowledge. One of Dewantara's philosophical teachings that reflects the wisdom of Javanese culture is the concept of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* (Dewantara, 1962). This notion embodies multilayered values of character development, describing stages in the process of self-control and the pursuit of a dignified life. *Neng* ("meneng" in the Javanese language) signifies serenity, representing inner and outer calm as the foundation for reflection and action. *Ning* ("wening") means clarity of thought, born from a peaceful heart. *Nung* ("hanung") signifies steadfastness in the face of temptations and challenges. Finally, *Nang* ("menang") means true accomplishment, the true success achieved through wisdom and self-awareness. These four principles collaboratively form a philosophical framework that serves as the moral foundation for cultivating integrity, mindfulness, and resilience in students. Unfortunately, these noble values are rarely implemented explicitly in classroom practice. Teachers tend to adopt uniform, text-based approaches without connecting learning to cultural or everyday life contexts (Ali et al., 2025; Jia & Guo, 2020). In fact, Indonesian Language as a subject offers broad opportunities to serve as an integrative vehicle for character education, through literary texts, folklore, speeches, rhymes, and other linguistic expressions (Muliastuti et al., 2023).

Despite the abundance of studies highlighting the importance of character education and the integration of local wisdom, a critical gap remains between philosophical ideals and pedagogical practice (Ecca, 2025; Guslinda et al., 2024; Parhan & Dwiputra, 2023). Prior research has primarily emphasized the cognitive and linguistic aspects of Indonesian language teaching, with minimal attention to its potential as a transformative medium for moral and cultural development. Moreover, existing studies that discuss local wisdom often treat it as supplementary content, rather than as a core pedagogical framework guiding learning design and character development (Fathurrahman, 2025; Harahap et al., 2025; Nurhayani et al., 2024). Consequently, a systematic model linking local philosophy, language learning, and character education remains largely underexplored. Addressing this gap, the present study reinterprets Ki Hajar Dewantara's *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* philosophy as a conceptual and pedagogical framework for character-based Indonesian language education at the junior high school level. The novelty of this study lies in its philosophical, pedagogical, and practical contributions. Philosophically, it revives the concept of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* as an ethical model of self-cultivation that aligns with national education goals. Pedagogically, it offers a contextual integration model that translates the four values into classroom strategies using language-based activities. Practically, it explores how embedding local philosophical values within language learning can enhance students' empathy, moral reasoning, and self-awareness. By grounding Indonesian language education in indigenous philosophical wisdom, this study proposes an alternative approach to character education that is contextual, culturally rooted, and holistically humanistic. It aims to reposition the Indonesian language not merely as a tool for communication but as a transformative space for developing moral integrity, cultural appreciation, and national identity, in line with the vision of Ki Hajar Dewantara's humanistic education philosophy.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ki Hajar Dewantara views education as an endeavor that not only aims to enlighten the nation intellectually but also to cultivate individuals of strong character and noble morals (Rosanawati et al., 2025). From his perspective, education extends beyond the mere transmission of information or skills; it is a holistic process of shaping one's character, ethics, and moral values. This view aligns with his educational philosophy that emphasizes the balance between *cipta* (intellect), *rasa* (emotion), and *karsa* (will or action) (Dewantara, 2004). These three elements must be developed harmoniously so that students are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally intelligent and wise in their actions. One of the most relevant concepts in character formation is Ki Hajar Dewantara's triadic principle: *Tut Wuri Handayani* (providing encouragement from behind), *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha* (setting an example in front), and *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa* (motivating others in the midst) (Dewantara, 1962). These principles apply not only to educators but can also be internalized by students in their daily lives, helping them develop resilience, responsibility, and integrity (Amalia et al., 2024).

### A. The Values of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* in Character Education

The concept of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* originates from Javanese cultural wisdom and reflects a deeply rooted philosophy of inner development that aligns closely with the goals of character education. Introduced by Dewantara

(1962), these four interconnected values guide individuals toward emotional stability, intellectual clarity, moral courage, and holistic success. Within educational settings, they provide a culturally grounded framework for shaping students into balanced, reflective, and ethically responsible individuals.

- (a). **Neng (Meneng; Serenity)** represents inner calmness and self-control. In character education, this principle encourages students to cultivate emotional awareness and respond thoughtfully to challenges rather than react impulsively. Through *Neng*, learners practice patience, mindfulness, and empathy, which are essential skills for managing stress, resolving conflicts, and maintaining harmony. A calm mind enables attentive listening and understanding of others' perspectives, fostering emotional intelligence and compassionate communication. This value also teaches that peace of mind is not passivity but an active state of balance that supports rational and ethical decision-making.
- (b). **Ning (Wening; Clarity of Thought)** emphasizes mental clarity, rational thinking, and intellectual honesty. It trains students to think critically, evaluate information objectively, and avoid superficial judgments. In a world saturated with data and opinions, *Ning* helps learners develop disciplined, reflective minds that value evidence, reasoning, and truth-seeking. By nurturing this value, character education fosters intellectual independence and curiosity, guiding students to form well-founded conclusions. Such clarity strengthens both academic competence and moral discernment, as students learn to distinguish right from wrong through reflection rather than impulse.
- (c). **Nung (Hanung; Steadfastness)** embodies perseverance and moral courage. It teaches that character is proven through consistency and integrity, especially in adversity. In education, *Nung* inspires students to stay true to their principles, uphold honesty, and remain resilient in pursuing goals. It develops purpose and endurance, reminding learners that challenges are opportunities for growth. *Nung* also nurtures ethical bravery, the courage to stand for what is right even when unpopular, cultivating inner strength to persist, adapt, and thrive without compromising integrity.
- (d). **Nang (Menang; True Accomplishment)** redefines success beyond external achievement. It emphasizes victory over one's weaknesses and fulfillment through honest effort, wisdom, and integrity. In character education, *Nang* guides students to see success not merely in grades or recognition but in personal growth and moral maturity. True accomplishment arises from perseverance, compassion, and meaningful contribution. This perspective encourages learners to value the process as much as the outcome, celebrating progress and ethical conduct as integral to achievement. Ultimately, *Nang* reminds students that education's highest goal is to form complete human beings: intelligent, kind, and morally grounded.

#### B. Application of Neng, Ning, Nung, and Nang Values in Indonesian Language Learning

The Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level presents an excellent opportunity to integrate the *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values into character education. As a subject that develops linguistic competence, the Indonesian language subject not only aims to enhance students' cognitive abilities but also serves as a medium for nurturing moral and emotional intelligence. Through various classroom activities, these cultural values can be meaningfully embedded in the learning process (Dewantara, 1962).

- (a). **Neng (Meneng; Serenity):** At the stage of *Neng*, students internalize serenity and self-regulation in the learning process. This value emphasizes emotional composure as the foundation of meaningful learning (Dewantara, 1962). Teachers may incorporate reflective pauses during reading or text analysis, allowing students to contemplate and absorb a text's essence. In discussions, learners are trained to think carefully before speaking, fostering a respectful and contemplative classroom atmosphere. *Neng* cultivates emotional discipline, patience, and mindfulness, which are essential qualities for deep comprehension and cooperative dialogue.
- (b). **Ning (Wening; Clarity of Thought):** The *Ning* stage represents intellectual clarity and critical discernment (Dewantara, 1962). In Indonesian language education, it promotes analytical thinking and evaluative skills. Through *Ning*, students learn to interpret meanings, assess arguments, and construct coherent analyses of various texts: literary, expository, or journalistic. For instance, when studying poetry or short stories, learners identify moral or philosophical nuances, compare perspectives, and support interpretations with textual evidence. This stage aligns with higher-order thinking objectives (HOTS), emphasizing reasoning, argumentation, and reflective judgment.
- (c). **Nung (Hanung; Steadfastness):** *Nung* highlights perseverance, integrity, and moral conviction (Dewantara, 1962). In language pedagogy, it is applied through activities requiring sustained reasoning and ethical engagement, such as debates, discussions, or argumentative writing. Students are encouraged to defend viewpoints with clarity and evidence while respecting opposing perspectives. Such practices foster intellectual courage and consistency, which are key traits in academic and civic discourse. Internalizing *Nung* develops resilience, integrity, and principled participation in dialogue.
- (d). **Nang (Menang; True Accomplishment):** *Nang* signifies true accomplishment, not superficial success, but moral and intellectual fulfillment achieved through self-mastery and meaningful learning (Dewantara, 1962). In language learning, it is reflected in students' ability to communicate effectively, empathetically, and ethically. Achievement is measured not by grades alone but by learners' progress in becoming articulate individuals who

embody moral values in academic and daily communication. The *Nang* stage thus represents holistic success: intellectual growth balanced with emotional maturity and ethical awareness.

### C. Teaching Strategies Integrating *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* Values

The integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values into pedagogical practice establishes a culturally responsive foundation for developing cognitive and affective domains of learning. These values align with Indonesia's holistic educational philosophy that emphasizes intellectual rigor, ethical awareness, and social harmony. The following instructional models illustrate how these values can be embedded in Indonesian language education and related disciplines.

- (a). **Project-Based Learning (PjBL):** PjBL provides a dynamic platform for students to collaborate on projects that yield meaningful outcomes rooted in local culture. Learning extends beyond the classroom as students engage in inquiry, design, and production reflecting community narratives and traditional wisdom (Akmal et al., 2025). In this study context, learners may compile anthologies of local literature or develop learning media infused with regional values. The iterative nature of project work cultivates *Neng* through disciplined self-regulation, *Ning* through critical reflection and conceptual clarity, *Nung* through perseverance and teamwork, and *Nang* through shared pride in collective achievement.
- (b). **Problem-Based Learning (PBL):** PBL immerses students in authentic problem-solving scenarios that demand analytical reasoning, creativity, and social responsibility (Olmedo-torre et al., 2025). Applied in Indonesian language teaching, it may involve exploring issues such as preserving dialects, overcoming communication barriers, or analyzing community narratives. Through guided inquiry, students identify problems, gather evidence, and propose viable solutions. *Neng* is exercised through reflective discernment, *Ning* through logical structuring and clarity of expression, *Nung* through persistence toward resolution, and *Nang* through collective fulfillment when culturally resonant solutions emerge.
- (c). **Holistic Approach:** The holistic approach emphasizes the interconnection of intellectual, emotional, and moral dimensions in learning. Language instruction thus extends beyond linguistic mastery to include ethical consciousness and humanistic understanding (Tong & Xie, 2025). Students engage with texts presenting moral dilemmas and cultural wisdom, relating them to personal and societal contexts. This reflective process nurtures empathy, respect, and tolerance while strengthening linguistic and interpretive competence. Within this framework, *Neng* fosters emotional awareness, *Ning* supports moral reasoning, *Nung* reinforces commitment to ethical action, and *Nang* reflects the shared satisfaction derived from moral growth.

## III. METHOD

### A. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive design to explore the cultural, pedagogical, and moral dimensions of the *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* philosophy in Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level. Rather than measuring variables, this approach aimed to capture the depth and contextual meaning of local wisdom within classroom practices. It allowed the researchers to observe and interpret how teachers and students experienced and internalized cultural values in natural learning settings (Elliott & Timulak, 2021). Since the *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* philosophy encompasses spiritual, ethical, and behavioral aspects that cannot be quantified, qualitative description provides flexibility for examining these nuanced processes. Character education and cultural integration are socially constructed and context-dependent, emerging from everyday interactions and local traditions. Thus, this design enables interpretive analysis of lived experiences, uncovering cultural narratives and implicit learning often overlooked by quantitative methods (Smith & Osborn, 2021).

### B. Research Participants

The participants of this study were selected through a purposive sampling technique based on their relevance to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria focused on individuals who were directly involved in the process of integrating *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values into the Indonesian language learning. The study involved three Indonesian language teachers, ten students, and three school principals from several junior high schools in Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province. The participating teachers had a minimum of two years of teaching experience and were actively engaged in classroom instruction that incorporated local cultural elements. Their experience and familiarity with curriculum implementation were essential in providing insights into pedagogical strategies and classroom dynamics. The student participants were from grades VIII and IX and had been involved in Indonesian language learning activities where *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values were introduced or practiced. Their inclusion enabled the researchers to understand how students perceived, internalized, and demonstrated these cultural principles in daily learning. Meanwhile, the school principals were chosen because of their strategic role in shaping institutional policies and ensuring that the integration of local culture was aligned with the schools' educational missions. The selected schools had demonstrated a strong commitment to character education and local culture integration, as reflected in their participation in regional curriculum innovation programs supported by the Boyolali Regency Education Office.

### C. Data Collection

The study was conducted over six months (January–June 2024) at three junior high schools in Boyolali, Central Java, with official school permission and adherence to research ethics. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews with three Indonesian language teachers, three principals, and ten students from Grades VIII–IX explored perceptions of the *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values in the Indonesian language learning. Conducted face-to-face from February to March 2024, each session lasted 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed with consent. Afterward, non-participant classroom observations took place from March to April 2024, covering six learning sessions (90 minutes each) across the three schools to document instructional strategies, interactions, and the embodiment of cultural values. Field notes were systematically compiled using observation guides. Subsequently, document analysis, conducted in May 2024, examined teaching modules, assessment sheets, literacy project guides, and student works (poems, essays, and drama scripts). This triangulation revealed how local cultural values were expressed in written and visual learning materials and how these elements reinforced the integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* in classroom practices.

### D. Data Analysis

All collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes across the three data sources. The analysis focused on how cultural values were integrated into teaching, how they influenced students' character development, and how institutional practices supported culturally grounded education. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was implemented by cross-verifying evidence obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis (Dewing et al., 2021). Peer debriefing sessions with academic colleagues were also conducted to review interpretations and enhance analytical rigor. Through these steps, the study ensured that the data accurately reflected the lived experiences of teachers, students, and principals in integrating *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values into Indonesian language education.

## IV. RESULTS

### *The Implementation of Neng, Ning, Nung, and Nang Values in Indonesian Language Learning at Junior High Schools*

Findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis conducted at three junior high schools in Boyolali Regency indicate that most teachers were aware of the importance of integrating local cultural values into classroom learning. However, the form and intensity of such integration varied widely across schools. The main findings are summarized in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1  
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *NENG*, *NING*, *NUNG*, AND *NANG* VALUES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

No.	Character Value	Learning Activities	Classroom Practices	Influence on Students
1	<i>Neng</i> (Serenity)	Reflective reading; listening to folktales	Students were given silent time before discussions.	Enhanced focus and patience
2	<i>Ning</i> (Clarity of thought)	Critical analysis of literary texts or speeches	Students analyzed the structure and moral values of short stories.	Improved critical reasoning and clarity of thought
3	<i>Nung</i> (Steadfastness)	Value-based debates; role-plays of strong-character figures	Students defended their opinions in debate forums.	Strengthened principles and courage
4	<i>Nang</i> (True accomplishment)	Reflective poetry writing; drama performance	Students presented creative works containing local values.	Built confidence and leadership

Based on the interviews, observations, and document analysis involving teachers and students, the study found that the implementation of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values has been initiated but not yet systematically structured. The teachers who were aware of the importance of integrating local culture into learning made conscious efforts to connect Indonesian language materials with these values, especially through literary texts such as folktales, poems, and plays. The *Neng* (serenity) value was reflected in learning activities that emphasized silence and concentration, such as deep reading (close reading), text contemplation, and personal reflection after reading short stories or poems. Through these activities, students were trained to control impulses, avoid premature reactions, and allow themselves time for deeper comprehension. Teachers also cultivated a calm and conducive classroom atmosphere as a prerequisite for reflective learning (Bae et al., 2025). Interview data further reinforced the significance of applying *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values in Indonesian language learning. One teacher emphasized the role of *Neng* in creating a conducive learning environment:

*"I usually begin the lesson by giving a few minutes of quiet time. The students are asked to be silent, close their eyes briefly, and focus before reading the text. It helps them become more prepared for discussion."*  
(Interview with Indonesian Language Teacher, SMP 1 Boyolali, 2024)

Afterward, the *Ning* (clarity of thought) value manifested in activities that promoted critical and analytical thinking, such as interpreting moral messages from texts, comparing literary works within their socio-cultural contexts, and developing arguments through essay writing. These activities could cultivate mental clarity, logical reasoning, and the

ability to articulate ideas coherently. One eighth-grade student shared their experience of applying *Ning* during text analysis activities:

*“When we analyze short stories, the teacher asks us to write down what we understand first instead of answering right away. I feel my mind becomes clearer because I have to reread and jot down notes before joining the discussion.”* (Interview with Grade VIII Student, SMP 2 Boyolali, 2024)

Meanwhile, the *Nung* (steadfastness) value was manifested through activities such as debates, presentations, and group discussions, where students were encouraged to express opinions based on convictions supported by data and moral reasoning. The ability to remain consistent and steadfast in defending an argument became a key aspect of the character being developed. A ninth-grade student shared their experience in embodying the value of *Nung* during a classroom debate:

*“During the debate on cultural issues, I learned to stand by my opinion even when my friends disagreed. I had to stay confident, but also learned to listen. It made me braver.”* (Interview with Grade IX Student, SMP 3 Boyolali, 2024)

Lastly, the *Nang* (true accomplishment) value was achieved when students successfully completed collaborative learning projects with responsibility and integrity. Success in this sense was not merely measured by cognitive outcomes such as grades, but also by students’ attitudes, teamwork, and accountability throughout the learning process. Students were encouraged to perceive “victory” not as defeating others, but as overcoming their own limitations and completing tasks with honesty and perseverance. The principal of one of the schools emphasized the importance of the *Nang* value in the character formation process:

*“For us, student success is not only about exam scores, but about how they work together, complete projects, and uphold honesty. That is the true form of victory we aim for.”* (Interview with Principal, SMP 2 Boyolali, 2024)

These statements indicate that the values of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* were not only understood conceptually but also experienced firsthand by students, teachers, and school leaders throughout the learning process. This finding confirmed that character education rooted in local wisdom could be effectively internalized through real and reflective classroom practices.

Observations from the three junior high schools in Boyolali revealed how *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values were applied in Indonesian language learning. At the beginning of lessons, teachers created a silent atmosphere for two to three minutes before reading activities. Students closed their books and sat quietly until the once-noisy classroom became calm and focused. This practice reflected the internalization of *Neng* (serenity), preparing students mentally for a mindful learning process. During folktale analysis, teachers guided students to identify main ideas and moral messages. Some students reread attentively while noting key points, an expression of *Ning* (clarity of thought), as they learned to think critically and systematically before sharing opinions. In group discussions and debates, students exchanged arguments about moral values in the stories. Despite differing opinions, they defended their viewpoints logically and respectfully, while teachers acknowledged their courage. This illustrated *Nung* (steadfastness), nurturing students’ confidence and consistency in reasoning. The *Nang* (true accomplishment) value emerged during a poetry-writing project on local wisdom. Students collaborated in groups, presented their poems, and were assessed not only on writing quality but also on teamwork, responsibility, and honesty; learning to value the process as much as the outcome. Overall, these classroom practices show that the integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values can be actualized through simple yet meaningful strategies that embed local wisdom and foster reflective, critical, consistent, and collaborative learning experiences.

As a subsequent step to strengthen the credibility of the findings, document analysis was conducted on Indonesian language teaching modules and students’ written works from the three participating junior high schools. The analysis revealed a clear integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values within the learning materials and assignments. In the teachers’ instructional modules, explicit directions emphasized self-reflection before reading activities. One module, for instance, included “a moment of silence before reading” as a standard routine, an embodiment of *Neng* (serenity) that allowed students to compose themselves before engaging in analytical tasks. The modules also encouraged students to record brief reflections in reading logs, fostering critical thinking and clarity of reasoning consistent with the *Ning* (clarity of thought) value. Students’ essays and poetry further reflected *Nung* (steadfastness). Many writings explored themes of integrity, perseverance, and moral strength, such as maintaining honesty in friendship or resilience in facing challenges. One poem notably ended with the line “standing tall even when the storm comes,” a vivid expression of the *Nung* principle. In group projects, such as drama performances and short story anthologies, students demonstrated *Nang* (true accomplishment). Assessment rubrics evaluated not only the final outcomes but also teamwork, honesty, and responsibility. Teachers’ notes showed that groups performing dramas rooted in local wisdom received special acknowledgment for delivering strong moral messages through harmonious collaboration, reflecting *Nang*’s essence of achieving success through sincere and collective effort. In conclusion, the analysis of teaching modules and student works corroborated the interview and observation data, confirming that *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values were systematically embedded in lesson design and meaningfully actualized through students’ authentic creative expressions of noble character and cultural wisdom.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. Integration of Neng, Ning, Nung, and Nang Values in Indonesian Language Learning

The integration of local cultural values into character education constitutes a key dimension of contextual pedagogy, grounding the learning process in students' immediate socio-cultural environment. This approach moves beyond universal or abstract models of education by ensuring that students remain connected to their cultural heritage, local wisdom, and community identity (Hidayat et al., 2022). Embedding local values, norms, and traditions within the curriculum not only nurtures moral and ethical awareness but also fosters a sense of belonging and cultural continuity. As emphasized by Purwaningsih (2024), incorporating traditional cultural values into character education strengthens students' understanding of their roots. In this way, contextual pedagogy bridges modern education and indigenous culture, promoting holistic character formation that is both morally grounded and culturally relevant. Aligned with this perspective, the values of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang*, derived from Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, represent sequential stages of character internalization: from self-control and clarity of thought to moral steadfastness and the attainment of noble character (Warsito et al., 2018). Within Indonesian language education, integrating these values enriches pedagogy by balancing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The systematic process of this integration is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

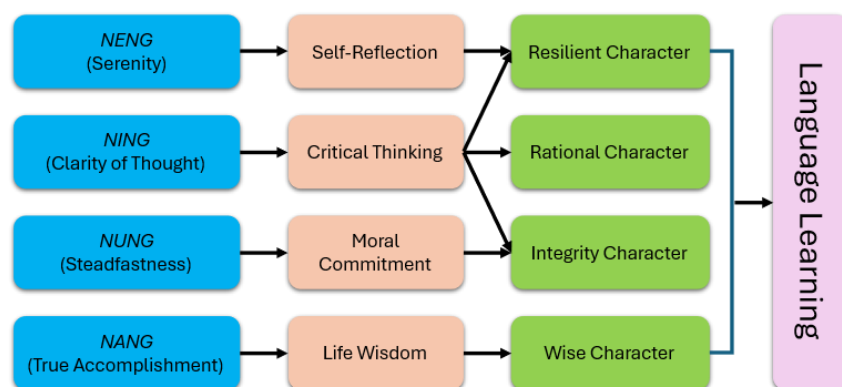


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* Values in Indonesian Language Learning

This conceptual model illustrates that the integration of local cultural values began with teachers' philosophical understanding of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang*. This foundational insight guided the design of instructional materials, which were implemented through literature-based learning and reflective value exploration, and reinforced through authentic, character-oriented assessments. These stages could foster students' character development by cultivating empathy, reflective thinking, perseverance, and social responsibility (Asnawan, 2020). This process is consistent with the findings of Sakti et al. (2024), who showed that integrating local cultural values into Early Childhood Education enhances character formation. Their study revealed that experiential learning and active participation in cultural activities nurture cooperation, tolerance, and social responsibility. These locally grounded values thus hold universal significance, reinforcing the broader relevance of culturally responsive pedagogy in developing holistic and ethically aware learners.

### B. Internalization of Neng, Ning, Nung, and Nang Values in Character Education

The *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* framework reflects a deep philosophical orientation in Javanese culture that emphasizes harmony among thought, feeling, and action. Although rooted in local wisdom, these values are universal in nature and align with humanistic perspectives. Scholars such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow argue that education should serve as a medium for self-actualization and the cultivation of a whole person (Feigenbaum, 2024). This notion aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's vision of education as a process of "humanizing humans" (Indonesian: *memanusiakan manusia*) (Dewantara, 1962). The value of *Neng* emphasizes the significance of productive silence, encompassing self-restraint, reflective space, and the ability to regulate impulsive reactions. In educational contexts, this value nurtures metacognitive awareness, the capacity to reflect on and regulate one's own thinking processes. This perspective aligns with Suganthi and Muthurasu (2020), who highlight that metacognition involves both awareness and control over cognitive activities. Productive silence and reflective self-restraint create conditions that enable learners to observe, evaluate, and refine their thought patterns. When these principles are embedded in classroom practice, educators can effectively strengthen students' metacognitive skills, fostering critical reflection on learning strategies and enhancing their overall learning effectiveness. Consequently, *Neng* cultivates a deeper sense of understanding and self-regulation among learners.

The value of *Ning*, which represents clarity of thought, serves as a foundational prerequisite for critical and analytical reasoning. Without inner clarity, it becomes difficult to engage in logical, objective, and evidence-based thinking. This notion is consistent with Friedman (2023), who asserts that clarity of thought is indispensable for effective critical

reasoning. Moreover, the lack of such clarity contributes to the limited critical thinking abilities observed among many graduates, an issue often rooted in cognitive biases and distortions that impede rational judgment. Cultivating *Ning* requires active listening, openness to diverse perspectives, and a genuine pursuit of truth. These practices help learners overcome mental barriers, refine their reasoning processes, and make well-informed decisions in increasingly complex environments. The value of *Nung*, symbolizing spiritual and moral steadfastness, fosters integrity and the courage to uphold truth even in the face of adversity. This concept resonates with Tchamba (2024), who defines integrity as moral completeness and adherence to ethical principles, which are qualities exemplified by biblical figures such as Job, Ruth, and Daniel, who remained steadfast despite severe trials. The term integrity, derived from the Latin *integer*, conveys wholeness and consistency between moral conviction and action. In this context, *Nung* embodies the inner strength required to maintain such consistency amid external pressures. Tchamba's analysis also highlights how postmodern relativism complicates the understanding of integrity by promoting situational and subjective notions of truth. Nevertheless, both perspectives affirm the enduring relevance of integrity as a moral compass in navigating contemporary ethical challenges and identity politics (Tchamba, 2024).

The value of *Nang* represents true accomplishment, not through material success, but through mastery of the ego and the attainment of a noble life balance. From a pedagogical perspective, *Nang* extends beyond the affective domain by nurturing both emotional and spiritual intelligence, dimensions often overlooked in conventional education, which tends to emphasize cognitive outcomes (Roliak et al., 2021). This aligns with the findings of Zhou et al. (2024), who demonstrate that emotional and spiritual intelligence are significant, independent predictors of educational achievement. Their meta-analysis revealed positive correlations between these forms of intelligence and academic performance, suggesting that integrating them into the learning process could enhance intellectual and personal development. Consequently, by cultivating emotional and spiritual awareness alongside cognitive growth, educators can promote a more holistic and balanced form of education, one that embodies the essence of *Nang* in guiding students toward self-mastery, harmony, and authentic accomplishment.

### C. Integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* Values Into Learning Strategies and Their Influence on Character Formation

The learning strategies employed by teachers play a pivotal role in the effective internalization of the *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values. Approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), and Reflective Learning have proven effective in embedding these values within classroom practices (Nurdiyanti et al., 2024). Through these approaches, learning shifts from a mere transmission of knowledge to a dialogical process, one that involves dynamic interaction among teachers, students, and their socio-cultural contexts. This finding resonates with Long's (2024) study, which highlights that PjBL enhances students' moral literacy and social responsibility through real-world problem-solving and collaborative teamwork. Similarly, CTL integrates ideological and political education to foster a sense of social mission, while Reflective Learning encourages self-examination of ethical dilemmas, deepening students' understanding of moral principles. Collectively, these strategies create a holistic educational experience that not only nurtures cognitive development but also aligns with and reinforces core socialist values.

The influence of the values of *Neng* (serenity), *Ning* (clarity of thought), *Nung* (steadfastness), and *Nang* (true accomplishment) was evident from classroom observations and teacher interviews. Students who embraced these values displayed greater calmness, patience, and emotional regulation when encountering academic pressure or differing opinions during discussions. They also demonstrated enhanced critical and reflective thinking skills, alongside a stronger sense of responsibility and commitment in group work and project-based tasks. These results are consistent with Soysa et al. (2021), who found that dispositional serenity, particularly aspects such as gladness and acceptance, significantly predicts lower stress levels and greater mental well-being among undergraduates. This suggests that nurturing serenity may similarly enhance students' emotional regulation and perseverance in academic contexts, reinforcing the observed benefits of calmness and patience under pressure. Likewise, the findings align with Akash and Suganya (2024), who identified emotional regulation and social support as key factors influencing emotional stability among university students. They underscore the crucial role of emotional resilience in fostering critical thinking, patience, and teamwork, paralleling the positive outcomes associated with these values in classroom settings.

Despite these promising outcomes, the implementation of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values encountered several challenges. Among the most significant were teachers' limited understanding of local cultural philosophy, time constraints within the existing curriculum, and the absence of structured teaching modules specifically designed to incorporate these values. Furthermore, the dominance of cognitively oriented assessment systems often discouraged teachers from exploring value- and character-based pedagogical approaches. To address these issues, it is essential to provide continuous professional development for teachers on character education rooted in local wisdom. Local governments and schools should collaborate to develop contextual and culture-based teaching resources that reflect regional identity and values. In addition, the integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values should be institutionalized as part of school-wide policies, fostering a humanistic and inclusive school culture that supports the holistic development of students academically, emotionally, and morally.

Although this study provides meaningful insights into the integration of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values in Indonesian language learning, several limitations should be acknowledged. *First*, the research was conducted within a

limited number of schools in Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province, which may not fully represent the diversity of educational and cultural contexts across Indonesia. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this local context. *Second*, as this study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, the results emphasize depth of understanding rather than generalizability. Quantitative validation or mixed-method approaches would be necessary to measure the broader impact of these values on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes. *Third*, the implementation of local cultural values was highly dependent on teachers' individual interpretation and pedagogical creativity, which may vary across different schools. *Fourth*, the study focused primarily on short-term observations and interviews; thus, it did not assess the long-term sustainability of students' character development after the intervention period. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the scope to multiple regions, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, and incorporating longitudinal designs to evaluate the enduring effects of integrating *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* in character education.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study confirms that the integration of the *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values into Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level holds significant potential for developing students' holistic character across cognitive, affective, and social domains. Furthermore, the values of *Neng* (serenity), *Ning* (clarity of thought), *Nung* (steadfastness), and *Nang* (true accomplishment) are not merely reflections of Javanese ethical traditions but also represent universal principles of character education that are highly relevant to the demands of twenty-first-century learning. Through reflective, iterative, and participatory approaches, these values can be systematically embedded within classroom activities such as reading, writing, discussion, and creative expression. Field findings revealed that students demonstrated notable growth in empathy, patience, clarity of reasoning, confidence in expressing ideas, and social responsibility. Consequently, Indonesian language learning serves not only as a medium for literacy enhancement but also as a strategic platform for the internalization of local cultural wisdom, which provides a moral and cultural foundation for national character development.

Based on these findings, several implications emerge for educational practice and policy. Indonesian language teachers are encouraged to design learning experiences that extend beyond academic achievement by creatively integrating the values of *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang*. Reflective, project-based, and contextual pedagogies should be employed to ensure these values are not only conceptually understood but also authentically experienced by students. Schools and policymakers are advised to strengthen curriculum implementation by embedding local cultural perspectives, supported by contextual learning resources, teacher training in culturally responsive pedagogy, and balanced assessment systems that value both cognitive and character development. At the policy level, local governments should promote collaboration among education authorities, cultural practitioners, and academic institutions to develop teaching modules, learning media, and literacy programs rooted in local wisdom, ensuring their systematic and sustainable application across schools. Future studies are encouraged to expand this research using quantitative or mixed-method approaches to examine the long-term impact of integrating *Neng*, *Ning*, *Nung*, and *Nang* values on students' character formation in measurable and cross-cultural contexts.

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