

# STRATEGIES AND MODELS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDONESIAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS FOR NON NATIVE SPEAKERS THROUGH LOCAL WISDOM

Cut Novita Srikandi

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

[cutnovita@umsu.ac.id](mailto:cutnovita@umsu.ac.id)

**Abstract:** *The global expansion of BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing, Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers) programs has heightened the need for qualified educators possessing both pedagogical expertise and the capability to create culturally authentic materials. Many BIPA teachers encounter professional challenges, such as insufficient training in foreign language instruction and limited access to systematic professional development opportunities. This study investigates strategies and models for the professional development of BIPA teachers by incorporating local wisdom from North Sumatra, particularly the traditions of pantun and hikayat. This study employs a systematic literature review to synthesize pertinent scientific literature on teacher professional development, local literary traditions, and BIPA instruction. The findings identify three primary strategies: collaborative learning communities rooted in pantun creativity principles, narrative-based reflection utilizing the hikayat storytelling tradition, and mentoring relationships informed by local Malay values, such as budi bahasa (good manners) and timbang rasa (consideration). This study presents the Local Wisdom-Integrated Professional Development Model (LW-IPD Model), comprising four components: cultural immersion, pedagogical adaptation, reflective dialogue, and sustainable practice. The integration of pantun and hikayat traditions offers a culturally significant framework for improving BIPA teachers' competencies and aids in the preservation of North Sumatra's Malay literary heritage.*

**Keywords:** : professional development, BIPA teachers, local wisdom, pantun, hikayat, North Sumatra's Malay literary heritage.

## 1. Introduction

The teaching of Indonesian to non-native speakers, also known as BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing), has grown significantly during the last two decades. This increase is seen not only in Indonesia, but also in Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States. Multiple factors contribute to the growing global interest in studying Indonesian, including the country's critical economic location in Southeast Asia, rich cultural legacy, growing tourism industry, and expanding diplomatic contacts with neighboring nations. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, BIPA programs are currently available in over 50 countries, with thousands of overseas students enrolling each year to learn Indonesian language and culture (Kusmiatun, 2016; Muliastuti, 2017).

Despite these encouraging developments, BIPA teachers facing a number of professional issues that require immediate response. Many BIPA teachers lack formal training in teaching Indonesian as a foreign language, as most teacher education programs in Indonesia are aimed at preparing teachers for native speaker classes (Suyitno, 2007). This gap leads to a lack of pedagogical skills adapted specifically to second or foreign language training. BIPA teachers frequently struggle with intercultural competence, which is required to facilitate successful communication between teachers and students from various cultural backgrounds. Understanding learners' cultural viewpoints, adjusting teaching approaches to diverse learning

styles, and bridging cultural gaps in the classroom are all complicated skills that must be intentionally developed. Furthermore, the availability of authentic and culturally suitable teaching materials remains a major challenge, as many BIPA teachers use outdated textbooks or materials that do not appropriately reflect the dynamic nature of current Indonesian society and culture. Limited access to professional development opportunities contributes to these issues, leaving many BIPA teachers with inadequate assistance to improve their teaching skills.

The above problems emphasize the significance of ongoing professional development for BIPA teachers. Professional development systematically improves teacher knowledge, abilities, and attitudes to improve teaching and student learning (Desimone, 2009). Professional development for language teachers includes pedagogical skills, linguistic fluency, cultural awareness, and instructional strategy creation and implementation (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Current BIPA teacher professional development programs are frequently Western-centric and might not correspond to Indonesian educational environments and cultural values. This contextual gap offers an opportunity to investigate Indonesian culturally-based BIPA teacher professional development methods.

Kearifan lokal, or Indonesian local wisdom, is the information, beliefs, values, and practices collected by local groups through generations of environmental interaction (Wagiran, 2012). A wealth of philosophical and practical understanding from this indigenous knowledge system can inform education. North Sumatran Malay literary traditions, especially pantun and hikayat, offer unique professional development frameworks among Indonesia's numerous local wisdom traditions. Pantun, a four-line Malay literary form with an ABAB rhyme system, has traditionally been used for socializing, entertainment, and wisdom (Daillie, 1988; Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006).

Despite its potential benefits, local knowledge in teacher professional development receives minimal study. Indigenous knowledge systems, especially literary traditions, have been ignored in BIPA teacher development research, which have focused on workshops, training, and formal education programs. This literature absence requires systematic research into how North Sumatran Malay local wisdom, particularly pantun and hikayat traditions, might be strategically integrated into BIPA teacher professional development techniques and models (Gay, 2010; Dei, 2000).

Based on the context above, this study addresses numerous key questions about BIPA teacher professional growth through local wisdom integration. This study's systematic investigation follows these research questions. Indigenous literary forms as teacher development foundations have received fewer investigations than Western educational approaches (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). This study fills this gap by combining pantun, hikayat, and teacher development literature to strengthen culturally responsive professional learning theory.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Professional Development of Language Teachers**

Professional development in language teaching encompasses unique aspects that highlight the specific characteristics of language education, as language educators need both general pedagogical knowledge and specialized skills in areas including second language acquisition theory, language assessment, intercultural communication, and technology integration in language learning. Richards and Farrell (2005) differentiate between teacher training and teacher development, indicating that training is concerned with fundamental teaching skills and their immediate application in the classroom, while development prioritizes long-term growth and the exploration of foundational beliefs and theories. The professional development of BIPA teachers poses distinct challenges, as educators must address the complexities involved in instructing

Indonesian as a communication system and cultural practice to students from varied linguistic and cultural contexts (Kusmiatun, 2016), while cultivating intercultural competence to establish inclusive learning environments that honor linguistic and cultural diversity. A significant number of BIPA teachers commence their careers without formal training in teaching Indonesian as a foreign language, as the majority of teacher education programs in Indonesia predominantly prepare educators for native speaker environments (Suyitno, 2007; Gay, 2010; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

## **2.2 Local Wisdom and Literary Traditions**

Local wisdom, or kearifan lokal, encompasses the information, beliefs, values, and practices transmitted by local communities through generations of lived experience (Wagiran, 2012; Alfian, 2013). In North Sumatran Malay communities, pantun and hikayat represent complementary literary traditions preserving cultural values for generations (Daillie, 1988). Pantun is a four-line poetic form with an ABAB rhyme pattern comprising sampiran (foreshadowing lines) and isi (content lines), with functional categories including pantun nasihat, adat, agama, and jenaka serving diverse communicative roles (Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006). Berbalas pantun, where participants exchange pantun responsively, embodies principles of reciprocity, creativity, attentiveness, and indirectness, requiring quick thinking, linguistic creativity, and attentive listening (Daillie, 1988; Sweeney, 1980).

## **3. Method**

This study employed a systematic literature review approach to explore strategies and models for the professional development of BIPA teachers through the integration of North Sumatran Malay local wisdom, specifically pantun and hikayat traditions. A literature review is a research methodology involving systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of existing scholarly works relevant to a particular topic or research question (Snyder, 2019), enabling comprehensive examination of theoretical foundations and empirical findings across multiple disciplines including teacher professional development, language teaching, Malay literary studies, and indigenous knowledge systems. The data analysis process followed a thematic synthesis approach involving identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the reviewed literature through several stages: extracting relevant information from selected sources, coding and categorizing information based on recurring patterns including strategies for professional development, characteristics of effective models, structural and philosophical features of pantun and hikayat, values embedded in Malay literary traditions, and applications of indigenous knowledge in educational contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coded information was then synthesized to identify connections, contradictions, and gaps across sources, enabling the development of an integrated understanding that transcended individual sources. To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, several quality assurance measures were implemented including triangulation through consulting multiple source types, peer debriefing with colleagues familiar with BIPA education and Malay cultural studies, and maintaining an audit trail through systematic documentation of search strategies and analytical procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **4. Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Strategies for BIPA Teacher Professional Development through Pantun and Hikayat Traditions**

The analysis of literature revealed three primary strategies for integrating North Sumatran Malay literary traditions into BIPA teacher professional development. These strategies are

grounded in the structural features, communicative practices, and philosophical values embedded in pantun and hikayat traditions.

The first strategy involves establishing collaborative learning communities grounded in the tradition of *berbalas pantun* or pantun exchange. Pantun, a traditional Malay poetic form consisting of four lines with an ABAB rhyme scheme, has historically functioned as a medium for social interaction, courtship, entertainment, and the transmission of wisdom (Daillie, 1988). The practice of *berbalas pantun*, in which participants take turns composing and reciting pantun in response to one another, represents a sophisticated form of collaborative intellectual engagement requiring quick thinking, linguistic creativity, cultural knowledge, and attentive listening.

The structural features of pantun offer additional insights for professional development. The literature identified the relationship between *sampiran* (foreshadowing lines) and *isi* (content lines) as a pedagogically significant pattern suggesting that preparation and scaffolding should precede introduction of core concepts (Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006). The constraint of the pantun form, with its fixed structure and rhyme requirements, demonstrates how creative expression can flourish within defined boundaries. The memorability of pantun, which has enabled oral transmission across generations, suggests attention to encoding professional knowledge in forms that teachers will remember and apply.

The second strategy centers on narrative-based reflection through hikayat study and storytelling practices. Hikayat, traditional Malay prose narratives, encompass diverse genres including heroic epics, romantic tales, religious stories, and historical chronicles. The literature identified notable hikayat from the Malay tradition including *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, and local variants circulating in North Sumatran Malay communities (Braginsky, 2004). These narratives served multiple functions in traditional society: entertainment, moral instruction, historical preservation, and transmission of cultural values. The literature revealed that hikayat typically feature protagonists who face challenges, make decisions, experience consequences, and ultimately embody or discover important truths about virtue, wisdom, and proper conduct.

The narrative structure of hikayat provides frameworks for professional reflection distinct from analytical approaches common in Western professional development. The literature indicated that narrative ways of knowing complement analytical reasoning by engaging imagination, emotion, and moral intuition (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Case studies from BIPA instruction can be structured as hikayat-style narratives featuring protagonists (teachers), challenges (instructional dilemmas), struggles (attempts to address challenges), and resolutions (lessons learned). The traditional role of *penglipur lara* (storytellers) as repositories of cultural knowledge who adapted narratives for different audiences while preserving essential truths suggests a model for experienced teachers as professional storytellers who share accumulated wisdom through engaging narratives.

The third strategy employs mentoring relationships guided by values embedded in pantun and hikayat traditions. The literature synthesis identified several core Malay values transmitted through both literary forms: *budi bahasa* (refined character and language), *timbang rasa* (consideration for others' feelings), *malu* (appropriate shame regulating behavior), and *adat* (customary practices maintaining social harmony) (Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006). These values collectively emphasize relational sensitivity, ethical conduct, and attention to social context. *Budi bahasa* suggests that mentoring involves modeling excellence in professional communication. *Timbang rasa* emphasizes empathetic attunement in mentoring relationships, assessing mentees' emotional states before offering feedback. *Malu* encourages both mentors and mentees to maintain professional standards and acknowledge limitations honestly. These values

create mentoring relationships characterized by mutual respect, emotional intelligence, and commitment to professional excellence.

#### **4.2 Local Wisdom-Integrated Professional Development Model (LW-IPD Model)**

Based on the synthesis of literature, this study proposes the Local Wisdom-Integrated Professional Development Model (LW-IPD Model) for BIPA teachers. The model comprises four interconnected components: cultural immersion, pedagogical adaptation, reflective dialogue, and sustainable practice.

The first component, cultural immersion, addresses the foundational need for BIPA teachers to develop deep understanding of pantun and hikayat traditions. The literature indicated that many teachers, even those from Malay backgrounds, have limited explicit knowledge of the formal features, historical development, and philosophical foundations of these literary forms. Cultural immersion includes systematic study of pantun forms, functions, and variations, examining structural features including syllable patterns, rhyme schemes, and the sampiran-isi relationship. Teachers explore functional categories including pantun nasihat (advice), pantun adat (customary), pantun agama (religious), and pantun jenaka (humorous). Cultural immersion also involves engagement with hikayat texts, analyzing narrative structures, character development, thematic content, and embedded values. Dialogue with cultural experts and reflection on personal cultural backgrounds complete this component.

The second component, pedagogical adaptation, focuses on translating pantun and hikayat values into concrete teaching practices. The literature synthesis revealed that effective integration requires alignment of pedagogical approaches with communicative practices embedded in these traditions (Gay, 2010). Pedagogical adaptation involves designing instruction reflecting pantun principles of reciprocity, creativity, and indirectness. Classroom activities incorporate turn-taking structures ensuring all learners contribute. Creative expression is encouraged within defined frameworks. Sensitive topics are approached indirectly, preparing learners through contextualizing activities. Hikayat narrative structures inform lesson design through attention to engaging openings, building tension, development through exploration, and resolution through synthesis. Pedagogical adaptation also addresses development of authentic materials incorporating pantun for pronunciation practice and condensed reading comprehension, and hikayat excerpts for extended reading and cultural transmission.

The third component, reflective dialogue, establishes structures for collaborative reflection grounded in Malay communicative traditions. The literature indicated that *berbalas pantun* principles of reciprocal exchange and hikayat traditions of narrative meaning-making can be operationalized within professional development contexts. Implementation involves sessions beginning with social rituals establishing relational warmth. Sharing follows *berbalas pantun* reciprocity, with contributions acknowledged and built upon. Indirectness shapes how challenges are addressed. Hikayat-style narrative sharing enables teachers to present experiences as stories with characters, challenges, and resolutions. Collective analysis of pantun and hikayat texts serves as stimuli for professional reflection, with literary themes illuminating contemporary challenges.

The fourth component, sustainable practice, addresses long-term maintenance of professional development activities. The literature revealed that pantun and hikayat traditions have persisted across generations through continuous practice and adaptation, suggesting principles for sustainability. Key elements include developing regular engagement rhythms embedded in professional routines, analogous to traditional communities maintaining literary traditions through regular performance occasions. The *berbalas pantun* principle creates chains of engagement maintaining community momentum through obligations to respond.

Documentation practices ensure professional knowledge is preserved and shared, creating collections analogous to anthologies preserving literary traditions. Mentoring relationships guided by *budi bahasa* and *timbang rasa* ensure transmission of professional wisdom to newer colleagues.

The four components are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Cultural immersion provides foundational knowledge informing pedagogical adaptation, reflective dialogue, and sustainable practice. Pedagogical adaptation translates understanding into practice while generating experiences fueling reflective dialogue. Reflective dialogue deepens understanding while building relationships necessary for sustainable practice. Sustainable practice ensures continuity over time. Values from *pantun* and *hikayat* traditions including *budi bahasa*, *timbang rasa*, reciprocity, creativity, and narrative wisdom permeate all components.

## 5. Discussion

The findings contribute to theoretical understanding of culturally grounded professional development in several important ways. The identification of *berbalas pantun* principles as a framework for collaborative learning communities extends existing models emphasized by scholars such as DuFour and Eaker (1998) by incorporating indigenous communicative practices characterized by reciprocity, creativity, attentiveness, and indirectness, aligning with Gay's (2010) argument that culturally responsive education must attend to culturally specific communication patterns. The *hikayat*-based reflection approach contributes to theoretical discourse on reflective practice by offering a narrative and communal alternative to Schön's (1983) individual-focused framework, resonating with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry while grounding it specifically in Malay literary traditions.

The LW-IPD Model contributes a conceptual framework that integrates contemporary professional development research, including Desimone's (2009) core features framework and Joyce and Showers' (2002) training components model, with indigenous knowledge systems, responding to calls from scholars such as Dei (2000) and Semali and Kincheloe (1999) for greater integration of indigenous knowledge in educational theory and practice. Furthermore, the identification of values embedded in *pantun* and *hikayat* traditions—including *budi bahasa*, *timbang rasa*, *malu*, and *adat*—contributes to understanding how cultural values can inform professional relationships and practices, suggesting that literature serves not only as content for instruction but as a repository of professional wisdom relevant to teacher development.

The findings carry several practical implications for BIPA teachers seeking to enhance their professional competencies. Engagement with *pantun* and *hikayat* traditions offers resources for developing literary and cultural competence essential for effective BIPA instruction, as many teachers possess conversational proficiency but lack deep familiarity with literary traditions representing significant dimensions of Indonesian cultural heritage (Suyitno, 2007; Kusmiatun, 2016).

The pedagogical adaptation strategies identified in this study offer concrete approaches for enhancing classroom instruction through the application of *pantun* principles—emphasizing reciprocity, creativity, and indirectness—which provide alternatives to teacher-centered instruction common in language classrooms (Richards & Farrell, 2005), while the *hikayat*-based approach to lesson design offers a template for creating lessons that engage learners cognitively and emotionally through narrative elements. Regarding authentic material development, *pantun* texts offer condensed, manageable materials for reading instruction and pronunciation practice due to their rhythmic features, while *hikayat* excerpts provide extended reading materials developing sustained comprehension and cultural knowledge transmission.

## 6. Conclusion

The study identified three primary strategies grounded in pantun and hikayat traditions: collaborative learning communities based on *berbalas pantun* principles emphasizing reciprocity, creativity, and attentiveness; narrative-based reflection through hikayat study engaging imagination, emotion, and moral intuition; and mentoring relationships guided by Malay values including *budi bahasa*, *timbang rasa*, and *malu*. These strategies offer culturally meaningful alternatives to Western-derived professional development approaches that may not fully resonate with Indonesian teachers' cultural contexts. Based on these findings, the study proposed the Local Wisdom-Integrated Professional Development Model (LW-IPD Model) comprising four interconnected components: cultural immersion, pedagogical adaptation, reflective dialogue, and sustainable practice. This model provides a comprehensive framework integrating contemporary professional development research with indigenous literary traditions, offering guidance for BIPA teachers, institutions, and policymakers seeking to enhance professional development through cultural grounding.

## References

- Alfian, M. (2013). Potensi kearifan lokal dalam pembentukan jati diri dan karakter bangsa. *Prosiding The 5th International Conference on Indonesian Studies: Ethnicity and Globalization*, 424-435.
- Braginsky, V. I. (2004). *The heritage of traditional Malay literature: A historical survey of genres, writings and literary views*. KITLV Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Dailie, F. R. (1988). *Alam pantun Melayu: Studies on the Malay pantun*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2000). Rethinking the role of indigenous knowledges in the academy. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(2), 111-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/136031100284849>
- Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181-199. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140>
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Solution Tree Press.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kusmiatun, A. (2016). *Mengenal BIPA dan pembelajarannya*. K-Media.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- Muhammad Haji Salleh. (2006). *Romance and laughter in the archipelago: Essays on classical and contemporary poetics of the Malay world*. Universiti Sains Malaysia Press.
- Muliastuti, L. (2017). *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing: Acuan teori dan pendekatan pengajaran*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.

- Semali, L. M., & Kincheloe, J. L. (Eds.). (1999). *What is indigenous knowledge? Voices from the academy*. Falmer Press.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333-339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Suyitno, I. (2007). Pengembangan bahan ajar Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing (BIPA) berdasarkan hasil analisis kebutuhan belajar. *Wacana*, 9(1), 62-78.
- Sweeney, A. (1980). *Authors and audiences in traditional Malay literature*. Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California.
- Teeuw, A. (1966). The Malay sha'ir: Problems of origin and tradition. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 122(4), 429-446.
- Wagiran. (2012). Pengembangan karakter berbasis kearifan lokal Hamemayu Hayuning Bawana. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 2(3), 329-339.