

Nurturing Indonesian Identity Through Intercultural Communication In Migrant Children

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Abstract – Intercultural communication is key in shaping national identity, especially for migrant children growing up in multicultural environments. This study aims to uncover the effectiveness of intercultural communication strategies in shaping the national identity of Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia. Through a qualitative approach, this study found that the Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK) has successfully implemented various innovative strategies. Active participation in activities related to the Indonesian language and culture significantly enhances the sense of pride in the national identity of migrant children. This study provides a new contribution by identifying the key factors that influence the success of intercultural communication strategies in the context of non-formal education for migrant children. This finding could serve as a foundation for the development of more effective non-formal education programs that facilitate the social and cultural integration of migrant children.

Keywords: Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK), Intercultural Communication, Migrant Children, National Identity, Non-Formal Education

Abstrak – Komunikasi antarbudaya adalah kunci dalam membentuk identitas nasional, terutama bagi anak-anak migran yang tumbuh di lingkungan multikultural. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap efektivitas strategi komunikasi antarbudaya dalam membentuk identitas nasional anak-anak migran Indonesia di Malaysia. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Pusat Bimbingan Hulu Kelang (SBHK) telah berhasil menerapkan berbagai strategi inovatif. Partisipasi aktif dalam kegiatan yang berkaitan dengan bahasa dan budaya Indonesia secara signifikan meningkatkan rasa bangga terhadap identitas nasional anak-anak migran. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi baru dengan mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor kunci yang mempengaruhi keberhasilan strategi komunikasi antarbudaya dalam konteks pendidikan non-formal bagi anak-anak migran. Temuan ini dapat menjadi dasar untuk pengembangan program pendidikan non-formal yang lebih efektif yang memfasilitasi integrasi sosial dan budaya anak-anak migran.

Kata Kunci: Anak Migran, Identitas Nasional, Komunikasi Antarbudaya, Sanggar Bimbingan Hulu Kelang (SBHK), Sekolah Non-Formal

1. INTRODUCTION

Nationalism is a fundamental value that needs to be instilled from an early age, especially in Malaysia, where Indonesian migrant children often face challenges in maintaining their national identity due to the influence of the majority culture and limited access to education in the Indonesian language. In this study, cultural nationalism is defined as a strong sense of identity and attachment to the culture, language, and values of the Indonesian nation. This study aims to uncover how intercultural communication strategies based on cultural and linguistic approaches, such as the use of folklore and regional songs, can enhance the sense of cultural nationalism among Indonesian migrant children aged 8–12 at SBHK, as well as various factors that influence the effectiveness of these strategies. Previous research by Puanandini (in FM, I.S., & Rosnawati, E., 2024) and Trisofirin et al. (2023) has shown a low sense of nationalism among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. This study continues the previous research with a focus on proactive efforts to cultivate a sense of nationalism through non-formal education, particularly in the multicultural context of Malaysia.

Previous research by Puanandini (in FM, I.S., & Rosnawati, E., 2024) and Trisofirin (2023) has highlighted the importance of nationalism in the context of migration, especially for migrant children growing up in culturally diverse environments. These studies demonstrate that the absence of national values-oriented education can impede the development of national identity in migrant children. This study continues those investigations by focusing on the role of non-formal

education in facilitating the process of internalizing national values. In other words, this research aims to delve deeper into how, through appropriate intercultural communication strategies, non-formal education such as that organized at SBHK can serve as a platform for migrant children to develop a sense of belonging and love for their homeland. Therefore, this study is expected to provide empirical contributions to a better understanding of how education can be an important instrument in shaping the national identity of migrant children amidst the dynamics of globalization.

This study is rooted in two relevant theories, namely intercultural communication theory and social learning theory. Intercultural communication theory, as explained by Cortazzi in Laopongharn et al. (2009) in the book *Intercultural Communication: An Advanced Resource Book*, emphasizes the importance of cultural context in the communication process. In the context of educating migrant children, this theory helps us understand how cultural differences can affect the comprehension and reception of messages conveyed during the learning process. Meanwhile, social learning theory, as explained by Bandura (2005) in his book *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, emphasizes the importance of models and the environment in shaping individual behavior and values. In the context of this research, this theory helps us understand how migrant children learn national values through interactions with teachers, peers, and the broader social environment. Both theories complement each other in explaining how the intercultural communication strategies implemented at SBHK can facilitate the internalization of national values among migrant children. In other words, through effective and meaningful communication in the context of diverse cultures, migrant children can learn and adopt the national values being taught.

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of deeply exploring the intercultural communication strategies implemented by Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK) to instill national values in migrant children in Malaysia. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of complex social phenomena, such as the process of internalizing national values in a multicultural context. This is in line with Asiah's (2018) opinion in her research on literacy and numeracy education for early childhood and literacy and numeracy entrance exams in elementary schools in Bandar Lampung, which shows that a qualitative approach is very effective in uncovering the meanings and experiences of research subjects related to complex social phenomena. Data collection was conducted through participatory observation during teaching and learning activities, in-depth interviews with migrant children, SBHK teachers, and parents of students, as well as analysis of curriculum documents and teaching materials. In-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide to explore the experiences of migrant children related to learning Indonesian, national values, and interactions with Indonesian culture. Data analysis using thematic analysis techniques to identify the main themes that emerge from the collected data. Thus, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of effective intercultural communication strategies in the context of non-formal education.

This study was conducted at Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK) from August 2 to 25, 2024. The selection of the research location at Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK) was based on the consideration that this center is a non-formal educational institution that is quite active in providing educational services for Indonesian migrant children in the Selangor region, Malaysia. Meanwhile, the research time in August takes into account the relatively stable teaching schedule at SBHK, allowing the researchers to conduct intensive observations. Using the time at the end of the semester also enables the researchers to observe the results of the learning program that has been implemented over one semester. The entire research process was conducted with adherence to applicable research ethics, including obtaining permission from SBHK and obtaining approval from the students' parents.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach aimed at deeply exploring the intercultural communication strategies implemented by Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK) in instilling national values in migrant children in the Selangor region, Malaysia. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand complex social phenomena, such as the process of internalizing national values in a multicultural context. This study focuses on SBHK, with

the research subjects being Indonesian migrant children aged 8–12 years who are registered as active students in grades 4-6 at SBHK. The sample size will be determined according to the principle of data saturation, where data collection will continue until no new themes emerge.

Data collection was carried out through participatory observation during teaching and learning activities in the classroom, extracurricular activities, and non-formal interactions in the SBHK environment. In-depth interviews will be conducted with 10 children selected purposefully based on variations in age, duration of program participation, and level of involvement. To gain a broader perspective, in-depth interviews will be conducted with 3 teachers and 3 parents. The interview instrument will be developed based on the framework of intercultural communication theory and will focus on participants' experiences related to learning the Indonesian language, national values, and interactions with Indonesian culture. Document analysis will be conducted on the SBHK curriculum, learning materials, and activity reports to gain a comprehensive understanding of the learning strategies implemented.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cross-cultural or multicultural understanding is an important component in foreign language teaching, including Indonesian. According to Ekawati (2022) in her article titled "Cross-Cultural Competence in Integrated Language, Literature, and Translation Learning," this understanding encompasses both verbal and nonverbal aspects. The verbal aspect includes the use of words, sentences, and language forms appropriate to the cultural context, while the nonverbal aspect includes body language and gestures. Intercultural communication, as defined in this study, refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appreciate cultural differences in the context of using the Indonesian language. Through intercultural communication, migrant children not only learn the Indonesian language but also develop an awareness of Indonesia's cultural diversity, an open attitude towards differences, and the ability to adapt to various social situations.

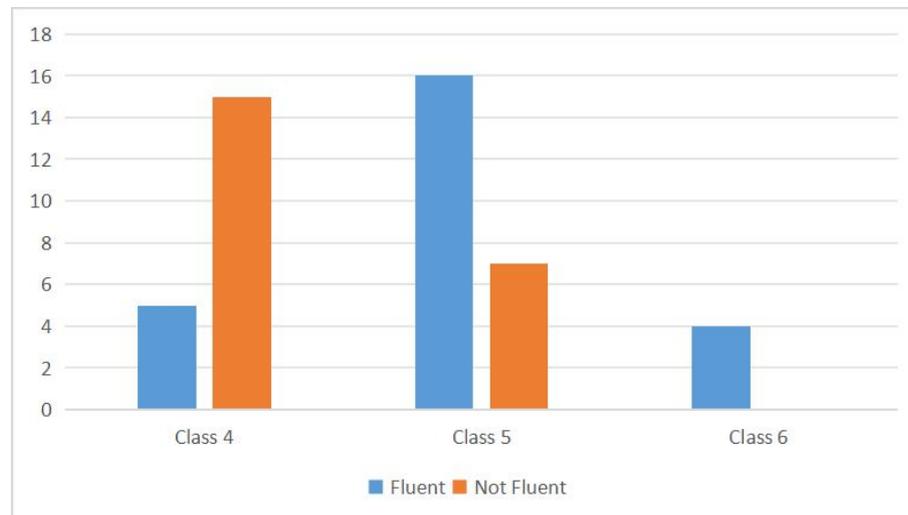
The process of internalizing national values in migrant children can be facilitated through intercultural communication. By actively participating in activities that promote the Indonesian language and culture, such as singing regional songs, writing folk tales, and retelling them, they not only learn new vocabulary but also understand the values contained within, such as mutual cooperation, unity, and love for the homeland. The utilization of folklore, as expressed by Melinda & Muzaki (2023) in their research titled "Folklore as an Effort to Introduce the Indonesian Language and Culture in BIPA Learning," can be an effective strategy in intercultural communication. Thus, intercultural communication becomes a bridge that connects language learning and the formation of national identity. Through this approach, migrant children not only become proficient speakers of Indonesian but also individuals who are proud of their nation and homeland.

The initial observation results of 47 children show a variation in their ability to use the Indonesian language. As many as 22 children are not yet fluent in using proper and correct Indonesian, indicating that language proficiency is not only related to cognitive aspects but also to socio-cultural factors. This finding supports the theory of intercultural communication that links language proficiency with the ability to interact across cultures. Children who are more proficient in Indonesian tend to have higher intercultural communicative competence, in line with the views of Purnamasari & Hartono (2023) in their research on "The Importance of Using Indonesian in Higher Education," which shows that good mastery of the Indonesian language reflects the internalization of social and cultural values. Good language skills enable them to actively participate in groups and better understand national values.

Table 1. Number of SBHK Students (Aged 8-12 Years)

Class	Female	Male
4	11	9
5	13	10
6	-	4

Table 2. Results of Indonesian Language Usage Observation



The results of interviews with three teachers at SBHK and three parents of students revealed that the difficulties faced by migrant children are understanding reading texts in Indonesian. This challenge is evident in the lack of understanding of specialized vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and the implied cultural context in the text. This indicates a gap in the intercultural communication competence of migrant children, where they are not yet able to interact effectively in various situations involving reading texts, such as class discussions or presentations. The inability to understand reading texts in depth hinders the development of oral and written language skills, as well as their active participation in activities involving the Indonesian language. This finding is in line with Supriani's (2023) research in the *Early Childhood Education* journal, which states that parental involvement is very important in supporting children's language development, including reading skills and text comprehension. To address this issue, it is necessary to develop a more intensive learning program that involves active participation from parents so that migrant children can have more opportunities to practice using Indonesian in various contexts, especially in reading and understanding texts.

According to research by Joen Boek (in Fikriyah, 2022), storytelling ability is an important indicator of children's language development. This finding is in line with our research results at the Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK), where children who initially predominantly used Malay showed a significant improvement in storytelling skills and the use of Indonesian after participating in an intensive learning program. This program includes activities such as writing regional stories, singing national and regional songs, and telling tales from Indonesian folklore.

The results of the observation show an improvement in the storytelling abilities of migrant children after participating in the intensive learning program. The migrant children who initially used more Malay are now able to retell Indonesian folktales quite well and fluently. For example, Muhammad Danil, a sixth-grade student at SBHK, stated that "Indonesian folk tales are very interesting because they are rich in noble values and make him more active in using the Indonesian language." "I like Indonesian folktales because the stories are interesting and full of advice. "It makes me speak Indonesian more often," said Danil. This shows that the designed learning program not only stimulates the cognitive development of children's Indonesian language skills but also motivates them to actively use Indonesian in their daily lives. The stories of the heroes' struggles created by migrant children also reflect their increasingly profound understanding of the noble values of the Indonesian nation, such as mutual cooperation and unity.



Image 1. Teaching and Learning Process at SBHK

The increase in the use of the Indonesian language and participation in nationalism-themed activities among migrant children at SBHK shows that the designed intensive learning program is not only effective in developing language skills but also in fostering a sense of nationalism. This is in line with Albert Bandura's social learning theory (1986), which states that children learn language and social values through interactions with their surrounding environment, including family and school.

Children who frequently interact with their parents in Indonesian tend to be more proficient in the language and have a stronger sense of nationalism. This shows that a family environment conducive to the use of the Indonesian language can facilitate the development of intercultural communication competence in children. In line with the views of Rahaditya & Dariyo (2018) in their research titled "The Role of Parenting Styles in Life Satisfaction and Nationalism Attitudes Among Adolescents," families play a very significant role in shaping children's character and values, including nationalism. Their research shows that parenting styles involving intensive communication in Indonesian can contribute to the formation of a strong national identity in migrant children. Intensive intercultural communication within the family can help migrant children understand and appreciate the cultural diversity in Indonesia, thereby fostering a stronger sense of nationalism. This finding highlights the importance of the family's role in shaping the character and identity of migrant children as Indonesian citizens.

The role of teachers in facilitating intercultural communication and instilling national values cannot be overlooked. As emphasized by Tambunan (2020) in his research titled "The Development of Character Education and National Culture with Local Wisdom Perspective," efficient, creative, innovative, productive, and independent educator characteristics are essential for creating an inclusive learning environment and encouraging the active participation of migrant children. Through this character, teachers can develop innovative learning methods that are relevant to students' needs, as well as become inspiring role models. Furthermore, by demonstrating a positive attitude towards Indonesian culture and providing good examples, teachers can inspire children to take pride in their national identity. This perspective by Tambunan (2020) aligns with the findings of Anwar (2018) in his research titled "Islamic Education in Building National Character in the Millennial Era." Anwar (2018) found that students with strong character education tend to be more open to cultural differences and possess better communication skills.

Table 3. Number of Instructors

No.	Name	Total
1	Permanent Teachers	3
2	Mahasiswa KKN	3

Table 4. Facilities of the Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK)

No.	Name	Total
1	Classroom	4
2	Whiteboard	6
3	Study Desk	51
4	Chair	62

The improvement of Indonesian language skills among migrant children at Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK) not only impacts cognitive aspects but also contributes to the development of their intercultural communication competencies. As emphasized by Bulan (2019) in his research titled "Indonesian Language as the National Identity of the Indonesian Nation," the Indonesian language plays a central role as the state language and a unifying tool for the nation. Bulan's research shows that proficiency in the Indonesian language can strengthen nationalism and encourage an attitude of appreciating diversity. By regularly interacting in Indonesian in the school environment, migrant children indirectly learn to appreciate the diversity of languages and cultures in Indonesia. They began to understand that language is the identity of a nation and serves as an important tool to unite diversity.

The intensive learning activities conducted at SBHK, such as singing regional songs, writing short stories with cultural themes, and storytelling, not only enrich the vocabulary and knowledge of migrant children about various aspects of Indonesian society but also facilitate the development of their intercultural communication skills. Through these activities, migrant children learn to appreciate cultural differences, build empathy, and communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Thus, the programs implemented by SBHK not only enhance the language skills of migrant children but also equip them with the necessary skills to live in an increasingly global and pluralistic society.

As an effort to strengthen national identity and improve Indonesian language skills, SBHK consistently organizes various activities that attract the interest of migrant children. The main highlight is the celebration of the 79th anniversary of Indonesia's independence. Through a series of competitions and art performances such as poetry readings, cultural-themed fashion shows, and traditional games, SBHK not only facilitates the improvement of Indonesian language skills but also instills national values and appreciation for Indonesia's cultural diversity. The participation of migrant children in the dance performance 'Wonderland Indonesia' at the Indonesian Embassy is tangible proof of the success of the SBHK program in developing their talents and interests.



Image 2. Celebration of the 79th Anniversary of Indonesian Independence

The activities organized by SBHK not only aim to foster love for the homeland but also actively facilitate the development of intercultural communication competencies among migrant children. By participating in various activities that involve the Indonesian language and elements of regional culture, migrant children are indirectly trained to become skilled intercultural communicators. They learn to appreciate cultural differences, understand various perspectives, and adjust their communication styles to different social contexts. For example, in performing the 'Wonderland Indonesia' dance at the Indonesian Embassy, the migrant children not only showcase their artistic skills but also practice communicating with the audience. This experience gives them the opportunity to develop confidence, flexibility, and the ability to adapt to various social situations.

It must be acknowledged that this study has several limitations. First, the research sample is limited to migrant children registered at the Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK), so generalizing the research results should be done with caution. Second, this study only focuses on one aspect of national identity, namely pride in one's country of origin. Other aspects, such as ethnic identity or religious identity, are not discussed in depth. Thirdly, this study employs an intensive qualitative approach, making it difficult to generalize the research findings to a broader population.

These limitations have implications for the interpretation of research results and the direction of future research. Future research could expand the sample by involving migrant children from various regions in Malaysia or even from different countries of origin. In addition, future research could examine other aspects of national identity, such as ethnic identity or religious identity. The use of quantitative research methods in combination with qualitative methods can also provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied. Longitudinal research can also be conducted to track the development of national identity among migrant children over a longer period.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that the intercultural communication strategies implemented at the Hulu Kelang Guidance Center (SBHK), with an emphasis on the active use of the Indonesian language in the context of Indonesian culture, are very effective in enhancing language skills and fostering a sense of nationalism among migrant children. This finding supports social learning theory, which shows that individuals learn new values and behaviors through social interaction. The most effective strategies include the use of folklore, regional songs, and group activities that involve the Indonesian language.

The unique contribution of this study lies in identifying the important roles of families and teachers in supporting the learning of the Indonesian language and culture among migrant children. By doing so, this study highlights the importance of curriculum adaptation and teacher training to meet the specific needs of migrant children.

Recommendations for future research include longitudinal studies to track the long-term development of children as well as comparative studies to assess the effectiveness of various language and cultural learning strategies. The practical implications of this study highlight the need for the development of a more inclusive and student-centered curriculum, as well as ongoing training for teachers to facilitate effective language and cultural learning.

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