



Bridging Cultures through the Introduction of Indonesian Culture in Andong, South Korea

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ABSTRAK

Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat internasional ini bertujuan memperkenalkan budaya Indonesia kepada mahasiswa internasional dan masyarakat lokal di Andong, Korea Selatan. Program dilaksanakan melalui pendekatan pertukaran budaya secara langsung yang menekankan interaksi interpersonal, diskusi, serta komunikasi lintas budaya. Metode yang digunakan meliputi pendidikan masyarakat melalui cultural exchange, observasi partisipatif, dan komunikasi informal di ruang publik. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan simbol budaya seperti batik dan tapis efektif meningkatkan ketertarikan dan pemahaman peserta terhadap keberagaman budaya Indonesia. Selain itu, terjadi interaksi dua arah yang memperkuat pemahaman lintas budaya serta meningkatkan sensitivitas budaya peserta. Kegiatan ini juga memberikan dampak positif terhadap peningkatan keterampilan komunikasi lintas budaya bagi pelaksana. Dengan demikian, program ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan sederhana berbasis interaksi langsung dapat menjadi strategi efektif dalam diplomasi budaya dan pengabdian masyarakat internasional.

Kata kunci: Andong; Korea Selatan; Layanan Komunitas Internasional; Budaya Indonesia; Komunikasi Antarbudaya.

ABSTRACT

This international community service activity aimed to introduce Indonesian culture to international students and local communities in Andong, South Korea. The program was implemented through a direct cultural exchange approach emphasizing interpersonal interaction, discussion, and intercultural communication. The methods used included community education through cultural exchange sessions, participatory observation, and informal communication in public spaces. The results showed that the use of cultural symbols such as batik and tapis effectively increased participants' interest and understanding of Indonesian cultural diversity. Furthermore, two-way interactions fostered intercultural understanding and enhanced participants' cultural sensitivity. The activity also contributed to improving the implementer's intercultural communication skills. Therefore, this program demonstrates that simple, interaction-based approaches can serve as effective strategies in cultural diplomacy and international community service.

Keywords: Andong; South Korea; International Community Service; Indonesian Culture; Intercultural Communication.



INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of higher education encourages universities to integrate international experiences into academic and community service programs to enhance global competence and intercultural awareness. Although various cultural exchange programs have been conducted in several countries, activities specifically introducing Indonesian culture through direct interaction and traditional cultural symbols in a heritage city such as Andong, South Korea, remain limited. Therefore, this program offers novelty through an interaction-based cultural exchange approach using batik and Lampung tapis to promote intercultural understanding and cultural appreciation.

Recent studies highlight that participation in international community engagement significantly enhances intercultural competence, including communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and global awareness (Kuffuor, 2024) (Wang & Li, 2024). Intercultural competence is considered an essential skill in today's interconnected world, as individuals are required to interact effectively across cultural boundaries and navigate differences in values, norms, and communication styles (Sarwari, 2024). In this context, cultural exchange activities serve as practical platforms where such competencies can be developed through real-life interactions.

Cultural exchange is not merely an activity of sharing information but also a process of constructing meaning through interaction. According to recent research, cultural interaction fosters mutual understanding and reduces stereotypes by allowing participants to directly experience and interpret cultural symbols and practices (Agbai & John, 2024). The use of tangible cultural elements, such as traditional clothing, can function as effective communication tools that stimulate curiosity and dialogue, especially in informal and interpersonal settings.

In the context of international community service, simple and interaction-based approaches have been found to be particularly effective. Rather than relying on formal presentations, direct engagement through conversation, observation, and symbolic representation can create more meaningful learning experiences (Dinu, 2025). This aligns with the concept of experiential learning, where knowledge is constructed through active participation and reflection during real-world interactions.

Andong, South Korea, is recognized as a cultural heritage city that preserves traditional Korean values and practices. This cultural environment provides an ideal setting for intercultural interaction and cultural introduction activities. The presence of international students and local communities in such a setting creates opportunities for meaningful dialogue and cross-cultural learning.

Andong was selected not only because of its status as a cultural heritage city, but also because it provides a relevant setting for intercultural dialogue between Korean cultural traditions and Indonesian cultural values. In addition, the limited exposure of international students and local communities in Andong to Indonesian cultural symbols, such as batik and Lampung tapis, creates a specific challenge in cultural understanding. Therefore, this activity was designed to introduce Indonesian culture directly through interaction, visual cultural media, and informal communication.

However, introducing a foreign culture in an international context presents several challenges, including language barriers, differences in cultural perspectives, and limited prior knowledge among participants. These challenges require adaptive communication strategies and culturally sensitive approaches to ensure that messages are effectively conveyed and understood.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore how Indonesian culture can be introduced effectively through an international community service program in Andong, South Korea. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) analyze the implementation of cultural introduction activities; (2) examine the forms of intercultural interaction that occur during the program; and (3) identify the impact of these activities on participants' cultural understanding.

Therefore, the purpose of this community service activity is explicitly to introduce Indonesian culture to international students and local communities in Andong, South Korea through an interaction-based cultural exchange approach. This activity is designed to facilitate meaningful intercultural communication, enhance participants' understanding of Indonesian cultural diversity, and promote mutual cultural appreciation. In addition, this study aims to analyze the implementation process of the activity, identify the forms of intercultural interaction that emerge, and evaluate its impact on participants' cultural understanding.

METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

This study employed a qualitative approach within the framework of community service activities, emphasizing experiential and interaction-based learning. The methods used were designed to facilitate direct engagement between the implementer and participants in a cross-cultural setting. The activity involved 35 participants consisting of international students and local community members in Andong, South Korea. Participants were selected based on their willingness to engage in intercultural communication activities.

The implementation process of this community service activity is illustrated in Figure 1, which describes the stages from activity design to the expected outcomes.

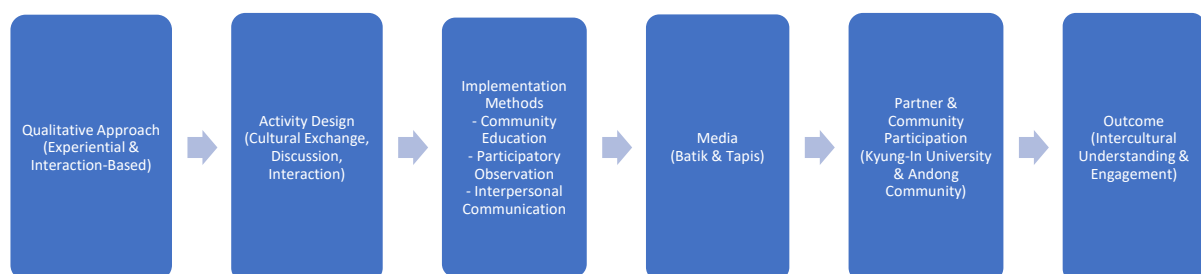


Figure 1. Activity Design

Activity design that program was structured around cultural exchange sessions, interactive discussions, and informal interpersonal interactions. This design aligns with previous studies suggesting that informal and dialogic approaches are more

effective in fostering intercultural understanding compared to one-way communication methods (Dinu, 2025).

The implementation involved several key methods: *Community education*, cultural knowledge was delivered through direct explanation and storytelling, allowing participants to understand Indonesian culture in a contextual and relatable manner. *Participatory observation*, observations were conducted to examine participants' responses, including their reactions, questions, and engagement during the activities. Participatory observation is widely used in intercultural studies to capture authentic interaction patterns (Wang & Li, 2024). *Interpersonal communication*, direct communication played a central role in the program. Effective intercultural communication requires adaptability, clarity, and sensitivity to cultural differences (Sarwari, 2024).

Media of Cultural Introduction, traditional Indonesian clothing, specifically batik and Lampung tapis, was used as the primary medium for cultural representation. Cultural artifacts have been recognized as powerful tools in intercultural communication, as they provide visual and symbolic meanings that facilitate understanding (Agbai & John, 2024).

Partner and Community Participation. The partner institution, Kyung-In Women's University, facilitated the implementation by providing access to participants and supporting the organization of activities. In addition, local communities in Andong contributed through spontaneous interactions, which enriched the intercultural experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the international community service program demonstrated that cultural introduction through direct interaction can effectively enhance intercultural understanding (Tjiptady, 2020); (Marsono & Tjiptady, 2021). Participants showed positive responses throughout the activity. Several participants expressed curiosity regarding Indonesian traditional textiles, cultural diversity, and daily social practices. These responses indicate an increased level of cultural awareness and engagement.

1. Effectiveness of Cultural Exchange

The cultural exchange sessions successfully attracted participants' attention and encouraged active engagement. The use of visual cultural elements, such as batik and tapis, stimulated curiosity and facilitated discussion. This finding supports previous research indicating that symbolic cultural representation can enhance communication effectiveness in intercultural settings (Agbai & John, 2024).



Figure 2. Cultural Exchange Session

2. Intercultural Interaction

The program created a dynamic environment where two-way communication occurred naturally. Participants not only received information but also shared their own cultural perspectives. Such reciprocal interaction is essential in developing intercultural competence and mutual understanding (Kuffuor, 2024).

The main challenge encountered during the implementation was the language barrier arising from differences in English proficiency levels. This challenge was addressed through simplified explanations, visual demonstrations, gestures, and repeated clarification to ensure mutual understanding.



Figure 3. Student Interaction While Trying Traditional Fabrics

3. Impact on Cultural Understanding

Participants demonstrated increased awareness and appreciation Of Indonesian culture. This aligns with findings that direct cultural engagement can reduce stereotypes and promote deeper cultural understanding (Wang & Li, 2024).

4. Challenges and Adaptation

Language barriers and cultural differences were identified as the main challenges. However, these were mitigated through simplified communication, non-verbal cues, and the use of visual media. Adaptive communication strategies are crucial in ensuring successful intercultural interaction (Sarwari, 2024).

5. Learning Outcomes

The program contributed to the development of essential 21st-century skills, including communication, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity. Experiential learning through real-world interaction has been shown to be highly effective in developing such competencies (Dinu, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This international community service program has demonstrated that the introduction of Indonesian culture through direct, interaction-based approaches can be effectively implemented in a global context. The use of cultural exchange sessions, supported by visual cultural elements such as batik and Lampung tapis, successfully attracted participants' interest and facilitated meaningful intercultural dialogue.

The findings indicate that participants gained a better understanding of Indonesian cultural diversity, not only at the level of knowledge but also in terms of appreciation and awareness. The two-way communication process that occurred during the activities played a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and reducing cultural distance between participants.

In addition, this program contributed to the development of essential intercultural competencies, including communication skills, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity. The experiential nature of the activities allowed learning to take place in a more contextual and impactful manner.

Overall, the program confirms that simple yet well-designed interaction-based cultural introduction can serve as an effective strategy in international community service and cultural diplomacy

Future community service programs are recommended to integrate digital cultural promotion media, expand collaboration with international partner institutions, and implement structured evaluation instruments to measure changes in intercultural understanding more comprehensively.

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