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Exploring BIPA Teachers' Experiential Learning Practices in Cultural Immersion for Introducing Minangkabau Culture to International Students

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ABSTRACT

Cultural integration in teaching Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) was recognized as a crucial element for developing authentic intercultural competence, particularly in addressing sociocultural adaptation challenges faced by international students. Although the immersion method had been widely acknowledged as a transformative approach, its practical implementation in connecting experiential learning theory with local cultural wisdom still required deeper exploration. Therefore, this study examined the experiential learning practices of BIPA teachers in utilizing cultural immersion to introduce Minangkabau culture to foreign learners in West Sumatra. A mixed-methods approach with a descriptive design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 48 BIPA teachers through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained from observation sheets based on learning practice videos. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of teaching practices. The findings indicated that experiential and cultural immersion-based BIPA learning had been implemented effectively through structured planning, authentic cultural activities, and the integration of language and culture in real-life contexts. Teachers demonstrated highly positive perceptions of this approach, as reflected in strong student engagement, reflective learning processes, and active language use. However, challenges related to time constraints, limited facilities, and uneven student participation remained evident, suggesting the need for further optimization.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Keywords:
BIPA teaching; cultural immersion; experiential learning; intercultural competence; minangkabau culture

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly complex global education system, language plays a fundamental role not only as a means of communication but also as a primary medium in the process of constructing knowledge, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Macaro et al., 2018; Sabuela et al., 2026). In recent years, studies have emphasized that the use of a common language in international educational settings is essential for bridging students' linguistic and cultural differences (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Dooly & Rubinstein, 2018). In the Indonesian context, Bahasa Indonesia serves not only as the official language of the country but also as a symbol of national identity, representing Indonesia's broad cultural diversity. This language plays a strategic role in building a positive image of Indonesia internationally and is also a primary means of transferring cultural values to foreign speakers (Hardika & Andriyanto, 2025; Islahuddin et al., 2025). The ability to communicate

effectively in Bahasa Indonesia enables international students to gain a deeper understanding of local social and cultural realities, creating a more meaningful and contextual learning experience (M. F. E. Wibowo et al., 2024). Therefore, effective language learning cannot simply focus on structural aspects but must also integrate social and cultural dimensions as a coherent whole (Tiawati et al., 2023).

Cultural integration in language learning is increasingly seen as an urgent need for developing students' intercultural competence. Recent research shows that language learning separated from cultural context has the potential to produce shallow understanding and a lack of application in real-life communication situations (Andriana et al., 2024; Byram et al., 2021). Culture, as a system of values, social practices, and expressions of everyday life, is an essential element inseparable from language itself (Kusmiatun, 2024; Tektigul et al., 2023). However, learning practices in the field still tend to emphasize mastery of grammar and vocabulary without integrating the emotional and sociocultural dimensions required by foreign learners (Ardiyanti, 2024; Putri, 2025). This situation has the potential to create gaps in the cultural adaptation process, which can lead to communication misunderstandings and even feelings of alienation in a new environment (de la Garza & Ono, 2015). Linguistic mastery without cultural awareness is insufficient to build effective intercultural communication (Baker, 2015; Sharipova, 2025). Therefore, cultural integration in the foreign language curriculum should be seen as a key strategy in creating authentic and relevant learning that meets global needs.

The concrete implementation of this language and cultural integration is realized in the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA or *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing*) program, which in recent years has experienced significant development as part of the internationalization of the Indonesian language (Andriyanto et al., 2025; Chamalah, 2025; Nurhuda et al., 2023). This program not only focuses on mastering linguistic aspects but also emphasizes the importance of cultural understanding as part of a comprehensive communicative competence (Batitusta et al., 2025). Recent data show an increase in the number of BIPA learners from various countries, indicating a high global interest in the Indonesian language and its accompanying culture (Ahmed & Aman, 2024). In this context, BIPA functions not only as an educational program but also as an effective instrument of cultural diplomacy in introducing Indonesian national identity to the international world (Aini et al., 2025; Shafira et al., 2024). Through integrated learning between language and culture, international students not only learn to communicate but also internalize the social values prevailing in Indonesian society (Wati et al., 2024). Thus, the success of the BIPA program depends heavily on the ability of the curriculum and instructors to link linguistic aspects to cultural realities.

However, the BIPA learning process is not without challenges, particularly those related to differences in cultural backgrounds and the adaptation process of international students. Recent studies have shown that international learners often experience difficulties in understanding the pragmatic aspects of language, such as the use of idioms, politeness norms, and the social context of communication (Taguchi, 2018). Furthermore, the phenomenon of culture shock remains a significant issue affecting the learning comfort and effectiveness of international students (Alshammari et al., 2023; Fedotova, 2022). This situation is exacerbated by the limited pedagogical approaches that integrate cultural learning theory with real-world practice (Asteria et al., 2024; Yurianta, 2023). Without an appropriate approach, language learning tends to be mechanistic and less able to address learners' social adaptation needs (Kibler & Valdés, 2016). Therefore, a learning strategy is needed that can connect direct experience with conceptual understanding so that the learning process becomes more applicable

One method considered effective in addressing these challenges is experiential learning, which places experience at the center of the learning process (Kolb, 2015; Morris, 2020; Ulfa et al., 2022). Recent research shows that this method can increase student engagement, conceptual understanding,

and higher-order thinking skills through direct experience (Pole & McGee, 2015). In the context of BIPA, experiential learning enables students to not only understand the language theoretically but also use it in real-life situations rich with cultural values (Aini et al., 2025; Susanti, 2025). This also aligns with the concept of active learning, which emphasizes direct student involvement in the process of exploration and discovery of meaning (Matriano, 2020). Through activities such as cultural visits, culinary practices, and interactions with local communities, students gain authentic experiences that simultaneously enrich their understanding of Indonesian language and culture (Idawati et al., 2025). Within the theoretical framework, experiential learning was developed by David Kolb through a four-stage cycle encompassing concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2012; Syafriani et al., 2025). This cycle describes the learning process as the transformation of experience into knowledge through reflection and application (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 2013). Recent research confirms that applying this cycle in language learning can improve the internalization of concepts and the ability to adapt in complex social contexts (Gusma et al., 2025). In the context of BIPA, implementing this cycle allows students to experience culture directly, reflect on those experiences, build conceptual understanding, and finally apply it in real-life communication (Alkan, 2016). Thus, learning is no longer passive but becomes an active process that empowers learners to construct their own knowledge.

Although experiential learning and cultural immersion methods have been recognized as having significant potential in language education, their implementation in the context of BIPA learning still requires more in-depth study, particularly regarding actual practices in the field. A critical examination of the existing literature shows that most previous studies have focused on theoretical aspects or been conducted in general education contexts, resulting in limited insights into how BIPA teachers concretely design and implement experiential learning in specific local cultural contexts. Studies by Kolb (1984) and subsequent scholars have extensively outlined the theoretical foundations of experiential learning, but translating these theories into practical classroom models, particularly in the Indonesian cultural context, remains underexplored. The growing literature on cultural immersion in language learning also tends to discuss the concept in broad strokes, without sufficient attention to how teachers operationalize immersion activities in specific cultural settings. Furthermore, a persistent gap remains between the theoretical concept of experiential learning and its practical implementation, directly applicable to teachers inside and outside the classroom. This gap is particularly pronounced in the context of a region rich in cultural heritage like West Sumatra, where the potential for culturally grounded learning is immense but pedagogically under-documented. Therefore, research is needed to bridge this gap by exploring learning practices based on local wisdom and authentic experiences, grounded in teachers' actual teaching decisions, rather than idealized frameworks.

The urgency of this research is further strengthened by empirical evidence obtained through a preliminary study conducted by the researcher. Based on initial observations of BIPA learning practices in West Sumatra, it was found that several BIPA teachers have implemented Minangkabau cultural immersion and experiential learning activities in their lessons, albeit with varying degrees of depth and consistency. Informal interviews with five BIPA teachers indicated that the implementation of cultural immersion and experiential learning has not been systematically documented, making it difficult to use as a reference for prospective teachers who wish to adopt a similar approach. Furthermore, preliminary questionnaire data indicated that teachers' perceptions of experiential learning and cultural immersion tended to be positive, but their understanding of how to integrate the two approaches in a structured and pedagogically grounded manner still needed to be deepened. These preliminary findings point to a broader systemic problem: although motivation and practical exposure exist among BIPA educators, the lack of documented models prevents the replication and

refinement of effective practices. This situation underscores the need for research that goes beyond individual teacher intuition to a more systematic and transferable body of knowledge. The gap between positive perceptions and structured implementation is the primary empirical justification for this research.

This situation highlights the need for research that specifically examines three key aspects: the implementation of cultural immersion, the implementation of experiential learning, and BIPA teachers' perceptions of both approaches. By documenting and analyzing these three aspects simultaneously, this study aims to produce a concrete and replicable picture that can be learned and applied by prospective BIPA teachers operating in diverse local cultural contexts. Previous studies have tended to address these dimensions separately. The integration of immersion and experiential learning in BIPA teaching represents a novel contribution to the field, as it bridges culture-based language teaching with the reflective learning cycle articulated by Kolb and others. The unique richness of Minangkabau culture, encompassing philosophy, social institutions, traditional arts, and culinary heritage, makes West Sumatra a highly strategic location to explore these three research dimensions. The Minangkabau context also offers analytical value beyond the local scope. In this context, it represents a case study of how a regionally distinctive cultural ecosystem can be mobilized as a pedagogical resource in internationally oriented language teaching. In this regard, this study addresses a clear research gap by offering context-based empirical evidence, largely missing from the BIPA literature.

Based on the description, this study aims to explore the experiential learning practices implemented by BIPA teachers in cultural immersion activities to introduce Minangkabau culture to international students in West Sumatra. This study seeks to uncover how the stages of experiential learning are implemented in real-life contexts and how teachers assess the effectiveness of these methods in fostering intercultural competence among international students. Unlike previous studies that have examined BIPA teaching primarily through the lens of curriculum design or student learning outcomes, this study prioritizes teachers' practices and perspectives as the primary unit of analysis, thus providing a teacher-centered empirical contribution to the existing literature. The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions: theoretically, by enriching the discourse on experiential and culture-based pedagogy in the field of BIPA; and practically, by providing a documented model that teachers, curriculum developers, and teacher educators can adapt to similar cultural contexts. Thus, this study supports the development of a local culture-based BIPA learning model. More broadly, such a model can support the improvement of intercultural competence among international students and strengthen the role of Indonesian as an instrument of cultural diplomacy at the global level. Thus, this research is a meaningful and timely contribution to the ongoing effort to position BIPA not only as language teaching, but also as a vehicle for cross-cultural understanding and international engagement.

METHOD

This study used a mixed-methods approach with a descriptive design to explore the practices of BIPA teachers in implementing experiential learning through cultural immersion activities to introduce Minangkabau culture to international students in West Sumatra (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to obtain a comprehensive picture through the integration of quantitative and qualitative data related to teachers' pedagogical practices in experiential and culture-based learning. The research subjects were BIPA teachers who were directly involved in cultural immersion-based learning activities, with 48 respondents participating in the study in groups. Respondents were selected purposively, considering their involvement in BIPA learning, specifically in the BIPA Management course in the Indonesian Language and Literature

Education Study Program. Furthermore, the international students involved were those studying at universities in West Sumatra who participated in cultural immersion activities. The main variables in this study included experiential learning practices and the implementation of cultural immersion in BIPA learning. This study aimed to identify aspects of planning, implementation, strategies, and challenges faced by teachers in integrating cultural experiences into Indonesian language learning.

The research instruments used consisted of a structured questionnaire and an observation sheet. The questionnaire was developed to measure the practices of BIPA teachers in the context of experiential learning and cultural immersion, while the observation sheet was used to analyze videos representing real-life learning practices. The questionnaire was designed based on the experiential learning theoretical framework proposed by David A. Kolb and the concept of cultural immersion in language learning. Experiential learning theory emphasized a learning cycle encompassing concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which served as the basis for developing the instrument indicators. Meanwhile, the concept of cultural immersion ensured that the instrument captured learners' direct involvement in authentic cultural contexts. The questionnaire consisted of six main dimensions: experience-based learning planning, implementation of cultural immersion activities, student involvement, learning reflection, cultural and language integration, and implementation challenges. Each dimension was elaborated into operational indicators relevant to BIPA teaching practices. A total of 30 statements were arranged using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The observation sheet was systematically structured to identify the stages of experiential learning and the forms of cultural immersion activities observed in teaching practices.

Before being used for data collection, the research instruments underwent a validation process to ensure content validity. Validation was conducted through expert judgment involving experts in BIPA teaching and language education. The experts assessed the suitability of questionnaire items with the indicators, the clarity of wording, and the representation of the constructs being measured. Based on the assessment results, several items were revised to improve clarity and accuracy of meaning. After the validation process was completed, the instrument was piloted to ensure that respondents understood each statement. The validation value obtained was (87.5) and was categorized as very valid.

Furthermore, reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the internal consistency of the instrument, with a value of (8.34) categorized as high. This reliability value served as the basis for ensuring the instrument's suitability for use in the research. The instrument was then distributed to respondents via an online platform to facilitate the data collection process. The questionnaire was completed independently by respondents while adhering to ethical research principles, including data confidentiality and anonymity.

Data collection techniques were carried out through the distribution of questionnaires and the analysis of learning videos using observation sheets. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to describe the tendencies of teaching practices in implementing experiential learning and cultural immersion. The analysis was conducted by calculating the mean values, percentages, and frequency distributions for each research dimension. Meanwhile, qualitative data from video observations were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques to identify emerging patterns of learning practices. The results of the analysis of both types of data were then integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding through a triangulation process. In addition, the analysis was also conducted to identify the most dominant dimensions as well as aspects that remained challenging in the implementation of learning. The research results were presented in the form of tables, narrative descriptions, and interpretations referring to the theoretical framework used. To ensure data accuracy, the completeness and

consistency of respondents' answers were checked before the analysis process. All research procedures were systematically designed so that other researchers could replicate them in similar contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are related to several things: 1) implementation of cultural immersion; 2) implementation of Experiential Learning; 3) BIPA Teachers' Perceptions of Experience-Based Learning and Cultural Immersion. The explanation related to the results of this study is outlined as follows. This research was conducted by observing eight videos based on cultural immersion activities conducted by BIPA (Indonesian Language and Literature) teaching students. Observations of the eight learning videos indicate that BIPA teachers implement various forms of cultural immersion that involve direct interaction between international students and Minangkabau culture. The research data comes from an analysis of videos representing experiential learning practices in BIPA classes. Each video features activities designed to engage students with real-life cultural contexts. The activities focus not only on theoretical language delivery but also emphasize direct experience in social and cultural environments. Students are actively involved in various activities, enabling them to experience the learning process more meaningfully. This analysis aims to identify the forms of cultural immersion activities and their role in facilitating authentic cultural understanding. The analysis shows that learning occurs contextually, integrating language and culture simultaneously. Teachers design activities that encourage students to observe, experience, and interact directly with cultural practices. The students involved in these activities are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Activities and International Students Involved

Activity	Type of Activity	International students
Cooking rendang and eating together	Culinary and Social Interaction	Safi from Vietnam and Umar from Nigeria
Cooking cubadak curry, leak crackers, and onde-onde	Culinary	Ismail and Umar from Nigeria
Restaurant visit and introduction	Culinary and Cultural Tourism	Adam from Nigeria and Mir from Pakistan
Traditional market visit and grocery shopping	Cultural Tourism and Social Interaction	Furqon and Abdul from Thailand
Snack tasting and Padang Beach visit	Culinary and Cultural Tourism	Ismail from Turkmenistan, Osama from Yemen, and Morsin from Pakistan
Adityawarman Museum visit	Museum Visits	Rina from Cambodia
Traditional games and coconut shell sandal making	Social Interaction	Vy Rani from Cambodia
Introduction to the rebana and bansi musical instruments	Social Interaction	Salihah from Cambodia

In general, the cultural immersion activities implemented reflect a real-life, experiential learning approach and are conducted interactively in the cultural environment in which they are applied. The designed activities enable students to understand culture not only conceptually but also through direct practice in the field. Students engage in various activities that support the development of cultural understanding through social interaction. The teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding and bridging the use of language in real-life situations. Social interaction is an essential element integrated

into every learning activity. Through these interactions, students can use Indonesian directly in relevant cultural contexts. Active student involvement demonstrates that the learning process is participatory. The experiences gained by students help them internalize cultural values more deeply. Thus, the cultural immersion approach has proven effective in implementing intercultural understanding in BIPA learning. Table 2 presents the frequency of cultural immersion activities observed in BIPA Learning.

Table 2. Frequency of Cultural Immersion Activities Observed in BIPA Learning

Type	Description	Frequency	Percentage	Category
Minangkabau Cuisine	Cooking rendang, cubadak curry, and trying traditional snacks	5	62.5%	High
Museum Visits	Observing artifacts at the Adityawarman Museum	1	12.5%	Low
Cultural Tourism	Visiting Padang Beach and a traditional market	4	50.0%	High
Social Interaction	Playing traditional games and experiencing the process of eating bajamba.	6	75.0%	Very high

The analysis shows that social interaction activities are the most dominant form of cultural immersion in BIPA learning. These activities occur with the highest frequency and reflect students' direct involvement in sociocultural practices, such as playing traditional games and participating in communal meal traditions. Furthermore, culinary activities also show a high level of intensity, indicating that food is an important medium for introducing culture to international students. Through cooking and tasting traditional dishes, students gain both sensory and social experiences. Cultural tourism is also relatively frequent, particularly through visits to local environments such as beaches and traditional markets, which allow students to observe local life firsthand. Meanwhile, museum visits are the least frequent compared to other activities. Nevertheless, these activities still contribute to enriching students' understanding of historical aspects and cultural artifacts. Overall, this variation in frequency indicates that instructors place a greater emphasis on interactive and participatory activities in cultural learning.

The finding that social interaction is the most dominant cultural immersion activity aligns with the view that language learning cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. Language in the context of multilingual education functions not only as a means of communication but also as a learning tool that enables interaction and knowledge transfer (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Mouboua et al., 2024). In the context of BIPA, the integration of language and culture is a fundamental aspect because the program is designed not only to teach linguistic competence but also to direct cultural understanding (Putri, 2025; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020; Tiawati et al., 2023). The dominance of social interaction activities in these findings also reinforces the view that immersion methods that involve direct engagement with local communities can accelerate cultural understanding and contextual language use (Andriyanto et al., 2025; Idawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, the importance of social interaction in BIPA learning is also related to the need for international students to adapt to new cultural environments, which is often a major challenge in the learning process (Alshammari et al., 2023; Cruwys et al., 2021). Thus, direct involvement in sociocultural practices helps students construct shared meaning in intercultural communication and reduces the potential for misunderstanding. This also aligns with the concept that intercultural

competence is a crucial component of foreign language acquisition. Therefore, the predominance of social interaction activities in BIPA learning demonstrates the effectiveness of an experiential approach in developing students' communicative and intercultural competence.

Furthermore, the high frequency of culinary and cultural tourism activities in this finding also reinforces the role of culture as a learning medium. Culinary culture, for example, has been recognized as an effective means of introducing social values and cultural practices to BIPA learners (Afnia et al., 2025; Ambasari & Rivanti, 2023; Setyawati et al., 2024). Activities such as cooking and tasting food not only enrich vocabulary but also open up understanding of the social context and customs of the community (Saddhono et al., 2024; Saputra et al., 2022). Furthermore, cultural tourism and field trips have been shown to provide authentic learning experiences and increase students' motivation and cultural awareness (Asteria, 2023; Putera & Sugianto, 2021). Although museum visits are less frequent, they remain significant in providing deeper historical understanding and cultural representation (Brida et al., 2016). Overall, this variety of activities reflects the importance of integrating local wisdom into BIPA learning as a strategy to strengthen the internationalization of the Indonesian language. This approach also supports the development of cross-cultural understanding and builds a positive image of Indonesia globally. Thus, these findings confirm that diverse cultural immersion-based BIPA learning can create a holistic learning experience for international students.

Based on David A. Kolb's experiential learning theory, the BIPA learning practices in the eight videos demonstrate the integration of four main stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In the concrete experience stage, students directly engage in various cultural activities such as cooking traditional foods, visiting traditional restaurants and markets, sampling local snacks, traveling to Padang Beach, visiting the Adityawarman Museum, playing traditional games, and trying out Minangkabau musical instruments. The reflection stage is evident when the instructor provides explanations and facilitates students' observations of the cultural meaning of each activity, although the intensity of student communication varies. Next, the abstract conceptualization stage emerges when students begin to understand cultural values such as togetherness, social function, and cultural identity embodied in these practices. The active experimentation stage is demonstrated through the use of Indonesian in real-life contexts, such as interactions at markets, restaurants, and in games and arts activities. Although not all students actively communicate, there are indications that they are beginning to try applying their language skills in authentic situations. Overall, the four stages of the experiential learning cycle are fully integrated in the observed learning practices. This shows that the BIPA learning carried out is in line with the principles of experience-based learning. The Stages of Experiential Learning in BIPA Learning Practice are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Stages of Experiential Learning in BIPA Learning Practice

Activity	CE	RO	AC	AE
Cooking rendang and eating together	√	√	√	√
Cooking cubadak curry, leak crackers, and onde-onde	√	√	√	√
Restaurant visit and introduction	√	√	√	√
Traditional market visit and grocery shopping	√	√	√	√
Snack tasting and Padang Beach visit	√	√	-	-
Adityawarman Museum visit	√	√	-	-
Traditional games and coconut shell sandal making	√	√	√	√
Introduction to the rebana and bansi musical instruments	√	√	-	√

Description: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), Active Experimentation (AE)

Based on Table 3, it can be understood that BIPA learning practices generally accommodate David A. Kolb's experiential learning stages, although not evenly across all activities. All activities demonstrate the presence of the concrete experience and reflective observation stages, indicating that students are consistently engaged in direct experiences while receiving reflective guidance from instructors. However, not all activities reach the abstract conceptualization and active experimentation stages, particularly in observational activities such as visits to the Adityawarman Museum and passive culinary tours. Activities that involve active participation, such as cooking, market shopping, traditional games, and music practice, tend to encompass all four learning stages more fully. This suggests that the level of student engagement influences the depth of the learning process. The absence of the conceptualization and experimentation stages in some activities indicates that the process of interpreting and applying language is not yet fully optimal. Thus, although the learning approach is experiential, its implementation remains partial in some contexts. Implicitly, these results confirm that the higher the level of active student participation, the more complete the experiential learning cycle.

Research findings indicating that all activities have reached the concrete experience and reflective observation stages, but not yet evenly reached the abstract conceptualization and active experimentation stages, align with recent studies on experiential learning, which emphasize the importance of a complete cycle in building in-depth understanding. Recent studies indicate that although experiential learning models are widely implemented, only a small proportion of educational practices fully integrate all four stages (Meyer et al., 2021; Nagel et al., 2024). This reinforces research findings that some activities still stop at experience and reflection without progressing to the conceptualization and application stages. From a contemporary perspective, experiential learning is understood as an iterative process that connects experience, reflection, concept formation, and experimentation as an inseparable whole (Gummelt et al., 2025). Other research also confirms that the reflection stage plays a crucial role in helping students interpret experiences and develop a more systematic framework for thinking (A. H. Wibowo et al., 2024). However, without the conceptualization and experimentation stages, the learning process tends not to result in optimal knowledge transfer to new situations. Furthermore, recent studies have shown that incomplete experiential learning can limit the development of students' thinking and understanding (Saragih et al., 2025). Thus, the results of this study indicate that learning practices are on the right track, but still require reinforcement at later stages to maximize the transformation of experience into knowledge. This confirms that the success of experiential learning lies not only in providing experiences, but also in learning design that ensures the continuity of the complete learning cycle.

A theoretical review of these findings through Kolb's (1984) experiential learning framework reveals a structurally significant pattern: the consistently present stages, namely concrete experience and reflective observation, correspond to the understanding dimension of the learning cycle, while the frequently absent stages, namely abstract conceptualization and active experimentation, fall under the transformation dimension. This distinction has theoretical consequences because, according to Kolb, true learning does not occur solely through experience, but through the dialectical tension between understanding and transformation of experience. The fact that BIPA learning activities in this study tended to stop at the reflective stage without progressing to conceptualization and experimentation suggests that students may accumulate experiential impressions without fully transforming them into transferable knowledge structures. From a pedagogical perspective, this imbalance implies that the learning design has prioritized exposure and observation over meaning-making and application, an imbalance explicitly warned against by Kolb's model. This finding carries theoretical implications in that it challenges the assumption that immersion-based learning is inherently experiential in the full sense, and instead proposes that cultural immersion achieves its

pedagogical potential only when intentionally structured to encompass all four stages of the learning cycle. Practically, this means that BIPA teachers need to go beyond designing culturally rich activities and shift to engineering reflective pathways, for example through post-immersion discussions, language application assignments, or project-based follow-ups that require students to apply newly acquired cultural and linguistic knowledge in new contexts. Thus, learning design shifts from being experientially inspired to being experientially comprehensive, which is the threshold at which Kolb's model predicts optimal knowledge transformation.

These results also reinforce the finding that the level of active student participation directly influences the completeness of the experiential learning cycle. Recent studies have shown that experiential learning significantly increases engagement, higher-order thinking skills, and learning outcomes when students are actively involved in real-life activities (Budiarto et al., 2024). Participatory activities, such as hands-on practice and social interaction, are more effective in encouraging students to reach the active experimentation stage than solely observational activities. Other research also confirms that involvement in simulations, real-life projects, or field practice can enhance conceptual understanding and the ability to apply them in real-life contexts (Adib, 2024). Furthermore, experiential learning has been shown to shape attitudes, awareness, and behavior through intensive reflection and social interaction (Hung et al., 2023). Recent research trends also indicate that this approach is increasingly important in 21st-century education because it can develop adaptive skills and readiness to face real-world challenges (Ainiyah et al., 2025). However, without activity designs that encourage the application of knowledge, the potential of experiential learning is not fully realized. Therefore, learning designs are needed that systematically integrate the four stages of the learning cycle so that students not only experience and understand but also can apply the knowledge contextually. Thus, the results of this study confirm that active engagement and a comprehensive learning cycle are key factors in the effectiveness of implementing experiential learning in BIPA learning.

The results of this study on BIPA teachers' perceptions of experiential-based learning and cultural immersion are compiled based on data obtained through a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5, referring to David A. Kolb's experiential learning framework and the concept of cultural immersion in BIPA learning. This instrument was designed to capture teachers' perspectives on six key aspects: planning cultural experiences, implementing cultural immersion, student involvement, reflection on experiences, cultural and language integration, and implementation challenges. Through the statements compiled, this study sought to capture the extent to which BIPA teachers understand, design, and implement experiential learning in their teaching practice. Furthermore, the questionnaire also revealed teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of student involvement in cultural activities and the role of reflection in deepening language and cultural understanding. Furthermore, the results of this study were supplemented by BIPA teachers' impressions regarding the implementation of these activities. The results are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. BIPA Teachers' Perceptions of Experiential-Based Learning and Cultural Immersion

Indicators	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural Experience Planning	I designed BIPA learning that involved direct cultural experiences.	0	0	4.2	31.3	64.4
	I determined learning objectives that integrated aspects of Minangkabau language and culture.	0	0	4.2	43.8	52.1
	I selected cultural activities that suited the needs and ability levels of international students.	0	0	0	35.4	64.4
	I prepared cultural introduction materials before the immersion activities.	0	0	2.1	35.4	65.5
	I designed activities that allowed students to gain real-life experiences with Minangkabau culture.	0	0	0	33.3	66.7
Implementation of Cultural Immersion	I take students to cultural sites such as museums or tourist attractions.	0	2.1	10.4	16.7	70.8
	I facilitate student sampling of Minangkabau cuisine as part of the learning process.	0	4.2	14.6	25.0	56.3
	I explain the cultural significance of each activity.	0	0	0	35.4	64.6
	I integrate cultural activities with direct use of Indonesian.	0	0	2.1	31.3	66.7
	I guide students in observing cultural practices in the local community.	0	2.1	4.2	37.5	56.3
	I ensure that cultural immersion activities are structured and directed.	0	0	0	45.8	54.2
Student Involvement	I encourage students to participate actively in cultural activities.	0	0	2.1	33.3	64.6
	I provide opportunities for students to experience cultural activities firsthand.	0	0	2.1	18.8	79.2
	I encourage students to ask questions about the culture they encounter.	0	0	2.1	33.3	64.6
	I integrate cultural activities with the direct use of Indonesian.	0	0	2.1	31.3	66.7

Indicators	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Reflection of Experience	I ask students to reflect on their cultural experiences.	0	0	0	37.5	62.5
	I facilitate discussions after cultural immersion activities.	0	0	6.3	31.3	62.4
	I help students connect cultural experiences to language learning concepts.	0	0	4.2	33.3	62.5
	I encourage students to compare their home cultures with Minangkabau culture.	0	0	10.4	27.1	62.5
	I use cultural experiences as discussion material in follow-up learning.	0	0	0	31.3	68.8
Language and Cultural Integration	I integrate cultural experiences into language skills practice.	0	0	6.3	31.3	62.4
	I use cultural context to clarify the meaning of Indonesian vocabulary and expressions.	2.1	0	2.1	41.7	54.2
	I help students understand cultural values through the use of language.	0	0	0	37.5	62.5
	I develop learning activities that simultaneously combine linguistic and cultural aspects.	0	0	8.3	39.6	52.1
	I relate cultural activities to real-life communication situations.	0	0	0	37.5	62.5

Description: 1—5 (Strongly Disagree—Strongly Agree)

Based on Table 4, BIPA teachers have a very positive perception of cultural experience-based learning planning. This is evident from the predominance of agree and strongly agree responses across all indicators, indicating that teachers consistently design learning that integrates direct cultural experiences. The absence of disagree responses indicates that this approach has become common practice in learning planning. The high percentages in the aspects of activity selection and designing real-life experiences indicate that teachers have considered the suitability of activities to the needs and abilities of international students. Furthermore, teachers' readiness to prepare cultural introduction materials prior to immersion activities also reflects structured planning. Although there were a few neutral responses on several indicators, this did not significantly reduce the overall positive trend. These results indicate that teachers not only understand the importance of cultural integration in language learning but are also able to implement it during the planning stage. Thus, BIPA learning planning based on cultural experiences is categorized as very good and supports the creation of learning oriented towards direct, contextual experiences.

The implementation of cultural immersion in BIPA learning shows a very positive trend, marked by the dominance of responses in the agree and strongly agree categories across almost all indicators. This indicates that teachers actively implement cultural experience-based activities, such as inviting students to visit cultural sites, try typical culinary delights, and observe cultural practices in the community. The high percentage of explaining cultural meanings indicates that teachers not only present experiences but also ensure that there is a deep understanding of these activities.

Furthermore, the high integration of Indonesian in cultural activities indicates an effort to link cultural experiences with direct language practice. However, there were still a small number of neutral and disagree responses, especially for cultural visits and culinary activities, which implicitly indicates variations in the intensity of implementation in the field. This is likely influenced by factors such as limited access, time, or certain conditions during the implementation of the activities. Nevertheless, overall, these results indicate that the implementation of cultural immersion has been running optimally. Thus, BIPA teachers are not only able to design but also effectively implement cultural experience-based learning in real-life practice.

Student engagement in cultural immersion-based learning shows a very high level, as reflected by the dominance of agree and strongly agree responses across all indicators. This indicates that teachers consistently encourage active student participation, both in participating in cultural activities and in experiencing them directly. The highest percentage of opportunities for direct practice indicates that real-life experiences are the primary focus of learning, allowing students to become not only observers but also actors in the learning process. Furthermore, the encouragement to ask questions and the use of Indonesian in a cultural context demonstrate efforts to foster communicative interactions. The absence of disagree responses suggests that student engagement has become a primary concern in BIPA teaching practices. Although there were a few neutral responses, this does not diminish the general trend that student engagement is at an optimal level. These results indicate that learning is student-centered, where students are given space to construct understanding through active experience. Thus, student engagement in cultural immersion-based learning can be categorized as very good and supports the creation of interactive learning.

The reflection aspect of experiences in BIPA learning shows a very positive trend, as indicated by the dominance of responses in the agree and strongly agree categories across all indicators. This indicates that teachers actively facilitate the reflection process as an important part of experiential learning, such as asking students to reflect on activities, holding discussions, and linking cultural experiences to language learning concepts. The high percentage of students using experiences as material for further discussion indicates that reflection is not only carried out briefly, but also continuously throughout the learning process. Furthermore, efforts to encourage students to compare their home culture with Minangkabau culture indicate a strengthening of intercultural awareness. However, the presence of neutral responses on several indicators, particularly on discussion and cultural comparison activities, implicitly indicates that not all teachers carry out reflection in depth or consistently. This is likely due to time constraints or variations in teaching strategies used. Nevertheless, the absence of negative responses indicates that reflection remains a recognized important part of learning.

The integration of language and culture in BIPA learning shows a very positive trend, marked by the dominance of answers in the agree and strongly agree categories across all indicators. This indicates that teachers consistently link cultural experiences to the development of language skills, both in understanding vocabulary and expressions and in the context of everyday communication. The high percentage for the indicator on understanding cultural values through language indicates that teachers not only teach linguistic aspects but also the social and cultural meanings inherent in language use. Furthermore, the development of activities that simultaneously combine linguistic and cultural aspects demonstrates the existence of contextual learning efforts. However, the presence of a small number of neutral responses and even strong disagreements regarding the use of cultural context to explain the implicit meaning of language indicates that not all teachers have optimally implemented this strategy. This may indicate variations in understanding or pedagogical skills in integrating these two aspects. Thus, overall, these results reflect that the integration of language and

culture has become an important part of BIPA learning practices. Furthermore, challenges and implementation are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. Challenges and Implementation

Indicator	1	2	3	4	5
Time constraints hinder cultural immersion activities.	2.1	2.1	18.8	35.4	41.7
Limited facilities or access to cultural locations hinder learning.	4.2	6.3	22.9	27.1	39.6
Students' cultural differences complicate the teaching process.	4.2	18.8	27.1	20.8	29.2
Students struggle to understand the deeper meaning of culture.	8.3	22.9	25.0	14.6	29.2
I struggle to integrate cultural experiences with language learning.	6.3	22.9	31.3	14.6	25.0

Description: 1—5 (Strongly Disagree—Strongly Agree)

Based on Table 5, the challenges in implementing cultural immersion-based learning demonstrate a greater variety of perceptions than the previous aspects. Limited time and access to facilities appear to be quite dominant obstacles, as evidenced by the high percentages in the agree and strongly agree categories, indicating that external factors remain a major obstacle in implementing cultural activities. However, regarding differences in students' cultural backgrounds and difficulties understanding cultural meanings, the distribution of responses tended to be more spread out, with a significant percentage even in the disagree category. This implicitly indicates that some teachers do not view cultural differences as a primary obstacle, but rather as a manageable part of the learning dynamics. Furthermore, regarding the indicator of difficulty integrating culture and language, the dominance of neutral to disagree responses indicates that most teachers feel quite capable of combining both aspects in their learning practices. However, some respondents still acknowledged difficulties, indicating variations in pedagogical competence among teachers. Overall, these results suggest that challenges in BIPA learning stem more from technical factors than from teachers' conceptual aspects. Thus, the success of cultural immersion implementation depends not only on teacher competence but also on the support of facilities, time, and the learning environment.

The results of student reflections on the implementation of the BIPA management project indicate a predominance of positive experiences. In general, students felt that this activity was very enjoyable, memorable, and provided new experiences not easily obtained through conventional learning. These impressions arose not only from the interaction with international students, but also from the opportunity to learn about and reflect on their own culture. Implicitly, this indicates that the BIPA project succeeded in creating authentic, experiential learning, where students acted not only as teachers but also as active learners in a cross-cultural context. Furthermore, the emergence of pride and love for their own culture indicates that cultural immersion activities were able to strengthen students' cultural identity. The two-way interactions also demonstrated that learning took place in a dialogic manner, not one-way, thus enriching the cultural insights of both parties. Furthermore, the experience of communicating directly with international students also increased students' confidence, especially in using language and adapting to cultural differences. This confirms that the BIPA project functions not only as a means of academic learning, but also as a space for developing interpersonal and intercultural competencies.

Furthermore, the data also revealed the development of professional and pedagogical dimensions throughout the project. Students recognized that being a BIPA administrator requires multitasking skills, such as teaching, emotional guidance, and managing learning activities in a structured manner. This implicitly indicates that the project provided real-world experience in learning management practices, from planning to evaluation. Furthermore, the growing awareness of the importance of patience, tolerance, and empathy indicates that students experienced a profound

learning process. This activity also demonstrated that language learning cannot be separated from its cultural context, as cultural understanding is the key to successful communication. However, there are indications that this meaningful experience is highly dependent on the level of active student involvement and the quality of interactions established during the activity. Therefore, the sustainability of this program is crucial to ensure its positive impacts can continue to be felt and developed. Overall, these results confirm that the BIPA management project not only improves academic competence but also shapes students' readiness as future teachers who are adaptive to cultural diversity.

The findings of this study indicate that BIPA teachers have a strong tendency to develop learning oriented towards direct experience and cultural immersion as the core of the learning process. This is reflected in how learning activities are not only designed contextually but also integrate aspects of language and culture simultaneously in real-life practice. This approach indicates that learning is no longer centered on knowledge transfer, but rather on creating authentic experiences that enable students to construct understanding independently through interaction with the sociocultural environment. This condition aligns with recent research findings confirming that experiential learning is effective in improving the quality of language learning because it involves active participation and real-life contexts (Morris, 2020). Furthermore, integrating cultural immersion into learning indicates a systematic effort to build students' communicative competence and intercultural awareness, as research confirms that direct cross-cultural experiences can deepen understanding of language as a social practice (Lokkesmoe et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2025). Thus, the learning practices undertaken are not merely instructional in nature but have led to authentic learning that places experience as the primary source of knowledge construction.

The learning implemented also reflects a complete experiential learning cycle, where active student engagement, reflection, and the integration of experiences into language use are integral components. Teachers not only facilitate activities but also encourage students to participate, interact, and critically reflect on their experiences, enabling them to transform these experiences into meaningful knowledge. This aligns with recent research showing that active engagement in real-life experiences can enhance students' motivation, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills (Ampountolas et al., 2019; Raach & Bellemmouche, 2024). Furthermore, the emphasis on reflection as part of the learning process indicates that teachers understand the importance of internalizing experiences, as reflection is key to transforming experiences into meaningful learning (Le Cornu, 2009). The integration of language and culture also demonstrates that language learning is not separated from the context of its use but rather positioned as a means of understanding cultural values and practices. These findings are supported by research showing that a culture-based approach can significantly improve communicative competence and intercultural awareness (Hicham et al., 2025). Overall, these results indicate that BIPA learning practices have developed, although they still require strengthening in terms of consistent reflection implementation and equitable student involvement.

From a scholarly contribution perspective, this study advances the BIPA literature in three interrelated ways. First, it provides the first teacher-centered empirical account of how experiential learning and cultural immersion are implemented simultaneously in a specific regional cultural context, namely Minangkabau, thus filling a documented gap in this field where theoretical elaboration has outpaced practical documentation. Second, it operationalizes Kolb's four-stage learning cycle as an analytical lens for evaluating BIPA instructional designs, demonstrating that the framework retains strong explanatory power in non-Western pedagogical environments rich in cultural heritage and thereby contributing to the cross-cultural applicability of experiential learning theory. Third, by highlighting teacher perceptions as a central variable alongside instructional practices, this study introduces a methodological orientation underrepresented in BIPA research, namely one that treats

teachers not simply as implementers of curriculum but as reflective agents whose epistemological stance shapes the quality of learning. Based on these contributions, future research is recommended to pursue several directions: developing and validating a structured BIPA learning model that systematically integrates all four stages of the experiential learning cycle across various cultural contexts in Indonesia; Conduct longitudinal studies tracking the development of students' intercultural competencies during extended immersion programs; and explore the role of digital or hybrid immersion formats in sustaining experiential learning when physical cultural access is limited. Teacher training programs for prospective BIPA educators should also be redesigned to encompass not only cultural content knowledge but also competencies in supporting the reflective and conceptual stages of experiential learning, ensuring that cultural immersion activities translate into pedagogically comprehensive learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, BIPA learning that integrates an experiential approach and cultural immersion has been implemented effectively and shows a strong tendency to support the learning process. The learning practices carried out not only provide direct experience through various cultural activities, but are also followed by a process of reflection and meaning that allows students to build an understanding of language in a sociocultural context. This indicates that concerns regarding the lack of connection between language learning and cultural practices can be addressed through learning designs that refer to the experiential learning cycle. However, there are still challenges in ensuring equal student involvement and consistent reflection processes. Furthermore, positive teacher perceptions regarding the planning, implementation, and integration of language and culture indicate pedagogical readiness in implementing holistic learning. The contribution of this research lies in strengthening empirical evidence that experiential and cultural immersion-based BIPA learning not only improves linguistic competence, but also forms intercultural competence, reflective skills, and students' readiness to interact across cultures, thereby enriching the study of second language learning that is oriented towards real experiences and relevant to global needs.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

CONFLICTING INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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