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INTEGRATING 'NGAOS, MAMAOS, MAENPO' PHILOSOPHY IN EXPOSITION TEXT LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian language learning within the *Merdeka Curriculum* requires students to possess critical reasoning skills, particularly in constructing argument-based texts. However, pedagogical reality often reveals a disparity between curriculum expectations and students' actual competence, primarily due to high cognitive load and cultural alienation. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of revitalizing Cianjur's local wisdom philosophy—*Ngaos, Mamaos, Maenpo*—as a cognitive stimulus in learning to write exposition texts. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with a case study design at MTs Al-Riyadl Cipanas, this research involved 26 Grade VIII students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via diagnostic surveys, pre-and post-intervention writing tasks, and observations. The findings revealed a striking "cultural paradox" where, despite 77% visual familiarity, 88% of students suffered from an "epistemic void" regarding the philosophy's meaning. However, after the didactic integration of local wisdom, specifically reinterpreting *Maenpo* as self-control, a significant surge occurred in argumentation quality. The average score for content competence increased significantly from 68 (Sufficient) to 85 (High), accompanied by increased writing productivity. These results indicate that local wisdom functions as effective "epistemic scaffolding," allowing students to transform implicit cultural knowledge into explicit academic arguments. This study concludes that integrating local culture is a strategic approach to realizing the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, fostering both global literacy and local moral character.

Keywords: *Exposition Text, Cianjur Local Wisdom, Ngaos Mamaos Maenpo, Epistemic Scaffolding, Profil Pelajar Pancasila.*

INTRODUCTION

The national education landscape in Indonesia is currently undergoing a seismic shift through the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Within this framework, language education is no longer confined to the mastery of grammatical rules but serves as a primary vehicle for cultivating critical reasoning and character. This paradigm aligns closely with the vision of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to foster the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student



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Profile). As (Masrukhi et al., 2024) eloquently argue, the dimension of "Global Diversity" (*Berkebinekaan Global*) is not merely about tolerating differences but about rooting students deeply in their own cultural identity so they can engage with the world without losing their moral compass.

However, the vision of producing character-driven students faces a grim reality in the field. The current generation of adolescents is grappling with a crisis of identity, manifested in the rising rates of juvenile delinquency, brawls (*tawuran*), and a general erosion of moral values. (Jayanti & Wulandari, 2024) identify this phenomenon as a direct consequence of the fading influence of local wisdom in the daily lives of students. Schools, which should function as cultural fortresses, often fail to bridge the gap between traditional values and modern teenage life. Consequently, language classes frequently become dry, technical spaces devoid of the moral negotiations necessary for character building.

This disconnect becomes particularly problematic when students face the demands of high-stakes academic writing, specifically the Exposition Text. Unlike narrative genres that allow for imaginative freedom, exposition requires a high degree of epistemic competence. Students must formulate clear theses, evaluate evidence, and construct logical defenses. (Hyland, 2003) posits that this ability to argue coherently is the hallmark of 21st-century literacy. Yet, for many students, the transition from being passive consumers of information to active producers of logical arguments is a steep uphill battle, often resulting in superficial and disorganized writing. The root cause of this academic struggle is often cognitive rather than merely linguistic. Cognitive psychology, particularly Schema Theory, suggests that the brain processes new information best when it can anchor it to existing knowledge structures. When students are asked to argue about abstract or generic topics that feel alien to their lived experiences, they suffer from an excessive cognitive load. They simply lack the mental "hooks" to organize their thoughts. This explains why students who are articulate in daily conversation often freeze when faced with a blank page; they are alienated from the content they are asked to write about.

Despite the theoretical consensus that culture can serve as this missing cognitive anchor, the bridge between culture and curriculum remains unbuilt. (Widiastuti et al., 2024) highlight a persistent implementation gap: while educators acknowledge the value of local wisdom, it is rarely integrated systematically into core skills like writing. Local wisdom is frequently treated as a museum artifact—something to be preserved in history lessons—rather than a living pedagogical tool that can sharpen analytical thinking in language classes. Compounding this cognitive alienation is the issue of student engagement.

Conventional teaching materials that ignore the student's social environment often lead to passivity and boredom. (Nur et al., 2024) emphasize that when learning materials fail to resonate with students' interests, the "affective filter" rises, blocking the intake of new skills. In the context of writing, this manifests as anxiety. Students perceive writing as a burdensome chore performed for the teacher's approval, rather than a medium for self-expression or intellectual defense.



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This complex web of problems—cognitive load, cultural alienation, and low engagement—is vividly illustrated at MTs Al-Riyadl in Cipanas, Cianjur. Situated in a region famous for its *tri-tangtu* philosophy (*Ngaos*, *Mamaos*, *Maenpo*), the students paradoxically exhibit what this study terms a "cultural void." Diagnostic data reveals that while 88% of students encounter the slogan daily, they fail to grasp its philosophical essence. *Maenpo* is reduced to physical fighting, and *Ngaos* to ritual recitation. This loss of meaning mirrors their academic struggles; just as they cannot articulate the depth of their culture, they struggle to articulate depth in their academic arguments.

Addressing this deadlock requires a pedagogical pivot toward contextualization. (Saputro, 2025) argues that for learning to be effective, it must be deeply rooted in the social environment of the learner. Local wisdom should function as "epistemic scaffolding." By utilizing the familiar logic of *Maenpo* (which teaches self-control and strategy), teachers can help students understand the unfamiliar logic of exposition texts (which require control of tone and strategic placement of evidence). Culture becomes the known territory that makes the unknown territory of academic writing navigable.

The impact of such integration extends beyond improved grades; it touches the core of student identity. (Setyowati et al., 2024) found that when local values are woven into learning, student motivation surges because the content feels relevant and emotionally resonant. Furthermore, (Anggraini & Riyanti, 2025) suggest that this approach effectively embeds moral education into skill acquisition. When a student writes an argument against violence based on the *Maenpo* philosophy, they are not just practicing text structure; they are internalizing a localized solution to modern problems, reclaiming their heritage as a source of intellectual authority.

Driven by these realities, this research aims to revitalize the *Ngaos*, *Mamaos*, and *Maenpo* philosophy not merely as a cultural topic, but as a cognitive strategy for writing exposition texts. This study posits a novel approach by establishing an isomorphic correlation between cultural values and text elements: *Ngaos* (intellectual rigor) mirrors the Thesis statement, *Maenpo* (strategic self-control) mirrors the Argumentation logic, and *Mamaos* (aesthetic sensitivity) mirrors the Linguistic features. Through this synergy, local wisdom is transformed from a static slogan into a dynamic epistemic tool that sharpens students' critical reasoning.

METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to investigate the phenomenon of students' argumentation skills within their natural learning environment at MTs Al-Riyadl. This methodological choice is grounded in the framework provided by (Tisdell et al., 2025), who state that qualitative research is best suited for understanding how individuals interpret their experiences and construct meaning from their world. By utilizing a case study design, this research generates a "thick description" of how the cultural values of



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Ngaos, Mamaos, and Maenpo are transformed into cognitive scaffolds. The research involved 26 students of Grade VIII in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at MTs Al-Riyadl, Cianjur. The respondents, consisting of 12 male and 14 female students aged 13 to 14 years, were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This selection was based on the consideration that Grade VIII students are in the transition phase to formal operational thinking, making them suitable for abstract argumentation. Furthermore, the respondents reside in a rural area with high exposure to Cianjur cultural symbols. The selected class represents a heterogeneous group with mixed academic abilities to ensure the data reflects the general student population accurately.

To ensure data validity, this study utilizes three standardized instruments based on the Genre-Based Approach as detailed in Table 1. The diagnostic survey maps the initial gap in cultural knowledge. The writing tasks are designed to be comparable, where Task A (General Topic) measures baseline competence, and Task B (Local Topic) measures competence after cultural scaffolding. This instrument design is supported by (Alle et al., 2025), who argue that modules incorporating local elements effectively strengthen students' writing skills. The third instrument is an analytic scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2007) to objectively measure content depth.

Table 1. Research Instrument Grid Specification

No	Instrument	Type	Indicator Measured
1	Diagnostic Survey	Closed Questionnaire	Mapping the gap between knowing the slogan vs. understanding the philosophy.
2	Writing Task A (Pre-Test)	Essay Prompt	Arguments on <i>School Cleanliness</i> (High Cognitive Load).
3	Writing Task B (Post-Test)	Essay Prompt	Arguments on <i>Maenpo Mentality</i> (Cultural Scaffolding).
4	Analytic Scoring Rubric	Assessment Sheet	Measuring: Content (30%) , Organization (20%), Vocabulary (25%), Grammar (25%).

The data collection process was carried out in a single intensive session of two 40-minute periods to ensure internal consistency. The procedure followed a systematic flow as illustrated in Figure 1. The process began with the diagnostic survey and the first writing task to establish a baseline. Subsequently, the teacher performed a didactic intervention by acting as a cultural mediator, explaining *Maenpo* as self-control through storytelling. Following this, students were assigned the second writing task to internalize the cultural philosophy. The session

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concluded with a reflection stage involving teacher observations and student verbal feedback.

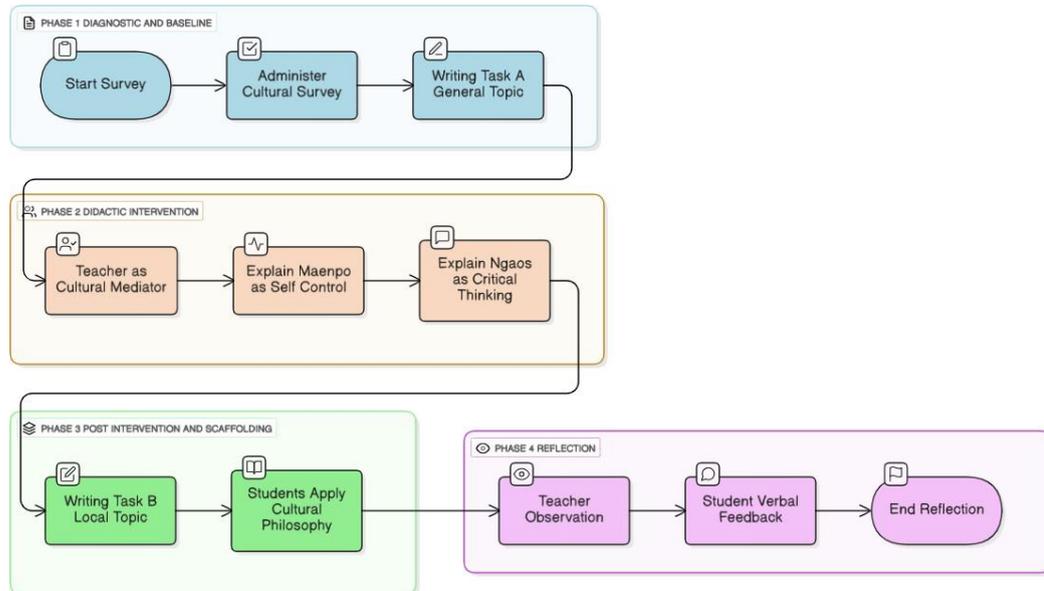


Figure 1. Research Procedure Flowchart

The collected data were analyzed using the Interactive Analysis Model by (Miles et al., 2013) which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the condensation phase, arguments were coded based on their logical structure while irrelevant data were discarded. The condensed data were displayed in comparison tables to visualize the progression of argumentation quality. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the causal link between local wisdom integration and argumentation logic. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher applied source triangulation by cross-verifying quantitative results with qualitative observation notes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE CULTURAL BASELINE: VISUAL FAMILIARITY VERSUS EPISTEMIC VOID

The investigation commenced with a diagnostic inquiry aimed at establishing the cultural baseline of the students at MTs Al-Riyadl. Before any pedagogical intervention could be designed, it was imperative to understand the existing cognitive landscape of the twenty-six Grade VIII students regarding their own local heritage. The results of the diagnostic survey revealed a phenomenon that this study identifies as a "Symbolic Paradox." This paradox is characterized by a stark contrast between visual familiarity and philosophical comprehension, creating a superficial layer of cultural identity that lacks cognitive depth.



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Quantitatively, the data indicated a high level of exposure to cultural symbols. Twenty students, representing approximately 77% of the cohort, affirmed that they were "very familiar" with the tri-tangtu slogan "*Ngaos, Mamaos, Maenpo*." They reported encountering these terms frequently in their semiotic landscape: carved on village entrance gates (*gapura*), printed on municipal banners, and even featured in school logos. This suggests that physically, the students are immersed in an ecosystem rich with Cianjur's cultural markers.

However, a qualitative probe into their understanding revealed an alarming "epistemic void." When asked to articulate the meanings of these pillars, 23 students (88%) failed to provide a philosophical definition. Their responses were largely literal or misconceived. For instance, *Maenpo* was predominantly defined merely as "fighting" (*gelut*) or "martial arts moves" (*jurus*), completely stripping it of its core value of self-control. Similarly, *Ngaos* was viewed strictly as the ritualistic act of reciting scripture, detached from the broader concept of intellectual curiosity or literacy. *Mamaos* suffered the most significant degradation of meaning, often being vaguely associated with "singing old songs," without any connection to aesthetic sensitivity (*olah rasa*) or polite communication.

This finding provides empirical validation for the theory of "cultural alienation" in the digital age. Despite living in the heart of Cianjur, these Generation Z students are intellectually disconnected from their roots. (Widiastuti et al., 2024) argue that this condition arises because local wisdom is often treated as a museum artifact in schools—something to be preserved rather than used as a thinking tool. The students view these terms as relics of the past, irrelevant to their modern lives. Consequently, when they entered the classroom to learn exposition writing, they arrived with a "cognitive deficit"; they lacked a strong value system to ground their arguments, which became evident in the subsequent pre-test.

PRE-INTERVENTION ANALYSIS: THE COGNITIVE LOAD OF ABSTRACT TOPICS

The impact of this cultural disconnection was vividly illustrated in the first phase of the writing assessment. Students were assigned Writing Task A on a general topic: "*The Importance of School Cleanliness*." This topic was chosen because it is a standard prompt in the curriculum, assumed to be universally understood. However, the classroom observation notes during this session painted a picture of cognitive struggle. The atmosphere was characterized by long periods of inactivity, frequent requests for teacher assistance (e.g., "*Bu, apalagi yang harus ditulis?*"), and visible signs of frustration.

The textual analysis of the students' output confirmed these observations. The resulting essays were characterized by "normative sterility." The arguments presented were circular and repetitive. For example, a vast majority of students produced sentences such as "*We must be clean because cleanliness is healthy*" and then repeated this idea in slightly different words for three paragraphs. They failed



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to elaborate on *why* cleanliness impacts the learning mood or *how* it reflects student discipline. The average paragraph length was stunted, hovering around three to four sentences. From a psycholinguistic perspective, this failure can be attributed to a high "cognitive load." Schema Theory suggests that writing requires accessing existing knowledge structures (schemata). Because the topic of "Cleanliness" was treated as a generic moral obligation rather than a personal value, students had no deep schemata to draw from. They were forced to invent arguments *ex nihilo*, which exhausted their working memory. As noted by (Nur et al., 2024), when learning materials fail to resonate with students' personal or social reality, the "affective filter" rises, blocking the flow of creative ideas and resulting in student passivity. The students were not "bad writers" per se; they were uninspired writers operating without a cognitive anchor.

THE DIDACTIC INTERVENTION: REFRAMING CULTURE AS LOGIC

The turning point of this research occurred during the didactic intervention phase. The researcher, acting as the teacher, introduced the *Ngaos*, *Mamaos*, *Maenpo* philosophy not as

a subject of history, but as a framework for logic and behavior. The intervention utilized a storytelling approach to reframe the concepts. *Maenpo* was explained using the metaphor of "*Ilmu Padi*" (the rice philosophy)—that true strength lies in bowing down, or self-control. The teacher explicitly connected *Maenpo* to the concept of "Argumentation": just as a martial artist anticipates an opponent's move and counters it with patience, a writer must anticipate a reader's counter-argument and refute it with logic.

This analogical reasoning sparked a visible shift in student engagement. Classroom observation notes recorded a phenomenon of "epistemic awakening." Students who were previously passive began to ask critical questions, such as, "*So, if I don't fight back when mocked, am I doing Maenpo?*" This indicated that the concept was resonating with their daily social struggles, particularly regarding bullying and peer pressure. (Setyowati et al., 2024) emphasize that such engagement is the precursor to deep learning; when local values are woven into the curriculum, the content becomes emotionally resonant, lowering the barrier to participation. The intervention successfully transformed *Maenpo* from a "physical sport" into a "mental stance," providing students with a new vocabulary to describe their internal world.

POST-INTERVENTION ANALYSIS: THE EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL LOGIC

The efficacy of this cultural scaffolding was rigorously tested in Writing Task



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B, which required students to write an exposition text on "*The Maenpo Mentality for Students.*" The transformation in writing performance was not merely quantitative but qualitatively profound, particularly in the dimension of content depth. In the pre-test, arguments were surface-level and generic, but in the post-test, students demonstrated the ability to construct multi-layered arguments. They successfully internalized the *Maenpo* value of patience to argue strictly against juvenile delinquency (*tawuran*). For instance, one student articulated a sophisticated logical sequence by writing, "*A student who fights is not a champion (jawara), but a loser who cannot control his emotions. The true Maenpo mentality is the ability to smile when insulted, because we know we are strong.*" This represents a shift from simple assertions to complex reasoning: Thesis (Fighting is weak) -> Evidence (Lack of control) -> Reiteration (True strength is patience). This finding empirically validates (Alle et al., 2025), who argue that local wisdom provides a "contextual foothold" that allows students to elaborate on ideas more freely because they possess ownership of the knowledge. Beyond the depth of argumentation, the clarity of the cultural concept significantly enhanced the structural organization and linguistic richness of the texts. Because students understood the "philosophy" clearly—equating *Ngaos* with the Thesis/Knowledge and *Maenpo* with the Argument/Defense—they naturally organized their essays with greater coherence. The transition between the introduction of the problem (bullying) and the proposed solution (*Maenpo* mentality) became smoother and more logical. Furthermore, the intervention enriched the students' lexical repertoire. In the initial task, vocabulary was limited to daily colloquialisms, but in the final task, students began to effectively code-switch, using culturally specific terms such as *Jawara*, *Handap Asor*, and *Soméah* alongside academic terms like *Mentalitas* and *Identitas*. This supports the view of (Saputro, 2025) that integrating culture enriches the linguistic environment of the classroom, allowing students to navigate between their local identity and academic expectations effectively.

COMPARATIVE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The qualitative improvements described above are substantiated by the statistical data presented in Table 2 and visualized in Figure 2. The comparison of scores across the four rubric dimensions reveals a consistent upward trajectory that mirrors the cognitive shifts observed in the students.

Table 2. Comparison of Argumentation Quality Scores (N=26)



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Assessment Aspect	General Topic (Pre-Intervention)	Local Topic (Post-Intervention)	Improvement Category
Text Structure	75	78	Moderate
Content Depth (Argument)	68	85	High
Productivity (Length)	Sufficient (3-4 sentences)	Good (8-9 sentences)	Significant
Data Relevance	70	88	High

As illustrated in **Figure 2**, the most significant surge occurred in the Content Depth aspect, which jumped from a "Sufficient" average of 68 to a "High" average of 85. This dramatic 17-point increase is the highest among all variables, confirming that the primary benefit of local wisdom integration is epistemic—it gives students something meaningful to say. Meanwhile, the Organization score improved from 75 to 78. While less dramatic than the content improvement, this rise suggests that having a clear "cultural logic" helps students structure their thoughts more linearly.

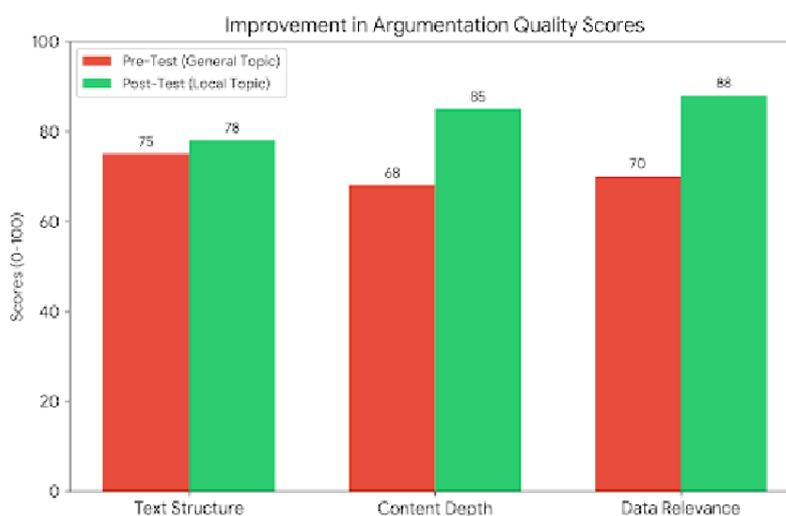


Figure 2. Improvement in Argumentation Quality Scores across Dimensions



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Furthermore, the intervention had a profound impact on writing productivity. As shown in **Figure 3**, the average paragraph length more than doubled, increasing from 3.5 sentences in the pre-test to 8.5 sentences in the post-test. This indicates that the "Maenpo" topic eliminated the writer's block that plagued the students during the general topic task

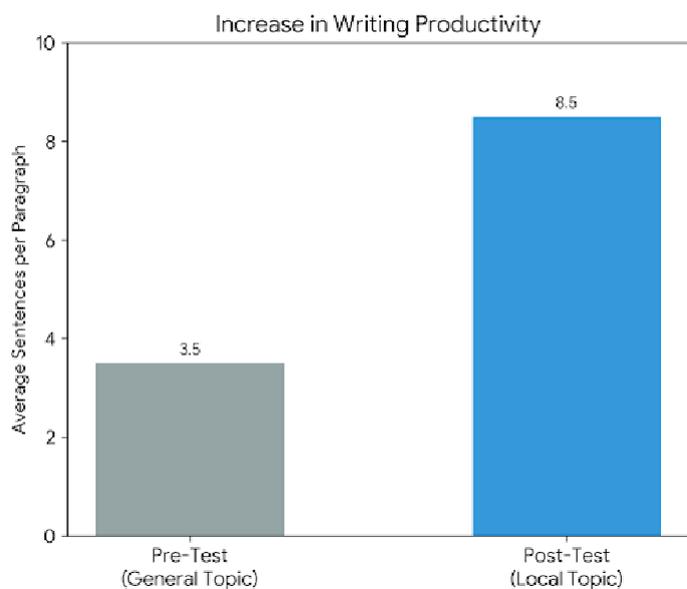


Figure 3. Increase in Writing Productivity (Average Sentences per Paragraph)

EXTENDED DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY AND POLICY

1. Local Wisdom as Epistemic Scaffolding

The central theoretical implication of this study is the validation of local wisdom as "Epistemic Scaffolding." In educational psychology, scaffolding refers to temporary support that helps a learner achieve a task. Here, the Maenpo philosophy acted as a scaffold for Critical Thinking. The abstract concept of "logical argumentation" was too difficult for students to grasp directly. However, by mapping it onto the familiar concept of "self-defense" (Maenpo), the task became manageable. Students used their cultural knowledge as a bridge to reach academic competence. This aligns with (Tisdell et al., 2025), who advocate for qualitative approaches that recognize the learner's background as a valid source of knowledge.

2. Character Education in the Age of Crisis

Beyond the academic metrics, this research highlights the critical role of local wisdom in addressing the moral crisis of Generation Z. As highlighted by (Jayanti & Wulandari, 2024), the erosion of character is a pressing issue manifesting in



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student brawls and lack of discipline. This study demonstrates that language learning can be a powerful vehicle for character internalization. By writing about *Maenpo*, students were effectively engaging in "moral reasoning." They were not just memorizing a definition of patience; they were constructing arguments for why patience is superior to violence. (Masrukhi et al., 2024) correctly identify this as the essence of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila—creating students who are globally competent yet locally rooted.

3. Addressing the Implementation Gap

Finally, this study serves as a practical response to the "implementation gap" identified by (Widiastuti et al., 2024). Many educators hesitate to use local wisdom because they perceive it as "non-academic" or "old-fashioned." This research refutes that view by proving that local philosophy can be operationalized into rigorous academic tasks (Exposition Writing). It provides a replicable model for teachers: identify a local value, extract its logical structure,

and use it as a prompt for academic tasks. This proves that local culture is not an obstacle to modernity, but a vital resource for achieving the "Deep Learning" envisioned in the Merdeka Curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Based on the rigorous analysis of the data and the discussion regarding the integration of Cianjur's local wisdom into the learning of exposition texts at MTs Al-Riyadl, this study draws several profound conclusions that extend beyond mere academic scoring. First, the research uncovered a critical phenomenon termed the "Cultural Paradox" among Generation Z students. While 77% of students possess high visual familiarity with the *Ngaos*, *Mamaos*, *Maenpo* slogan, a staggering 88% suffer from an "epistemic void," lacking philosophical comprehension of these values. This finding indicates that without explicit pedagogical intervention, local wisdom risks becoming a "dead artifact"—visible on the surface but cognitively absent from the students' value systems. This disconnection was directly correlated with the students' initial inability to construct deep arguments, resulting in normative and superficial writing.

Second, the didactic integration of these cultural pillars has proven to be a highly effective strategy for "Epistemic Scaffolding." The significant surge in the average Content Depth score from 68 (Sufficient) to 85 (High) provides empirical evidence that culture functions as a cognitive bridge. By reintroducing *Maenpo* not as a physical martial art but as the "art of self-control," students were able to grasp the abstract concept of argumentation more easily. The cultural logic of *Maenpo* (patience conquering anger) became the template for their academic logic (reason conquering fallacy). This confirms that reducing cognitive load through familiar cultural schemas allows students to allocate more mental resources to higher-order thinking skills, such as elaboration and analysis.

Third, this research demonstrates that language learning is a strategic



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vehicle for character internalization, aligning with the national vision of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*. As emphasized by (Masrukhi et al., 2024), integrating local wisdom is essential for cultivating the "Global Diversity" dimension. In this study, students did not merely improve their writing skills; they internalized a localized solution to the modern problem of juvenile delinquency (*tawuran*). By writing arguments based on *Mentalitas Maenpo*, students actively reconstructed their identity as intellectuals (*Ngaos*), aesthetes (*Mamaos*), and guardians of peace (*Maenpo*). Thus, the classroom became a space where academic competence and moral character were developed simultaneously.

Fourth, regarding pedagogical implications, this study refutes the misconception that local wisdom is an obstacle to modernity or irrelevant to the modern curriculum. On the contrary, as highlighted by (Widiastuti et al., 2024), local wisdom is an untapped intellectual resource that can close the gap between curriculum expectations and student engagement. This research recommends that Indonesian language teachers should move beyond using culture merely as "content" (what is read) and start using culture as a "perspective" (how to think). Teachers in other regions can replicate this model by identifying their own local philosophies—whether it is *Siri' Na Pacce* in Bugis or *Tri Hita Karana* in Bali—and mapping them onto the logical structures of academic texts.

Finally, while this study successfully demonstrates the efficacy of cultural integration in improving argumentation skills in a specific case at MTs Al-Riyadl, it suggests pathways for future research. The current study focused on the genre of Exposition Texts. Future researchers are encouraged to explore how other genres, such as Explanatory or Narrative texts, can be taught using different dimensions of local wisdom. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to observe whether the internalized values of *Maenpo* translate into long-

term behavioral changes outside the classroom. Ultimately, this research affirms that the path to global literacy does not require abandoning local roots; rather, deep roots are precisely what allow students to grow tall and resilient in the global academic landscape.

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