



A Cultural Foundation-Based Multicultural Pedagogical Framework for Reconceptualizing Balinese Language Learning in Digital Classrooms

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Abstract

This study reframes Balinese language instruction in digital classroom contexts by applying a multicultural pedagogical framework grounded in cultural foundations. It addresses the challenge of reconciling rapid digital transformation with the safeguarding of local cultural values in increasingly diverse learning environments. A qualitative intrinsic case study was conducted in selected multicultural schools in Bali, employing semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis with teachers and students recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. The findings disclose a pedagogical framework structured around three interrelated dimensions. First, Balinese philosophical principles of *Tri Hita Karana*, *Desa Kala Patra*, and *Tat Twam Asi* that serve as the epistemological foundation shaping meaning-making and identity. Second, at the implementation level, digital learning strategies, multicultural pedagogy, and teachers as digital cultural mediators collectively foster inclusive and culturally responsive instruction. Third, these processes generate outcomes such as enhanced linguistic and cultural competence, increased student engagement, and improved wellbeing. The study emphasizes the importance of continuous reflection to balance cultural authenticity with digital adaptation. It concludes that embedding cultural foundations within digital pedagogy is essential for meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable language education, while contributing theoretically to multicultural and sociocultural learning perspectives and practically to culturally grounded digital strategies and teacher capacity development.

Keywords: Balinese Language Learning; Cultural Foundations; Digital Classrooms; Multicultural Pedagogy

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1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed educational practices by expanding access to resources, enabling multimodal communication, and supporting more flexible and collaborative knowledge construction. In language education, these opportunities allow learners to engage with authentic materials beyond the physical classroom. At the same time, digitalization and globalization raise concerns about the sustainability of local languages



and cultures because learners increasingly participate in digital cultures that may reshape identities, values, and everyday practices (UNESCO, 2003). This tension is especially crucial for regional languages, which function not only as communication systems but also as repositories of cultural values, collective memory, and social identity. Digital innovation in regional language education therefore needs to strengthen, rather than erode, the cultural meanings embedded in language learning.

The Balinese language education illustrates this challenge. The Balinese language carries philosophical principles, social norms, and cultural practices transmitted across generations, thus learning it involves both linguistic competence and cultural comprehension. Three principles are particularly relevant as pedagogical foundations: *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes harmony among humans, nature, and the divine; *Desa Kala Patra*, which stresses contextual adaptation to time, place, and circumstance; and *Tat Twam Asi*, which promotes empathy and mutual respect. These principles can guide the design of culturally meaningful learning while allowing adaptation to contemporary digital environments. Studies of the Old Javanese prose *Tantri Kamandaka* and the use of *peparikan* in the *Ngusabha Sambah* ritual further demonstrate that linguistic structures and literary practices preserve culturally situated knowledge and communal experience (I Nengah Adi Widana; I Gusti Agung Rai Jaya Wangsa, 2022).

The growing diversity of classrooms further requires approaches that recognize cultural differences as educational resources. Multicultural pedagogy promotes inclusivity, cultural responsiveness, and equitable participation (Banks et al., 2001; Gay, 2018), while culturally sustaining pedagogy emphasizes maintaining and strengthening learners' cultural and linguistic identities in changing social contexts (Paris, D., & Alim, 2017; Paris, 2012). Sociocultural theory similarly views learning as socially situated and culturally mediated, with language serving as a central tool for meaning-making and identity formation (James P. Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1978; Zuckerman, 2003). From this perspective, digital technologies



are not merely instructional tools but cultural artifacts and spaces that mediate interaction, communication, and knowledge construction.

Previous studies show that digital media can improve motivation, participation, and access to language-learning resources (Herniyastuti, 2024), while the integration of local cultural content can increase learning relevance and engagement (Kurniawan, 2025). Digital media have also been associated with stronger cultural awareness and participation in multicultural learning (Mahardika et al., 2025). A recent study of the Merdeka Curriculum in Balinese language education reported implementation achievements ranging from 54.69% to 71.88% across planning and practice dimensions, while identifying continuing challenges in deriving learning objectives, changing teaching paradigms, accessing resources, and securing specific training (Widana et al., 2025). Balinese literary scholarship also indicates that *Geguritan Tamtam* embodies all six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, underscoring the capacity of local texts to connect cultural continuity with contemporary character education (Arimbawa, I. N., & Widana, 2024). Nevertheless, these studies largely emphasize the effectiveness of media or particular strategies. They provide limited explanation of how local cultural values can operate systematically as epistemological foundations that guide pedagogical decisions, how they interact with multicultural pedagogy and digital learning strategies, and what educational outcomes emerge from that integration.

Addressing this theoretical and empirical gap, this study reconceptualizes Balinese language learning in digital classrooms through a multicultural pedagogical framework grounded in Balinese cultural philosophy. It examines how *Tri Hita Karana*, *Desa Kala Patra*, and *Tat Twam Asi* shape meaning-making and identity; how these principles are enacted through digital learning strategies, multicultural pedagogy, and teachers' cultural mediation; and how their integration contributes to linguistic and cultural competence, student engagement, and welfare. The study contributes theoretically by positioning culture as a central organizing principle of digital language education and practically by offering a culturally



grounded framework for more meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable Balinese language learning.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design to obtain an in-depth comprehension of how cultural values, multicultural pedagogical practices, and digital technologies interact in Balinese language learning within their natural educational context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted from January to May 2026 in three junior secondary schools in Bali selected purposively since they had culturally diverse student populations and integrated digital technologies into Balinese language instruction.

The study involved 81 participants: 6 Balinese language teachers and 75 students. All participants contributed contextual information through the observed learning activities, while in-depth interview participants were selected purposively to represent varied cultural backgrounds, experiences, and levels of engagement with digital learning. Selection criteria included experience in Balinese language learning, active engagement with digital technologies, and familiarity with Balinese cultural values. Snowball sampling was then used to identify additional information-rich participants recommended by initial informants (Patton, 2002).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Interviews explored teachers' and students' experiences and interpretations of culturally grounded digital learning; observations examined the enactment of multicultural pedagogy, digital strategies, and cultural mediation; and documents included lesson plans, teaching modules, digital materials, instructional media, and other relevant educational records. Data were analyzed thematically using the interactive procedures of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Transcripts and field data were read repeatedly, openly coded, grouped into categories and broader themes, and compared across sources. The conceptual framework emerged inductively from this iterative process and was refined until relationships among cultural foundations, pedagogical implementation, learning outcomes, and reflection achieved conceptual coherence.



Trustworthiness was strengthened through data triangulation by comparing evidence from interviews, observations, and documents, and through methodological triangulation to examine consistency across different data collection techniques. Member checking was conducted with selected participants to confirm the credibility and accuracy of preliminary interpretations, while an audit trail documented methodological decisions, coding processes, and analytical procedures to support transparency, dependability, and confirmability. In reporting the findings, anonymized participant labels (e.g., Teacher 2; Student 8) are used, and direct quotations are presented selectively as empirical evidence alongside observational and documentary data.

Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was assured, and pseudonyms were used in research records, field notes, interview transcripts, and reports. The study is limited to three multicultural junior secondary schools and particular digital learning environments; consequently, transferability to other regions and educational levels should be made cautiously. Nevertheless, the use of multiple data sources and prolonged engagement provided rich contextual evidence for the proposed framework.

3. Findings and Discussion

The thematic analysis generated a Cultural Foundation-Based Multicultural Pedagogical Framework organized around three interconnected dimensions: Cultural Foundation, Pedagogical Implementation, and Learning Outcomes. Continuous Reflection emerged as a cross-cutting mechanism that connects and sustains these dimensions by assisting educators balance cultural authenticity with digital adaptation. Table 1 summarizes the components and functions of the framework.

Tabel 1 Summary of the Cultural Foundation-Based Multicultural Pedagogical Framework

Dimension	Component	Key Function
Cultural Foundation	<i>Tri Hita Karana, Desa Kala Patra, Tat Twam Asi</i>	Shapes meaning-making and identity formation in Balinese language learning
Pedagogical Implementation	Digital Learning Strategies, Multicultural Pedagogy, Teacher as Digital Cultural Mediator	Facilitates culturally responsive, inclusive, and technology-enhanced learning



Learning Outcomes	Linguistic and Cultural Competence, Student Engagement and Wellbeing	Promotes language mastery, cultural understanding, learner participation, and wellbeing
Continuous Reflection	Balancing Cultural Authenticity and Digital Adaptation	Supports continuous improvement and sustainability across all dimensions

Source: Processed by the Researchers, 2026

3.1 Cultural Foundation as the Basis of Meaning and Identity

Cultural Foundation emerged as the epistemological starting point of digital Balinese language learning. Across interviews, observations, and documents, *Tri Hita Karana*, *Desa Kala Patra*, and *Tat Twam Asi* were treated not simply as cultural content but as principles that shaped classroom interaction, pedagogical decisions, and students' interpretation of knowledge. Interview evidence illustrates this interpretation. Teacher 2 explained:

"Tri Hita Karana is not only taught as cultural knowledge. It guides how students collaborate, communicate, and respect one another during digital learning activities." (Teacher 2)

Student 8 similarly reported that discussing Balinese stories and traditions through online platforms supported the comprehension of both the language and the values behind it. This convergence of teacher and student accounts indicates that cultural values mediated how learners constructed meaning and related language use to identity, consistent with sociocultural views of learning as culturally mediated (James P. Lantolf, 2021; Vygotsky, 1978).

Observational data showed collaborative learning, mutual respect, and shared responsibility consistent with *Tri Hita Karana*. *Desa Kala Patra* supported contextual adaptation: teachers adjusted examples, materials, and digital resources to learners' backgrounds and contemporary experiences while retaining core cultural values. Teacher 5 described this adaptive principle as follows:

"We need to adjust digital learning materials to students' backgrounds and experiences. Cultural values remain the same, but the way we present them must be relevant to contemporary learners." (Teacher 5)

Students confirmed that contextualized examples made lessons feel closer to situations experienced both online and offline (Student 14). *Tat Twam Asi*, for the meantime, fostered



empathy, respectful dialogue, and appreciation of different perspectives. Observational data indicated that teachers frequently encouraged students to appreciate different perspectives, engage in respectful dialogue, and support one another during collaborative digital learning activities. Taken together, the convergence of interview and observational evidence shows that cultural diversity functioned as a learning resource rather than a barrier, aligning with multicultural education principles (Banks et al., 2001; Gay, 2018).

Participants also associated culturally grounded learning with a stronger sense of identity and belonging. The integration of Balinese values into digital activities linked classroom learning with everyday cultural experiences and encouraged students to view the Balinese language as a living medium of cultural continuity. Thus, culture functioned not as an added curricular topic but as the organizing principle through which learning was designed and interpreted. This finding extends culturally sustaining pedagogy by showing that local cultural values can guide digitally mediated learning while supporting the continuity and development of learners' cultural identities (Paris, D., & Alim, 2017; Paris, 2012).

3.2 Pedagogical Implementation in Digital Multicultural Classrooms

Pedagogical Implementation comprised three mutually reinforcing components: digital learning strategies, multicultural pedagogy, and the teacher as a digital cultural mediator. Teachers used digital platforms, videos, online discussions, interactive media, and collaborative applications not merely to deliver content but to translate cultural values into accessible and relevant learning experiences. Teacher 1 explained:

“Digital media allow students to explore Balinese culture through videos, discussions, and collaborative projects, making cultural learning more interactive and relevant to their daily lives.” (Teacher 1)

Student 21 similarly emphasized that digital resources made cultural concepts clearer because students could see examples, discuss them with classmates, and relate them to everyday situations. This account was consistent with classroom observations of technology-supported collaborative activities. Technology thus became educationally meaningful when



embedded in culturally grounded pedagogy rather than functioning as an isolated technical innovation.

Multicultural pedagogy was visible in inclusive practices that encouraged dialogue, collaboration, and respect for cultural differences. Teachers created opportunities for students to share perspectives and compare cultural experiences, enabling diversity to enrich collective learning. Teacher 3 stated:

“Students come from different backgrounds, and classroom discussions allow them to learn from each other while developing respect for different perspectives.” (Teacher 3)

Student 35 also reported greater confidence in sharing ideas because different cultural perspectives were respected. Observational data supported these accounts by showing collaborative learning activities that promoted intercultural understanding and strengthened social relationships among students from diverse backgrounds. These practices support the view that culturally responsive and multicultural education should promote equitable participation and use cultural diversity as an educational resource (Banks et al., 2001; Gay, 2018; Gusnetti & Isnanda, 2019).

A distinctive finding was the teacher’s role as a digital cultural mediator. Teachers did more than facilitate learning or integrate technology; they assisted students reinterpret cultural meanings in contemporary digital contexts and connect traditional knowledge with present-day experiences. Teacher 4 summarized this responsibility as follows:

“Our responsibility is not only to teach language but also to assist students comprehend how Balinese cultural values remain relevant in the digital era.” (Teacher 4)

Student 32 likewise explained that teachers connected cultural values to behavior in social media and digital technology. This mediating role ensured that technological innovation remained aligned with cultural and educational objectives. It also challenges technology-centered approaches to digital education: educational value depends on the interaction among pedagogy, culture, context, and human agency rather than on technological sophistication alone (Fawns, 2022; Kimmons, R., & Veletsianos, 2021; Selwyn, 2022).



3.3 Learning Outcomes

The interaction between Cultural Foundation and Pedagogical Implementation produced two major groups of outcomes: linguistic and cultural competence, and student engagement and welfare. Students reported greater confidence in using Balinese appropriately because they comprehended the cultural meanings associated with vocabulary, expressions, and communicative situations. Teacher 3 observed:

“Students are now more confident using Balinese language because they comprehend the cultural meanings associated with it, not just the vocabulary and grammar.”
(Teacher 3)

Student 47 similarly emphasized that confidence in using Balinese was related to comprehending when and why particular expressions should be used in different situations. Interview and observational data therefore indicate that linguistic competence and cultural competence developed simultaneously rather than as separate outcomes.

The second outcome was increased participation, motivation, enjoyment, and sense of belonging. Students became more active in discussions, collaborative projects, and digital tasks when cultural content was presented through interactive and contextualized activities. Student 56 stated:

“Learning becomes more enjoyable because we can discuss culture through videos, group activities, and online platforms rather than only reading textbooks.” (Student 56)

Student 63 similarly reported feeling more connected to the lesson because it reflected culture, experience, and everyday life, while Teacher 6 observed more active participation when learning activities were meaningful and culturally connected. Observational data confirmed higher levels of interaction, collaboration, and willingness to contribute ideas during digitally mediated learning activities.

These outcomes demonstrate that the educational value of digital learning did not arise from technology alone but from the meaningful integration of cultural foundations and pedagogical practices. Culturally grounded digital learning supported academic development while also strengthening cultural awareness, identity, social participation, and welfare. This



broadens the evaluation of digital language education beyond technological efficiency or linguistic achievement and supports an understanding of learning as simultaneously cognitive, social, cultural, and emotional (Selwyn, 2022).

3.4 Continuous Reflection and Framework Synthesis

Continuous Reflection emerged as the mechanism that connected and sustained all three dimensions. Teachers continuously evaluated learning experiences, responded to technological change, and considered whether pedagogical decisions remained aligned with cultural and educational goals. Reflection consequently enabled ongoing negotiation between cultural preservation and digital adaptation. Unlike a linear instructional model, the framework is cyclical: cultural foundations inform pedagogical implementation, pedagogical practices shape learning outcomes, and reflective processes feed back into subsequent decisions. This mechanism assists cultural values remain dynamic and responsive rather than static or disconnected from contemporary learners.

Taken together, the framework positions culture at the center of digital pedagogical decision-making while recognizing technology as a mediating environment. This interpretation is compatible with entangled pedagogy, which conceptualizes educational practice as emerging through interactions among pedagogy, technology, context, and human agency (Fawns, 2022). The framework contributes theoretically to multicultural pedagogy, sociocultural learning theory, and culturally sustaining pedagogy by moving local culture from supplementary content to an epistemological foundation. It also introduces the teacher as a digital cultural mediator and identifies continuous reflection as the sustaining mechanism that maintains relevance, adaptability, and cultural integrity across changing digital contexts.



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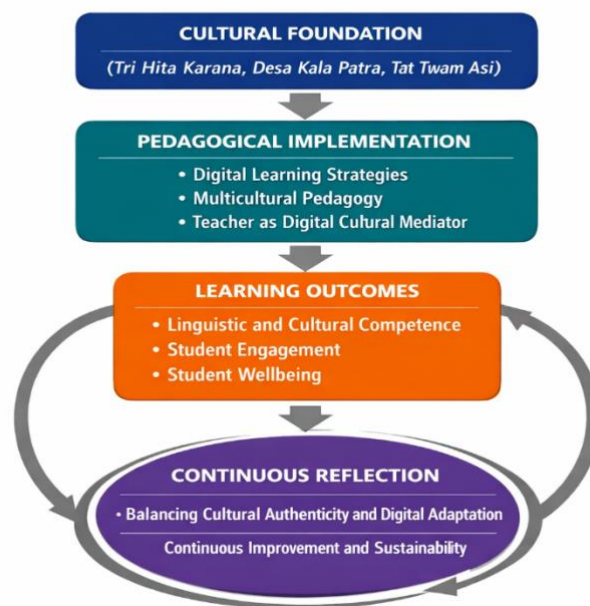


Figure 1 Cultural Foundation-Based Multicultural Pedagogical Framework for Balinese Language Learning in Digital Classrooms

Figure 1 illustrates the dynamic relationship among cultural foundations, pedagogical implementation, learning outcomes, and continuous reflection. Practically, the framework implies that teacher development should strengthen both digital competence and cultural mediation; curriculum design should embed local cultural values as foundational elements rather than supplementary content; and educational policy should support the integration of cultural foundations, digital innovation, and multicultural learning. The framework may therefore inform future curriculum development, instructional innovation, and teacher education for culturally grounded regional language learning.

4. Conclusion

This study reconceptualizes Balinese language learning in digital classrooms through a multicultural pedagogical framework grounded in *Tri Hita Karana*, *Desa Kala Patra*, and *Tat Twam Asi*. These principles function as epistemological foundations that shape meaning-



making, learning interaction, and identity formation; they are enacted through digital learning strategies, multicultural pedagogy, and teachers' role as digital cultural mediators; and together they contribute to linguistic and cultural competence, student engagement, and welfare. Continuous reflection sustains the framework by balancing cultural authenticity with digital adaptation.

The framework offers three central contributions: it positions local cultural values as foundations for pedagogical decision-making rather than supplementary content; conceptualizes teachers as digital cultural mediators connecting culture, pedagogy, and technology; and identifies continuous reflection as the mechanism supporting adaptability and cultural integrity. Practically, institutions and curriculum developers should strengthen culturally grounded digital learning and support teachers' digital and cultural mediation capacities. Future research should empirically validate instructional models derived from the framework across educational levels, regional languages, and multicultural contexts.

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DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT to assist with language editing, structural organization, and formatting in accordance with the journal template. All AI-assisted output was reviewed and revised by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.



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