



FROM DENOTATION TO MYTH: A SEMIOTIC-PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOLO RAYA'S RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AS ADVANCED INDONESIAN FOR FOREIGN SPEAKERS' MATERIAL

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Abstract

The teaching of Indonesian to Foreign Speakers (BIPA) requires learners to be able to interpret culturally embedded implicit meanings; however, Javanese religious traditions have not yet been utilised for this purpose. Focusing on the Greater Solo region in Central Java, this study analyses the construction of meaning within local religious traditions and theorises their value as teaching materials for advanced-level BIPA. The research employs a descriptive qualitative design utilising Roland Barthes' semiotics (denotation, connotation and myth), drawing on data from in-depth interviews, visual observation, documentation and literature review, analysed through reduction, categorisation, interpretation of signs and conclusion. Analysis of local traditions in the Greater Solo area reveals an intertwining of Javanese and Islamic traditions, which advanced learners must be able to interpret. Based on a semiotic-pedagogical framework that aligns Barthes' progression from denotation to myth with symbolic competence (Kramsch), these traditions can be used as teaching materials for Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA) to develop foreign learners' linguistic, intercultural, and symbolic competences in interpreting implicit meanings and communicating within a Javanese-Islamic sociocultural context.

Keywords: religious tradition; local wisdom; barthesian semiotics; symbolic competence; advanced BIPA

Abstrak

Pengajaran Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) menuntut pemelajar mampu membaca makna implisit yang tertanam secara budaya, namun tradisi keagamaan Jawa belum dimanfaatkan untuk tujuan ini. Fokus pada kawasan Solo Raya, Jawa Tengah, penelitian ini menganalisis konstruksi makna tradisi keagamaan lokal dan menteorikan nilainya sebagai bahan ajar BIPA tingkat lanjut. Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif dengan semiotika Roland Barthes (denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos) dengan data dari wawancara mendalam, observasi visual, dokumentasi, dan studi pustaka yang dianalisis melalui reduksi, kategorisasi, interpretasi tanda, dan penyimpulan. Analisis terhadap tradisi-tradisi lokal di Solo Raya saling berkelindan antara tradisi Jawa dan Islam, dan harus mampu dibaca pemelajar tingkat lanjut. Berbasis kerangka semiotik-pedagogis yang menyelaraskan progresi Barthes dari denotasi ke mitos dengan kompetensi simbolik (Kramsch), tradisi-tradisi tersebut dapat dijadikan bahan ajar BIPA dalam mengembangkan kompetensi linguistik, antarbudaya, dan simbolik pemelajar asing dalam menafsirkan makna implisit serta berkomunikasi dalam konteks sosiokultural Jawa-Islam.

Kata Kunci: tradisi keagamaan; kearifan lokal; semiotika barthes; kompetensi simbolik; BIPA lanjut

INTRODUCTION

In this global era, teaching Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages (BIPA) is no longer confined to the mastery of linguistic aspects; it has evolved into a socio-cultural practice that emphasizes the integration of language and cultural context. Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a representation of the values, norms, and social practices of a community (Kramsch, 2013; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Effective language learning therefore requires learners to grasp the cultural meanings underlying language use in authentic contexts. Within this framework, the concept of intercultural communicative competence proposed by Byram (2021) affirms that language learning must cultivate learners' capacity to understand, interpret, and interact with other cultures critically and reflectively.

Nevertheless, BIPA practice in the field still shows a limited tendency toward cultural integration. The teaching materials commonly used remain focused on surface culture, such as cuisine, tourism, and the arts, whereas deep culture the systems of values, beliefs, and social practices has not been systematically addressed. Based on the results of interviews with BIPA instructors, teaching materials on local wisdom oriented toward Islamic insights are still very limited; therefore, their development is viewed as a pressing need. This condition reveals a gap between the theoretical demands of culture-based language learning and its implementation, indicating the need for innovation in developing more contextual and meaningful teaching materials.

One of potential cultural resources for BIPA learning is religious tradition (Mulyaningtyas & Arinugroho, 2025). Religious traditions are collective community practices that carry spiritual, social, and cultural values inherited across generations (Geertz, 1960). In Indonesia's plural society, religious traditions reflect not only the dimension of religiosity, but also act as an acculturation space between religious principles and local culture, shaping collective social identity. As a result, for BIPA students, the religious traditions of the Solo Raya region serve as a social laboratory capable of dissolving negative stereotypes, reducing intercultural scepticism, and replacing it with emotional relationships. Finally, foreign speakers not only live in Indonesia but also coexist peacefully with Indonesian society.

Furthermore, the integration of religious traditions into BIPA learning needs to be developed on the basis of local wisdom. Local-wisdom-oriented BIPA learning carries cultural and linguistic political value (Inderasari et al., 2025). The use of local-wisdom-based learning media increases the motivation of BIPA learners and serves as an engaging learning resource (Prasanty & Nurlina, 2024). Local wisdom is a value system that lives within a community and guides the regulation of human relations with fellow humans, the environment, and God (Sibarani, 2023). This aligns with Setiadi's view that local wisdom is an integral part of a region's culture, possessing unique characteristics that cannot be found identically elsewhere. Such uniqueness arises because each region develops its cultural system differently. In general, culture may be classified into two main categories: (1) material culture, namely the physical products of human creation and intention such as buildings, means of production, infrastructure, and various tools for processing nature; and (2) non-material culture, encompassing the values, customs, traditions, and knowledge that live within a community (Agustina & Masyhuda, 2021; Fiske, 2016).

Furthermore, the local knowledge that develops within a community is generally stored in collective memory and passed down through various forms of cultural expression, such as stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, dances, myths, cultural values, belief systems, rituals, customary law, language, and local knowledge classifications (Kim et al., 2017). A local-wisdom-based approach to BIPA learning is an effective strategy for enhancing foreign learners' cultural understanding and language competence (Febriyana & Pustaka, 2025). Referring to Schein (2010), culture can be distinguished into two main types: material culture and non-material culture. Language, clothes, transportation, the arts, social settings, and a wide range of everyday equipment are examples of material culture. Non-material culture, on the other hand, refers to the values, norms, beliefs, and meaning systems embedded in a community's collective consciousness.

Local wisdom is manifested within religious traditions through a variety of ritual practices, symbols, and tales that are meaningful and relevant as real learning sources. This method is congruent with the concept that language acquisition should depart from real social practice,

allowing learners to comprehend language in its context of usage more completely (Risager, 2007). According to Koentjaraningrat (2000), culture can be understood in three principal forms. First, culture as a system of ideas encompassing notions, values, norms, and rules that are abstract and not directly observable. Second, culture as a pattern of human activity in communal life, manifested in social action. Third, culture as the product of human work in concrete physical form that is real and directly observable.

To uncover the symbolic meaning contained in the practice of religious traditions, this study adopts a semiotic approach. Semiotics, as proposed by Roland Barthes, is a method and a discipline used to analyze signs and their systems of signification. In line with this, Barthes (2018) regards semiotics as a theory for understanding sign systems, in which the process of signification is a social phenomenon interpreted on the basis of its underlying cultural context. Sobur (2013) explains that Barthes's semiotic approach can be used to examine meaning at three layers: denotative, connotative, and myth.

Cultural practices can be converted into a semiotic language system by viewing tradition as a text full of signs and meanings rather than a physical action. The steps required to develop a semiotic linguistic system from tradition are separated into three stages. The first level, sensory (denotation), enables BIPA students to recognise visible or audible physical characteristics of a culture. The second step is interpretative (connotation), in which students are guided to determine the meaning of existing signs/symbols. The third stage is linguistic integration, which entails transforming previously understood signs and meanings into linguistic materials like descriptive writings, dialogue scripts, or negotiation texts.

Within Barthes's semiotic framework, the system of sign signification is constructed through several interrelated levels of meaning (Barthes, 2012; Piliang, 2010). These stages demonstrate that meaning is not solitary, but rather evolves from a basic meaning to more complicated and ideological meanings. More specifically, denotative meaning is the objective, basic meaning that relates to apparent reality. Connotative meaning is the additional meaning that derives from the experience, emotion, and cultural values associated to a sign (Dawkins, 2018; Halik, 2012). Mythical meaning exists on the ideological level—meaning that has become ingrained in a community's collective consciousness and is frequently recognised as true. Through these three levels of signification, Barthes' semiotic analysis serves to expose meaning not only at the surface but also within the deeper structures of meaning in religious traditions as representations of local wisdom (Sitanggang, 2020; Syakur et al., 2018).

The relationship between religious practice, vocabulary, and language learning can be examined theoretically using Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Dell Hymes' communicative competency model. According to Vygotsky, human learning and cognitive growth are strongly integrated in a sociocultural framework (Vygotsky, 1978). Dell Hymes emphasizes that to use language, a person needs not only linguistic competence but also sociolinguistic competence (Hymes, 1974). Religious practice serves as a meaningful social activity that provides specialised terminology for semiotic mediation. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the structure of a language (particularly its vocabulary) influences how its speakers think and perceive the world (Whorf, 1956). Religious traditions provide vocabulary that has no direct parallel in foreign languages. Teaching this religious terminology in BIPA learning fundamentally teaches Indonesians' cognitive schemata and worldview about harmony and divinity.

A number of prior studies have affirmed the importance of cultural integration in foreign-language learning. Kramsch (2013) emphasizes that language and culture are two inseparable entities in learning, while Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) underline the need for a reflective approach in understanding the relationship between language and culture. In addition, the study by Kusumaningputri and Widodo (2018) shows that integrating intercultural awareness into language learning can enhance learners' cross-cultural communication ability. Nonetheless, there are few studies that expressly use local-wisdom-based religious traditions as cultural material in BIPA learning, especially for advanced-level learners. This suggests a research gap that must be filled with more detailed investigation.

Based on this context, the current research aims to identify and analyse the potential of religious

traditions as a source of cultural material in BIPA learning,

develop a local-wisdom-based integration model, and investigate its implications for improving advanced-level learners' intercultural competence. This study is unique in that it takes a systematic approach to incorporating religious traditions as local-wisdom-based BIPA cultural material—an area that has gotten little attention, particularly among advanced learners. Thus, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically to the development of culture-based BIPA studies and practically to the design of teaching materials that are contextual, authentic, and relevant to the requirements of global learners.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a descriptive qualitative method with a semiotic approach to analyze signs and their signification within a socio-cultural context. Semiotics, as explained by Nurhadi (2017), is a method for assigning meaning to signs and for understanding how that meaning is communicated to and received by a community. Roland Barthes' semiological theory was used as an analytical tool in this inquiry. Data is collected from two sources: primary and secondary. Primary data are documentation and descriptions of religious traditions that contain local wisdom, obtained through observation, visual documentation, and digital source searches. In addition, primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with BIPA instructors to investigate the demand for and availability of local-wisdom teaching resources geared toward Islamic perspectives. Secondary data is gathered through a literature review, including textbooks and scholarly papers pertinent to the study of religious traditions, local wisdom, and BIPA learning (Van Peer et al., 2010).

To confirm data validity, source and theory triangulation were used. The acquired data were chosen based on their relevance to the research topic and then analysed descriptively using the steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drafting. The investigation involved finding signs within religious traditions, categorising their meanings based on levels of denotation, connotation, and myth, and assessing their relationship to local wisdom values and significance as cultural material in BIPA learning.

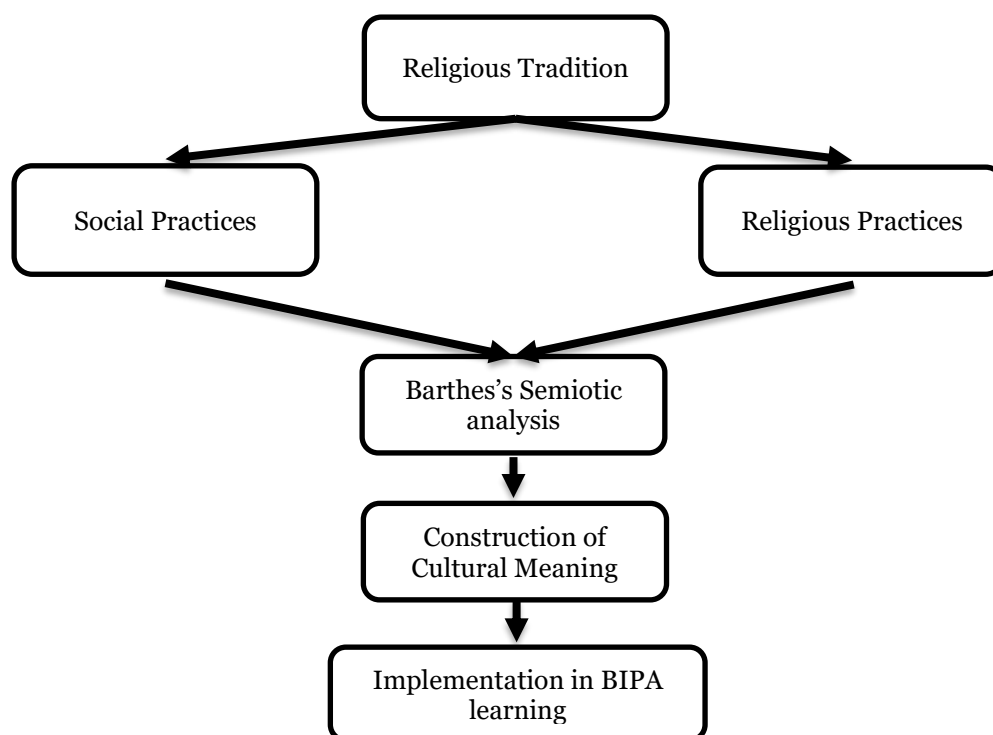


Figure 1.

Flow of Semiotic Analysis and the Transformation of Religious Tradition into BIPA Material

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious tradition is a representation of local wisdom that forms part of a community's collective identity and embodies the values of togetherness, respect, solidarity, and religiosity (Azizah et al., 2022). In BIPA learning, the construction of such cultural meaning has implications for strengthening sociocultural competence by modeling the traditions of the Solo Raya community, which trains learners to combine speech acts with local norms of politeness (Auliana, 2024). Building on this framework, the present study examines religious traditions as cultural representations and the construction of their meaning, together with their implications for supporting the cultural understanding and intercultural competence of BIPA learners.

Forms of Religious Tradition and the Construction of Cultural Meaning

Religious traditions in Indonesian society reflect not just religious activities, but also value systems, beliefs, and social interaction patterns passed down through generations. As a result, this part examines numerous religious traditions, including *nyekar/nyadran*, *ngabuburit*, communal *iftar*, *malam selikuran*, *punjungan*, *halalbihalal*, and *sungkeman*, to discover the cultural meanings they carry. These traditions were chosen based on behaviours evolved in the Solo Raya region, one of the heartlands of Javanese culture with a strong assimilation of Islamic beliefs and local tradition, resulting in a more full portrayal of Indonesian culture.

The *Nyekar/Nyadran* Tradition

Pilgrimage, or *nyekar*, derives from the *masdar* (verbal noun) form of the word *zaara*, which means appearance or the past (Wulandari, 2021). *Nyekar* or *nyadran* is a religious tradition that developed within Javanese society, generally performed by visiting ancestral graves to clean the burial area and offer prayers, especially ahead of the month of Ramadan or at certain other times. The data of *nyekar/nyadran* tradition were taken from Sragen where pilgrimage practice is still maintained as a part of local religious-cultural calendar.

Based on this visual data, the *nyekar* or *nyadran* tradition can be interpreted through the three layers of meaning proposed by Roland Barthes. At the denotative level, a group of people is seen gathering in the cemetery, seated around a grave that has been cleaned. This meaning then develops at the connotative level, where the act of gathering and praying at the grave is understood not



Figure 2.

The *Nyekar/Nyadran* Tradition
(Source: authors' personal documentation)

merely as an ordinary pilgrimage but as a form of respect for ancestors and an expression of the religious values living within the community. The presence of family members in the same space reflects the strength of kinship ties and social solidarity.

Furthermore, at the level of myth, the *nyekar* tradition represents the ideological construction that the relationship between the living and the deceased is not severed but remains connected through prayer and collective memory. This aligns with the finding of Faturahman and Berakon (2025) that local traditions play a role in strengthening the spiritual dimension as well as the social relations of a community. The *nyekar* tradition combines ancestor pilgrimage Javanese pre-Islamic culture with Islamic teaching through prayers and religious intention, so it can be understood as a whole by people. The *nyekar* tradition blends ancestral pilgrimage practices from pre-Islamic Javanese culture with Islamic prayers and religious intentions, creating a unified tradition perceived by the community as an inseparable whole. Understanding the meaning of this unified culture requires symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013) in the level of CEFR C1.

In practical terms, this cultural value emerges in learning to improve sensitivity to mortality, filial devotion, and family lineage themes that commonly feature in everyday discourse and local writing. Thus, embracing this practice entails not only teaching precise language but also allowing students to immerse themselves in how Indonesians think, feel, and care for and remember times of community togetherness. The nyekar tradition can be used as the foundation for BIPA 7 activities by conducting text analysis on nyekar and then engaging in reflective discussion to compare the tradition to the learner's own.

Buka Puasa Bersama/Bukber (Communal Iftar)

The tradition of communal iftar (*buka bersama*, or *bukber*) that has developed within Indonesia's Muslim society is a social phenomenon demonstrating the close relationship between religious teaching and communal cultural practice (Muzaki & Fauriz, 2026). Buka bersama is a religious ritual that develops within Muslim communities, notably during the month of Ramadan, and involves gathering to break the fast together. Bukber data comes from Surakarta residents, who practice communal iftar as a social-religious ritual throughout Ramadan.

Based on this visual information, the bukber tradition can be interpreted using Barthes' three layers of meaning. At the denotative level, a group of individuals is observed seated at a long table in a dining room, with various foods already provided. This meaning emerges at the connotative level, where the act of dining together conveys the values of togetherness, intimacy, and social



Figure 3.
Communal Iftar (Buka Puasa Bersama)
(Source: authors' personal documentation)

bonding among persons. The presence of several people at a single table reflects the social relationships formed and maintained via this custom. Furthermore, the act of waiting for the time to break the fast embodies the concepts of patience and self-control as part of the fasting practice.

At the level of myth, *bukber* constructs the understanding that togetherness in breaking the fast is an important part of religious expression that is not only individual but also collective. This tradition represents the belief that strengthening social bonds is part of the highly esteemed religious values. Furthermore, *bukber* also reflects the integration of religious practice and

modern lifestyle, thereby shaping an adaptive Muslim identity that does not abandon fundamental religious values. This shift in meaning requires symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013) in level CEFR C1.

For advanced-level BIPA learners, understanding the *bukber* tradition can sharpen intercultural sensitivity. Learning a language through a contemporary tradition such as *bukber* is not merely a pursuit of language proficiency. It is a way of inviting foreign learners to go further to build cultural empathy and to understand how Indonesians perceive and adapt to the moment of Ramadan. The *bukber* tradition can be used as basis of BIPA 7 tasks through social-media-post analysis about continued with reflective discussion to compare the tradition with the one from the learner's origin.

Ngabuburit

Ngabuburit is a tradition of awaiting the call to the maghrib prayer just before breaking the fast during Ramadan (Putri et al., 2025). This activity is typically filled with light activities such as going for a walk, looking for takjil (snacks to break the fast), socialising with friends, or simply enjoying the afternoon environment. Ngabuburit is seen not just as a way to pass the time before breaking the fast, but also as part of a cultural expression that reflects the community's social

dynamics as it approaches the moment of iftar. The data on the ngabuburit tradition was gathered from the actions of Surakarta residents who use the streets as their primary social area before to breaking the fast.

Based on this visual data, the ngabuburit tradition can be understood using Barthes' three layers of meaning. As the afternoon approaches, the denotative level sees a busy street full with bikers. Shop buildings and business signs line the roadside, and people are active in the surrounding area. This meaning emerges at the connotative level, where the congested street is perceived not as ordinary traffic, but as a representation of the community's joint work in filling the ngabuburit period. The community's high mobility reflects enthusiasm for breaking the fast, whether it's to buy food, spend time with family, or simply enjoy the Ramadan afternoon.

At the level of myth, *ngabuburit* represents the collective belief that waiting for the time to break the fast is done not passively but can be filled with enjoyable and socially valuable activities. This tradition builds the cultural construction that Ramadan is not only about enduring hunger and thirst but also about strengthening togetherness and the dynamics of social life. The bustle on the streets ahead of iftar becomes a symbol that this time holds a special value celebrated communally. *Ngabuburit* demonstrates the transformation of the waiting time for breaking the fast into a space for shared celebration, not just a mere waiting activity. Understanding this meaning requires symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013) in level CEFR C1.

Understanding the ngabuburit custom is a wonderful way for advanced BIPA students to improve their intercultural awareness. Practically, this custom provides learners with seasonal vocabulary and conversation etiquette while mingling among the masses at the Takjil market. Aside from that, this content fosters deep cultural empathy, allowing readers to grasp Indonesian society's flexibility in embracing and celebrating religious traditions. This tradition can serve as the foundation for BIPA 7 tasks by conducting a short field observation (or video analysis) in the Surakarta takjil market area, followed by a reflective writing assignment that compares the meaning of "waiting" in the context of ngabuburit to the concept of free time in the learner's culture of origin.

Malam Selikuran

Malam Selikuran a creative work of Javanese Muslims aimed at giving identity to their community (Susanti & Achiriah, 2024). *Malam selikuran* is a religious practice in Javanese society observed during the last 10 nights of Ramadan, particularly the twenty-first night (*selikur*). This custom typically includes group prayer, *tahlilan*, or *kenduri* (a ritual supper) as a spiritual endeavour to welcome *Lailatul Qadar*. *Malam selikuran* is seen not just as a form of prayer, but also as a means of fostering unity, reinforcing religious ideals, and conserving cultural traditions that are interwoven into Islamic doctrine. *Malam selikuran* was first recorded by the inhabitants of Wonogiri, who still celebrate the feast on the odd nights of the last 10 days of Ramadan.



Figure 4.
The Atmosphere of Ngabuburit
(Source: authors' personal documentation)

Based on this visual data, the malam selikuran tradition can be analysed using Barthes' three levels of meaning. At the denotative level, a group of community members is pictured sitting in a circle inside a house, surrounded by rice, side dishes, and traditional snacks served on banana-leaf mats.



Figure 5.
Malam Selikuran
(Source: authors' personal documentation)

On a connotative level, this action indicates not just dining together but also togetherness, mutual cooperation, thankfulness, and spiritual intimacy. The use of banana leaves shows simplicity and adherence to local traditions, whereas circular seating represents social equality and familiarity among community members.

At the level of myth, *malam selikuran* represents the collective belief that the momentum of the final nights of Ramadan holds a higher sacred value and constitutes the right time to intensify worship. This tradition builds the cultural construction that blessing is obtained not only through individual worship but also through togetherness and social solidarity. This

finding reinforces the study by Muzakki (2018), which asserts that local wisdom serves as a basis for harmony education in multicultural societies. The tradition of the night of *Selikuran* combines Islamic teachings about seeking Lailatul Qadr with the Javanese custom of *kenduri* (feast). This fused meaning demands symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013) in level CEFR C1.

In BIPA learning, the *malam selikuran* tradition functions as a medium for understanding the relationship between religion and local culture, as well as the value of togetherness that lives within the community. Understanding this tradition can broaden cultural insight, enhance intercultural competence, and help learners adapt to and interact more appropriately and politely within the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society. This tradition can be designed as a BIPA 7 assignment in the form of a short interview with Wonogiri residents regarding the meaning of *kenduri* on *Selikuran* night which is then written down in a reflective piece that links the interview findings with the concept of religious-cultural syncretism that has been studied.

Malam Takbiran (The Torch Parade)

Malam takbiran is a religious practice observed by Muslim communities on the eve of Eid al-Fitr, which involves the announcement of the takbir as a means of honouring God. In the local cultural context, malam takbiran is frequently commemorated with a procession around the village carrying torches, which is interpreted not only as a religious expression but also as a type of collective celebration that enhances the community's cohesiveness and social identity. The torch-lit parade represents social virtues including cooperation, mutual aid, and a strong spirit of tolerance across religious communities (Dayun Riadi et al., 2025). The data on the *takbiran* night torch procession was taken from the procession in Sukoharjo which still maintains the torch parade around the village before Eid al-Fitr.

Based on this visual data, the malam takbiran tradition, including the torch parade, can be understood using Barthes' three layers of meaning. At the denotative level, people of various ages are observed going in procession at night, holding lit torches. At the connotative level, the torch parade represents not only the celebration of Victory Day, but also togetherness, joy, social solidarity, hope, and spiritual illumination after the Ramadan fast. The broad participation of the community demonstrates collective involvement in the religious celebration, in line with the finding of Ambarita et al. (2024) that local traditions can become a medium of social integration within the context of diversity.

At the level of myth, this tradition constructs the understanding that *malam takbiran* is a sacred moment celebrated not only individually through worship but also communally through cultural expression. The torch parade represents the belief that light is a symbol of victory, purity, and humankind's return to its primordial nature (*fitrah*). Thus, the *malam takbiran* tradition functions not only as a religious ritual but also as a symbol of the integration of religious values and local culture that strengthens the identity and social cohesion of the community. Understanding this meaning requires symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013) in level CEFR C1.



Figure 6.
Malam Takbiran (The Torch Parade)
(Source: authors' personal documentation)

Understanding the malam takbiran custom and the torch parade allows BIPA students to grasp how Indonesian society commemorates the day of triumph. This content teaches students about the torchlight as a symbol of purity while also providing a concrete example of how public space can be used to bring residents together. This cultural understanding improves not only their language skills, but also their cultural intelligence. This custom can be used as a BIPA 7 project, consisting of a photo/video analysis of the torch procession in Sukoharjo, followed by a reflective conversation relating the symbolism of light in this tradition to the symbol of victory/purity in the learner's culture of origin.

Punjungan (Gift-Giving Before Eid)

The *munjung* tradition is the activity of visiting the homes of parents, relatives, or respected elders within a local community (Kartinawati, 2024). Punjungan or munjung is a religious tradition that has developed within Javanese society, particularly ahead of Eid al-Fitr. It takes the form of giving parcels or food hampers from one party to another such as to parents, relatives, religious figures, or neighbors as an expression of respect, kinship, and gratitude after completing the worship of Ramadan. This punjungan tradition data was taken from the Surakarta community who still maintain the practice of delivering gifts before Eid al-Fitr.

Based on this visual data, the *punjungan* tradition can be interpreted through Barthes's three layers of meaning. At the denotative level, various hampers are seen containing snacks, cakes, fruit, household items, and daily necessities, neatly packed in bags, boxes, or decorated baskets.



Figure 7.
Hampers for Punjungan
(Source: authors' personal documentation)

At the connotative level, these hampers signify not merely the giving of goods but also a symbol of care, respect, affection, and the sharing of fortune ahead of the festive day. The neat packaging reflects sincerity and esteem for the recipient, while the practice of *punjungan* represents the values of mutual cooperation and social solidarity within the family and the wider community.

At the level of myth, *punjungan* represents the collective belief that the period ahead of Eid al-Fitr is the right momentum to strengthen social relations through the practice of sharing. *Punjungan* becomes a symbol that social harmony and respect for others are an important part of religious values in communal life. The *punjungan* tradition

combines Javanese culture of honoring parents and relatives with religious obligations after fasting. Understanding this dual meaning requires symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013) in level CEFR C1.

Understanding the beauty of the *punjungan* tradition is an excellent way for BIPA students to become immersed in Indonesian family values of reciprocal giving and respect. This habit of gifting food hampers before Eid helps overseas students understand why residents swap meals while also providing a practical representation of how our culture celebrates parents, relatives, and seniors. This cultural understanding not only broadens their language, but also increases their sensitivity while interacting with others. As a result, overseas students will be able to communicate with the locals in a more respectful, genuine, and empathy-filled way. This custom can be turned into a BIPA 7 project in the form of a role-play simulation of delivering *punjungan* to community leaders, followed by a reflective discussion on etiquette for speaking and behaving in accordance with the Javanese social hierarchy structure.

Halalbihalal

Halalbihalal is a tradition distinctive to Indonesia's Muslim society, performed after Eid al-Fitr as a form of kinship and mutual forgiveness. *Halalbihalal* is the right moment to maintain kinship ties and to ask one another for forgiveness (Fuadi & Syam, 2023). It is viewed not only as a social rite, but also as a religious exercise that embodies the concepts of reconciliation, harmony, and the restoration of interpersonal relationships following Ramadan devotion. The data on the *halalbihalal* ritual was collected in Wonogiri, where the act of shaking hands in the village hall serves as a collective drive to rebuild bonds after fasting.

Based on this visual evidence, the *halalbihalal* tradition can be studied through Barthes' three layers of meaning. On the denotative level, a group of ladies and children is seen neatly queuing in an open space near the village hall. They dress modestly and diversely, shaking hands and forming a long queue as part of an organised social engagement. Shaking hands in a queue is more than just a physical act; it shows mutual respect, humility, and the desire to mend social relationships. The neat, religiously toned attire contributes to the sacredness of the occasion, while the long lineup demonstrates the community's concerted efforts to maintain cohesiveness and order while encouraging social connections.

At the level of myth, the *halalbihalal* tradition builds the understanding that Eid al-Fitr is not only about individual spiritual victory but also about the restoration of the social order through the practice of mutual forgiveness. This tradition represents the belief that social harmony is an integral part of piety, so that human relations must be purified just as the relationship between humankind and God is. The tradition of *halalbihalal* demonstrates that improving interpersonal relationships is seen as equally important as asking God for forgiveness after fasting. Understanding this meaning requires symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013) at the CEFR C1 level.



Figure 8.

Halalbihalal

(Source: authors' personal documentation)

Understanding the *halalbihalal* tradition helps BIPA learners see how Indonesian society renews the bonds of kinship. Through this tradition, learners can understand why the moment of gathering after Eid becomes so important, and how mutual forgiveness is able to preserve the harmony of communal life. This knowledge not only broadens their language insight for everyday communication but also enhances their cultural intelligence. As a result, foreign learners can enter and interact within various community settings more flexibly, politely, and with mutual respect. This tradition can be designed into a BIPA 7 assignment in the form of participatory observation at the *halalbihalal* event in Wonogiri (or a simulation of a handshake queue in class), followed by a reflective piece of writing that compares the practice of collective apology with the tradition of social reconciliation in the learner's culture of origin.

Kupat and Opor Dishes on the Day of Eid

Kupat (ketupat) and opor are traditional Indonesian foods linked with Eid al-Fitr celebrations, notably in Java. The information about kupat and opor dishes is derived from the culinary traditions of the Boyolali people, who make these two dishes a necessary menu item during Eid al-Fitr festivities. Ketupat is a rice-based dish cooked in woven young coconut leaves (janur) (Fatimah et al., 2025), Opor, on the other hand, is a chicken dish cooked with coconut milk and spices. The presence of kupat and opor on Eid is interpreted not only as gourmet fare, but also as a cultural and religious symbol with multiple meanings, including the admittance of wrongdoing (ngaku lepat) and reciprocal forgiveness. The tradition of providing these delicacies has spread as a way of expressing gratitude following Ramadan worship, as well as establishing solidarity among family members and the community.

Based on this visual data, the *kupat* and *opor* dishes can be interpreted through Barthes's three layers of meaning. At the denotative level, a plate of food is seen consisting of slices of ketupat, opor chicken in coconut-milk broth, and accompaniments such as boiled egg and a sprinkling of fried seasoning. At the connotative level, *kupat* and *opor* signify not only food but also a symbol of togetherness, celebration, and family warmth. *Ketupat* symbolizes purity and the plea for forgiveness, while *opor* reflects abundance and gratitude after performing the fast. The presence of various complementary side dishes further affirms the meaning of the diversity of fortune and togetherness in the celebration of Eid al-Fitr.

At the mythological level, the *kupat* and *opor* dishes express the widespread notion that Eid al-Fitr is associated with cleanliness, togetherness, and the custom of reciprocal forgiveness. This custom reinforces the cultural notion that eating *kupat* and *opor* is more than just a culinary habit; it is part of a symbolic ritual that celebrates Islamic and Javanese identity. *Ketupat* is interpreted as a symbol of admitting wrongdoing and seeking forgiveness, while *opor* completes the concept of celebration by expressing thanks for the favours received. This finding aligns with Imdad et al. (2025), who reveal that religious cultural practices represent the symbolic relationship among



Figure 9.

Kupat and Opor Dishes

(Source: authors' personal documentation)

humankind, spiritual values, and the environment through layered systems of meaning. Thus, *kupat* and *opor* dishes function not only as food but also as a representation of the integration of religious values and local culture that strengthens the identity and social harmony of the community. To grasp this meaning, students need symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2013), namely the ability to understand the cultural meaning behind the sounds or forms of language, at the CEFR C1 proficiency level.

For BIPA learners, understanding the story behind *ketupat* and *opor* dishes is a delicious way to immerse themselves in the depth of Indonesian particularly Javanese culture. Through the philosophy of *ketupat* (*ngaku lepat*, or admitting one's fault) and *opor* (*apuro*, or to forgive), foreign learners are

invited to see that festive food is not merely a satisfier of hunger. These dishes are the way the community sincerely conveys forgiveness and gratitude. Through this cultural understanding so close to daily life, they not only enrich their vocabulary but also sharpen their sensitivity in reading the meaning behind local traditions. This tradition can be designed into a BIPA 7 assignment in the form of an analysis of sound games (*kupat*, *ngaku lepat*, *opor*, *apuro*) in Boyolali Eid al-Fitr dishes, followed by group discussions to find language games with similar cultural meanings in the learner's language or culture of origin.

These eight traditions indicate that language development is inextricably linked to the speakers' socio-cultural background. Traditions like *nyadran*, *malam selikuran*, and *bakda kupat* (the post-Eid period) express the community's traditional values of togetherness, harmony, and social solidarity. Their incorporation into BIPA learning broadens the focus of learning from linguistic to sociocultural understanding. Cultural terminology like *ngabuburit* and *punjungan* help learners comprehend how Indonesian society interprets social and religious experiences. As a result, BIPA learning fosters not just linguistic competence but also intercultural competence and the capacity to relate appropriately within the Indonesian cultural framework.

The Relevance of Religious Traditions and the Construction of Cultural Meaning in Advanced-Level BIPA Learning

Teaching material is a set of resources arranged systematically to meet learning needs and may be sourced from various media, such as print, visual, audio, audiovisual, and multimedia. Teaching material contains information, knowledge, skills, and values arranged in a structured manner, designed to help learners achieve learning objectives effectively and enjoyably (Yaumi, 2013; Chen et al., 2018). Moreover, teaching material plays a role in helping to overcome learning difficulties by attending to learners' needs and characteristics. Complementing this, Iskandarwassid and Sunendar (in Muliastuti, 2017) state that teaching material is a set of information that learners must absorb through meaningful learning so that they can directly experience the benefits of what is learned.

Teaching material is developed with the aim of providing content aligned with curriculum demands while also considering the needs of BIPA learners (Daryanto, 2014; Istanti, 2013). The implementation of local-wisdom-based BIPA teaching material can be realized by selecting forms of local wisdom in Indonesia to be introduced to foreign speakers (Riadi & Latif, 2024). Therefore, the development of teaching material needs to be adapted to learners' needs, particularly within the context of teaching Indonesian to Speakers of Other Languages (BIPA).

In line with this, religious traditions that develop within the community can serve as an alternative source of local-wisdom-based teaching material in advanced-level BIPA learning. Traditions such as *nyekar/nyadran*, *communal iftar (bukber)*, *ngabuburit*, *malam selikuran*, *malam takbiran (the torch parade)*, *punjungan*, *halalbihalal*, and *the kupa* and *opor dishes* are representations of cultural practices rich in socio-religious meaning and value. Through Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, these traditions are understood not only at the denotative level as cultural activities but also at the connotative and mythical levels, which represent the values of togetherness, religiosity, social solidarity, and the cultural identity of the community. This aligns with the finding of Devi et al. (2025) that religious traditions contain Islamic educational values relevant to culture-based learning.

Such local-wisdom-laden religious traditions are appropriate for use as instructional material for advanced-level BIPA students, particularly at the BIPA-7 level. According to Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Regulation No. 27 of 2017 concerning the Competency Standards for BIPA Courses and Training, particularly in the listening competency unit, learners must comprehend a variety of ideas containing complex notions and nuances of meaning within a socio-cultural context. This competency emphasises not only literal understanding, but also the capacity to grasp implicit and symbolic meaning. As a result, examining religious traditions using a semiotic method allows students to discern meaning at three levels: denotative, connotative, and mythical, which aligns with learning outcomes that emphasise interpretative and analytical abilities.

Furthermore, advanced-level BIPA learners are anticipated to be able to comprehend texts rich in cultural context as they acquire language abilities, notably listening and reading. Religious traditions can be packaged as instructional material in a variety of literary formats, including descriptive, narrative, and multimedia, to assist students grasp the social function, structure, and cultural meaning contained within them. Furthermore, this content can help improve speaking and writing skills through activities including conversation, presentation, and critical cultural analysis. This transformation process is represented by the following flow of educational implications for BIPA learning.

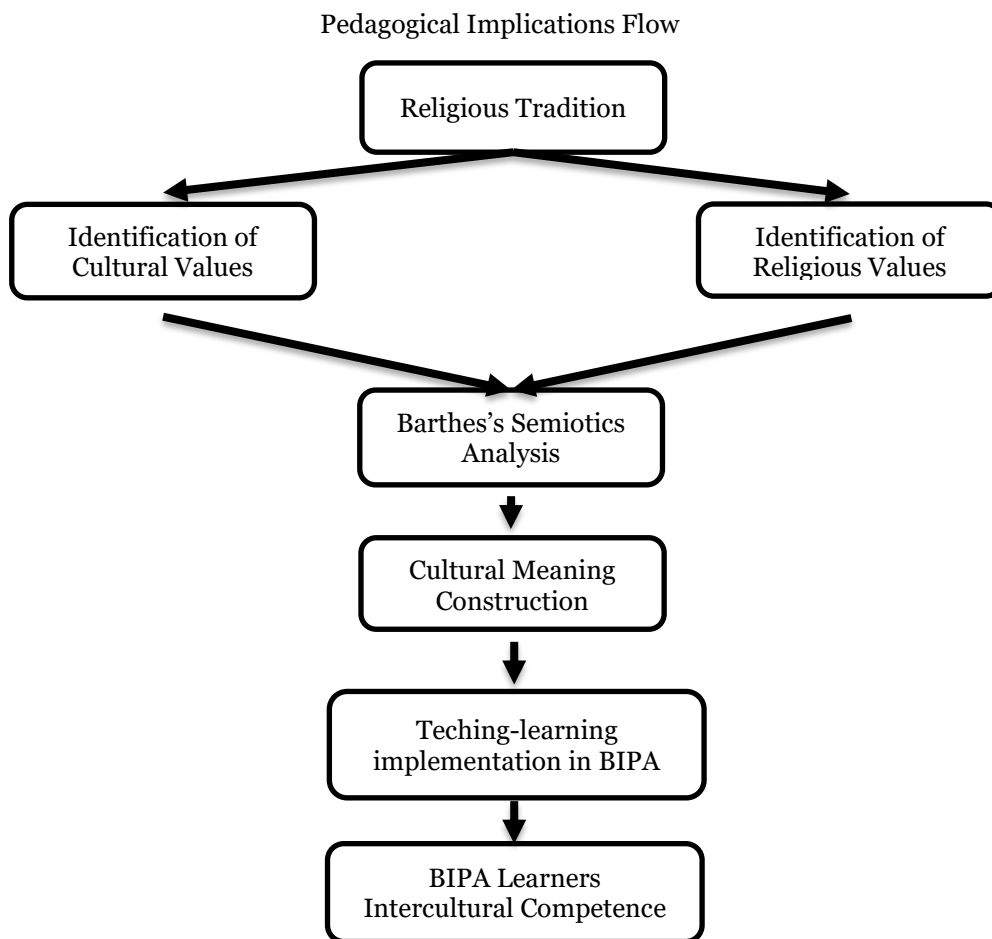


Figure 10.
Flow of the Pedagogical Implications of Religious Tradition as Advanced-Level BIPA Material

According to the flow diagram above, the relationship between religious traditions and the formation of cultural meaning in advanced-level BIPA learning proceeds in two steps: theoretical reasoning and practical consequences. The reasoning process begins with the identification of factual phenomena, which are supplemented by cultural evidence from various religious traditions such as nyadran, punjungan, and bakda kupat. These traditions are then examined using semiotic decoding, an analytical tool that peels back the layer of physical meaning (denotation) to reveal the philosophical roots of the local community's way of life (connotation/myth), such as the principle of social harmony and the ethos of andhap asor (humility) in politeness. This structure of cultural meaning is then synthesized with sociocultural and sociopragmatic theories of language acquisition, which view tradition as a concrete vessel in which language is produced and used contextually. The result of this theoretical formulation underlies the design of the draft advanced-level BIPA teaching material.

This conceptualization is then translated into a line of results applied tactically in the classroom through three instructional stages. In the initial stage, foreign learners are guided to deconstruct the cultural lexicon through a critical discourse analysis of tradition texts in order to unravel vocabulary with specific cultural meaning. This is reinforced by the findings of an interview with AW, who stated:

"Religious traditions such as nyadran, punjungan, and bakda kupat are suitable for BIPA 7 because they contain rich cultural vocabulary and expressions that help learners understand the meaning behind a tradition, not merely its literal definition."

The second stage proceeds to a sociopragmatic simulation, in which learners practice language skills while also enacting nonverbal aspects, such as intonation and body language in keeping with local norms of politeness. This is consistent with the view of AM:

"Religious traditions can be used to train language skills in authentic situations; through such material, learners can learn to use polite language appropriate to local community customs."

This process culminates in a dialogic space, where learners reflect on and compare these traditions with their own cultures in order to erode ethnocentric. This is reinforced by the statement of DU:

"Discussions of religious traditions often generate engaging classroom discourse; learners are able to compare traditions in Indonesia with those of their home countries, deepening their understanding of Indonesian culture."

The integration of these two lines enables the optimal achievement of advanced-level BIPA learning objectives, which are to produce intercultural speakers who are not only linguistically fluent but also sensitive to the feel of the language, the ethics, and the humanistic values of Indonesian culture. Thus, integrating religious traditions as cultural material in BIPA learning not only fulfils curriculum requirements, but also provides a contextualised and authentic learning environment. Learners learn not just linguistic competency but also extensive cross-cultural knowledge, allowing them to adapt to the social environment of Indonesian society and internalise local wisdom values in everyday settings.

CONCLUSION

The utilisation of religious traditions as advanced-level BIPA learning material aims to incorporate local wisdom that represents the principles of togetherness, religiosity, social solidarity, respect, and peace. Traditions such as nyekar/nyadran, communal iftar, ngabuburit, malam selikuran, malam takbiran, punjungan, halalbihalal, and kupa opor, analysed through Roland Barthes' semiotics and interpreted at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth, demonstrate that religious traditions serve not only as rituals but also as a medium for constructing cultural meaning that strengthens the community's collective identity. In language learning, incorporating these traditions helps BIPA learners understand Indonesian more contextually by introducing vocabulary, cultural symbols, and community social values, thereby promoting the development of interpretive ability, comprehension of implicit meaning, and intercultural competence in Indonesian.

According to the study's findings, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, BIPA-organizing higher education institutions, and regional governments must work together to develop local-wisdom-based BIPA learning by developing guidelines, incorporating religious traditions into teaching materials and curricula, and documenting and promoting local culture as part of Indonesian language internationalisation. Furthermore, a more comprehensive instrument for assessing intercultural aptitude should be developed. Future research is needed to establish the effectiveness of using religious-tradition-based BIPA materials at various skill levels and learning settings. Thus, the Solo Raya community's religious traditions can serve as a strategic learning resource for enhancing the internationalisation of the Indonesian language while also presenting the worldwide community to the principles of moderation, tolerance, and social harmony.

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