

INTRODUCTION TO INDONESIAN CULTURE THROUGH THE AUGUST 17 COMPETITION AT ANUBAN WANGMAI SASANASART SCHOOL, THAILAND

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Abstract:

In the era of globalization, cross-cultural understanding plays a crucial role in fostering mutual comprehension and tolerance among people worldwide. The International Community Service Program (KKN Internasional), participated in by students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang (UMT), aims to introduce Indonesian culture to elementary school students in Thailand through traditional Indonesian Independence Day games. This program employs an interactive and enjoyable approach to ensure the effective reception of Indonesian culture. The method involves the active participation of students in various competitions such as water relay, rocking chair, and sarong race. The results indicate that Thai students demonstrate greater enthusiasm and a better understanding of Indonesian culture through direct experience compared to conventional methods. Additionally, this program provides valuable experiences for students in enhancing cross-cultural communication skills, understanding the Thai education system, and strengthening Indonesia-Thailand bilateral relations through cultural diplomacy. This initiative serves as a model for similar programs in other countries, promoting international relations through cultural exchange.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is the main foundation in forming a nation's national identity. Each country has a unique culture that reflects the values, norms, and character of its people. In the era of globalization, interactions between nations are increasingly intensive, making the introduction of cross-country cultures a crucial element in increasing understanding and tolerance between world communities (Afandi, 2020; Zunaidi, 2024).

Efforts to introduce a country's culture to other nations not only strengthen international relations but also contribute to strengthening cultural and educational diplomacy.

Indonesia is known as a country rich in cultural diversity, one of which is reflected in the celebration of Independence Day, which is celebrated every August 17. This tradition is not only a moment to commemorate the history of the nation's struggle but is also filled with various traditional competitions such as water relay, rocking chairs, and sarong races. This competition is not just a game but also has an educational value that teaches cooperation, sportsmanship, togetherness, and the spirit of struggle to achieve common goals.

As members of ASEAN, Indonesia and Thailand have close bilateral relations in various fields, including education and culture (Putri & Kresnawati, 2023). However, the understanding of Thai society, especially among elementary school students, towards Indonesian culture is still limited. Therefore, a more interactive and fun approach is needed so that Indonesian culture can be introduced effectively to the younger generation of Thailand. As a form of implementing a cultural



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introduction program, students of the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang (UMT) from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), English Language Education Study Program, participated in the International Community Service (KKN) held in Thailand. This activity is under the auspices of the UMT International Affairs Office (KUI) in collaboration with the Association of Education Cultural International (AECI). One of the initiatives in this program is the introduction of Indonesian culture through traditional August competitions at Anuban Wangmai Sasanasart School, Southern Thailand.

Through this activity, Thai students are given the opportunity to experience Indonesian culture directly in a fun and educational atmosphere. Thus, they not only gain theoretical understanding but also practical experience in getting to know Indonesian culture through active participation in various competitions. It is hoped that this activity can strengthen cultural relations between Indonesia and Thailand and increase awareness of the younger generation of Thailand towards cultural diversity in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, this program not only has an impact on Thai students but also provides great benefits for the author as a student participating in KKN. The author can improve cross-cultural communication skills, understand the education system in Thailand, and hone teaching skills in an international environment; this is a valuable experience for the author in developing global insight that can increase their competitiveness in the world of work.

In addition to cultural and educational aspects, this program also contributes to strengthening diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Thailand. Culture can be an effective diplomatic tool in building closer cooperation between countries. By introducing culture through fun activities such as traditional competitions, the younger generation of Thailand can better understand and appreciate Indonesian culture more acceptably (Wijaya, 2023). In the long term, this program is expected to be a model for similar activities in other countries. Direct cultural interactions can form a deeper understanding than just theoretical information. In addition, this activity can be an inspiration for other educational institutions in developing more effective and interesting cultural introduction programs.

METHODS

The method of implementing Community Service (PKM) activities is carried out using a participatory approach method (Participatory Action Research/PAR), socialization, and demonstrations.

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach is a method that emphasizes the active participation of the target community in every stage of the activity. In the context of introducing Indonesian culture to students in Thailand, this method allows students to contribute to each activity session actively. This approach not only increases participant engagement but also ensures that the material presented is more in line with their needs and interests (Rahman et al., 2021).

In addition to the PAR approach, the socialization method is used to provide students with an initial understanding of Indonesian culture, including the values contained in traditional traditions and competitions. Socialization is carried out through presentation sessions, interactive discussions, and screenings of educational videos that describe the diversity of Indonesian culture (Putri & Kresnawati, 2023).

The demonstration method is also applied to provide participants with direct experience in understanding Indonesian culture. Demonstrations are carried out by directly demonstrating how to play traditional games such as water relay, rocking chairs, and sarong racing. With this method,



participants not only get theoretical information but can also try and experience the cultural practices introduced themselves (Santoso, 2022).

Time and Place of Implementation. This activity was held on January 03, 2025, at the Anuban Wangmai Sasanasart School field, Krabi Noi District, Satun Province, Thailand. The selection of this location was based on the availability of a large and adequate area to support the smooth implementation of various traditional Indonesian competitions.

Activity Participants. Participants in this activity are students from Elementary School to Junior High School, namely from grade 1 of Elementary School to grade 3 of Junior High School. With a varying age range, the activity approach is adjusted so that all participants can participate actively and enjoy a fun learning experience.

Competitions Held. Three traditional Indonesian competitions were chosen to be introduced to Thai students, namely:

1. Water Relay: A race that teaches teamwork and coordination.
2. Sarung Race: Teaches balance and togetherness in achieving goals.
3. Rocking Chair: Trains strategy and teamwork in a group.

Tools and Materials Used. To support the implementation of activities, various tools and materials are used as follows:

1. Plastic buckets and cups for the water relay race.
2. Traditional Indonesian sarongs for the sarong race.
3. Plastic or wooden chairs for the rocking chair race.
4. Sound system and microphone for communication and direction during the activity.
5. Documentation (camera and video recorder) to record the progress of the activity as part of the program report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Event Implementation. As previously mentioned, this Community Service (PkM) activity is a series of activities aimed at introducing Indonesian culture to elementary school students to junior high school students in Thailand. This activity is carried out in the form of traditional competitions, which are usually held in celebration of Indonesian Independence Day on August 17, and this series of PkM events took place at Anuban Wangmai Sasanasart School, Southern Thailand, on January 3, 2025. The implementation of the activity began with the socialization of Indonesian culture, which was carried out through group presentations by students of the Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang (UMT), then continued with demonstrations and the implementation of traditional competitions such as water relay, sarong racing, and rocking chairs. During the activity, the author, who is a UMT student, acted as the host (MC) to manage the event to make it more interactive and enjoyable.

team consists of three people who must enter one large sarung and move together towards the finish line. The main challenge in this game is how participants can adjust their steps to stay balanced and not fall, and this game not only tests balance but also introduces sarung as one of Indonesia's traditional clothes that has high cultural value. The excitement of this competition can be seen from the enthusiasm of the participants who try to maintain their balance while laughing with their friends. Nattharik Ngakulang, a 6th-grade elementary school student, said in an interview that sarung racing is a very funny and fun game. He felt challenged to maintain balance while running with his friends. In addition, he just learned that sarung is part of Indonesian culture that is often used in everyday life.



Figure 3. Sarong Race Competition

Next, the rocking chair game was played as the final competition. In this game, participants had to sway to the rhythm of the music being played, and when the music suddenly stopped, they had to fight for the available chairs immediately. Each round, one chair would be removed so that participants who did not get a chair had to leave the game, and this game continued until there was only one participant left who managed to get the last chair as the winner. The enthusiasm of the participants was very high, especially when they had to compete fiercely to get a chair in the final round, and they felt that this game increased the excitement and strengthened the togetherness among the participants. Nattawut Rungroj, a 9th grader at Junior High School (SMP), in an interview, revealed that the rocking chair was his favorite game because it was very exciting and tense. He liked the moment when he had to dance to the music before finally fighting for a chair with his other friends. According to him, this game increased the excitement and strengthened the togetherness among the participants.



Figure 5. Prize Distribution for Competition Winners

CONCLUSION

The introduction of Indonesian culture through the August 17th competition at Anuban Wangmai Sasanasart School received a positive response from the students. They felt enthusiastic and happy to be able to learn a new culture through direct experience in traditional competitions. Based on interviews with participants, the water relay was considered a game that trains teamwork, the Sarung race provided a challenge to maintain balance together, and the rocking chair was a favorite game because of its excitement. The students not only enjoyed the games but also understood Indonesian cultural values such as togetherness, cooperation, and sportsmanship.

In addition, the school also appreciates this activity because it is able to provide an interactive and enjoyable learning experience. Thus, the method of introducing culture through traditional games has proven effective in increasing students' understanding of Indonesian culture and strengthening cross-cultural relations between Indonesia and Thailand.

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