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CULTURAL DIPLOMACY STRATEGY THROUGH PAPUAN TRADITIONAL DANCE USING TABOLA BALE SONG AT UPHSD CALAMBA

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Abstract: The cultural diplomacy activity implemented through the From Indonesia to Perpetual: A Journey of Learning and Culture program at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) Calamba, Philippines, is noteworthy because it introduces Papuan traditional dance as a medium of cultural diplomacy. This study aims to describe the implementation of a cultural diplomacy strategy through the introduction of Papuan traditional dance using the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium and to examine students' responses and appreciation toward Indonesian culture. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The research was conducted at UPHSD Calamba, Philippines, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana data analysis technique. The findings indicate that the cultural diplomacy strategy was implemented through three stages based on Milton C. Cummings' concept: exchange of ideas, exchange of information, and exchange of art and other aspects of culture. The program generated positive student responses and fostered appreciation of Indonesian culture through active participation, cultural interaction, and dance practice. This study contributes to the field of dance education by demonstrating that traditional dance can serve as an effective medium for cultural diplomacy, cultural preservation, and cross-cultural learning in an international educational setting.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy; Papuan traditional dance; Tabola Bale; dance education; cultural appreciation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is one of the forms of art that serves as the cultural identity of a region. Each traditional dance has its own distinctive characteristics in terms of movements, music, costumes, and the cultural values embedded within it. Therefore, traditional dance functions not only as entertainment or a performance but also as a medium for conveying cultural values, history, and the identity of the community that supports it (Soedarsono, 1997; Jazuli.). Through the movements, music, costumes, and expressions presented, traditional dance is able to convey cultural meanings to the audience without the use of verbal communication. Therefore, traditional dance needs to be preserved and introduced to the international community through cultural diplomacy activities.

Currently, technological advancements and globalization have created opportunities for artists to introduce traditional dance to both domestic and international communities. Technological advancements and the flow of globalization have expanded



opportunities for the preservation as well as the promotion of Indonesian traditional dance to the international community. These conditions have made traditional dance function not only as a cultural heritage but also as a medium of cultural diplomacy that can introduce Indonesia's national identity in various countries. According to Milton C. Cummings (2003), cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art, values, traditions, and other aspects of culture among nations with the aim of building mutual understanding. With these opportunities, traditional dance can serve as one of the media used in cultural diplomacy activities abroad (Soedarsono, 1997; Jazuli, 2016). Therefore, traditional dance is one of the effective media for introducing the diversity of Indonesian culture to foreign communities because it is able to convey cultural values.

According to Milton C. Cummings (2003), cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art, values, traditions, and other aspects of culture among nations with the aim of promoting mutual understanding. In this context, traditional dance is often used as a medium of cultural diplomacy to introduce Indonesia's cultural identity, which is rich in diversity, to foreign communities so that it can attract interest and be more easily accepted. Through these activities, foreign communities can more easily become familiar with the diversity of Indonesian culture. Many cultural events abroad are used as platforms for cultural diplomacy. Through these activities, the international community can directly learn about and experience the diversity of Indonesian culture, particularly in the field of traditional dance. Therefore, cultural diplomacy plays an important role as a means of bridging relationships between countries with different cultural backgrounds in order to establish good cooperation.

To strengthen relationships between countries through cultural diplomacy, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) in Manila, as the official representative of Indonesia in the Philippines, also plays a role in introducing the diversity of Indonesian culture to the people of the Philippines. Under the coordination of the Education and Cultural Attaché (Atdikbud), in collaboration with the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) Calamba, Philippines, a cultural activity was organized involving UPHSD students to introduce Indonesian culture, particularly in the field of traditional dance, within an educational environment. In its implementation, students from the Dance, Drama, and Music Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Surabaya who were undertaking an internship program at the Indonesian Embassy in Manila also participated in the activity at UPHSD Calamba. They were directly involved under the supervision of the Education and Cultural Attaché in carrying out cultural diplomacy activities through the introduction of Indonesian traditional dance.

The activity was attended by elementary school (SD) and junior high school (SMP) students, with approximately 150 participants. During its implementation, the internship students encountered several challenges, including differences in cultural backgrounds, language barriers, and finding ways to attract students' interest in Papuan traditional dance, which was considered difficult to learn. The internship students realized that emphasizing technical mastery in the learning process would only reduce the students' enthusiasm. According to Paranti et al. (2020), the primary objective of dance learning for foreign students is to enable them to become familiar with Indonesian culture through direct bodily experience (practice) without burdening them with the mastery of complex techniques.

This encouraged the internship students to develop the idea of combining Papuan traditional dance, which is characterized by energetic movements and is relatively easy to memorize, with the song Tabola Bale, which became popular on TikTok, as a supporting learning medium to attract the students' attention. The selection of the song Tabola Bale was based on the widespread use of TikTok, including at the international level. The song frequently appears in various contents created by young people, making it more familiar and recognizable on social media. Therefore, it was possible that students in the Philippines were also familiar with the application. The internship students observed that the participants responded positively to the Papuan traditional dance combined with the song Tabola Bale, and they showed great enthusiasm in participating in the traditional dance demonstration.

By applying a cultural diplomacy strategy, this approach proved to be effective in introducing Indonesian traditional dance to students at UPHSD Calamba, Philippines. This study focuses on the use of the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium for Papuan traditional dance to introduce Indonesian culture to Filipino students. The study employs Milton C. Cummings' theory of cultural diplomacy as the analytical framework to understand the process of cultural introduction, cultural interaction, participant participation, cultural understanding, and the impacts that emerged during the implementation of the activity as the focus of the analysis.

Based on the background phenomenon presented in this study, the cultural diplomacy strategy implemented by the internship students for the students at UPHSD Calamba demonstrates a unique approach in introducing Indonesian culture, particularly in the field of traditional dance. This is evidenced by the challenge faced by the internship students in attracting the students' interest in traditional dance by combining it with the song Tabola Bale, which was popular on social media, as a supporting medium. By using the demonstration method, the internship students directly demonstrated the prepared dance material and invited the students to follow each movement being demonstrated. This encouraged the students to participate actively and showed positive responses throughout the activity. The focus of this study is the cultural diplomacy strategy of introducing traditional dance using the song Tabola Bale to students at UPHSD Calamba, Philippines, as an effort to introduce Indonesian culture through traditional dance activities.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is an approach used to understand a phenomenon based on participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings toward a particular event. Likewise, Sugiyono (2023) states that descriptive qualitative research aims to describe a phenomenon systematically based on data obtained from the field without manipulating the research object. Therefore, this method was considered appropriate for describing the implementation of a cultural diplomacy strategy through the introduction of Papuan traditional dance using the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium. The research was conducted on 11 September 2025 at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) Calamba Campus, Laguna, Philippines, during the From Indonesia to Perpetual: A Journey of Learning and Culture program

organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) in Manila in collaboration with UPHSD Calamba. The researcher participated directly in the program as an internship student under the Education and Cultural Attaché of the Indonesian Embassy in Manila.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on the implementation of the cultural diplomacy strategy, the interaction between Universitas Negeri Surabaya students and UPHSD students, and students' responses and participation throughout the activity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online through WhatsApp and Instagram with the Secretary of the Education and Cultural Attaché at the Indonesian Embassy in Manila and two UPHSD Calamba students who participated in the program. Documentation included photographs, videos, activity records, and certificates obtained during the program to support the observation and interview data. The implementation of the cultural diplomacy strategy was analyzed using Milton C. Cummings' (2003) framework, consisting of Exchange of Ideas, Exchange of Information, and Exchange of Art and Other Aspects of Culture. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Implementation of the Cultural Diplomacy Strategy

The cultural diplomacy program From Indonesia to Perpetual: A Journey of Learning and Culture was implemented through a collaboration between the Education and Culture Attaché (Atase Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan) of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) in Manila and the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) Calamba, Philippines. The activity was held on 11 September 2025 at the UPHSD Calamba Campus, Laguna, Philippines, and involved internship students from the Department of Drama, Dance, and Music Education, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, as facilitators in introducing Indonesian traditional dance to approximately 150 elementary and junior high school students (Grades 1–10).

In this program, the Education and Culture Attaché of KBRI Manila acted as the coordinator of institutional cooperation and cultural activities, while UPHSD Calamba served as the host institution that provided the educational environment for the implementation of the program. Through this collaboration, internship students were directly involved in introducing Indonesian culture by teaching Papuan traditional dance using the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium. The implementation of the cultural diplomacy strategy during the program was carried out through three stages based on Milton C. Cummings' concept: Exchange of Ideas, Exchange of Information, and Exchange of Art and Other Aspects of Culture.

Exchange of Ideas

The first stage of the cultural diplomacy strategy began with cultural interaction between Indonesian representatives and the UPHSD Calamba community. The program was officially opened with welcoming remarks from representatives of the Education and Culture Attaché of KBRI Manila and UPHSD Calamba, followed by

introductions from the internship students of Universitas Negeri Surabaya. This initial session aimed to establish communication and create a friendly atmosphere before the cultural learning activities began.

The cultural interaction continued through a series of performances presented by both institutions. Filipino students performed several cultural presentations, while the Universitas Negeri Surabaya internship students introduced Indonesian culture by performing the Lenggang Nyai dance. These performances became an initial medium of interaction that allowed participants from both countries to observe and appreciate each other's cultural expressions before participating in the learning activities.

Following the performances, the internship students introduced the objectives and sequence of the cultural program while interacting directly with the participants. During this session, students from UPHSD Calamba showed curiosity by responding to questions and actively communicating with the facilitators. According to Manette Gonzales, Secretary of the Education and Culture Attaché Office at KBRI Manila, cultural activities conducted in educational institutions provide opportunities for Indonesian and Filipino participants to interact directly while introducing Indonesian cultural diversity. The observation results also indicated that the initial interaction created a positive learning atmosphere and encouraged students to participate actively throughout the program.



Figure 1.

Ceremony and Cultural Performances

Opening

Exchange of Information

Following the initial cultural interaction, the internship students continued the program by introducing Papuan traditional dance to the participants. Before the practical session began, students were provided with information about the dance, including its origin, characteristics, and cultural significance. The facilitators explained that Papuan traditional dance represents the cultural identity of the eastern region of Indonesia and is characterized by energetic, dynamic, and expressive movements that reflect the spirit of the Papuan people.

In addition to introducing the dance, the facilitators explained the reason for selecting Papuan traditional dance as the learning material. The dance was chosen because its movements are relatively simple, energetic, and suitable for elementary and junior high school students who had no prior experience with Indonesian traditional dance. The internship students also introduced the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium. They explained that the song has a fast tempo, a clear rhythm, and a cheerful atmosphere, making it easier for participants to follow the dance movements while maintaining their enthusiasm throughout the learning process.

According to Manette Gonzales, Secretary of the Education and Culture Attaché Office at KBRI Manila, introducing Indonesian culture through learning activities that are adapted to students' interests can increase their participation during cultural programs. She also explained that the use of learning media familiar to young people helps create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere without reducing the cultural values conveyed during the activity.

Based on the observation results, the participants paid close attention during the explanation session and actively responded to questions from the facilitators. Several students expressed curiosity about Indonesian culture, particularly Papuan traditional dance, before participating in the practical session. The delivery of cultural information before the dance demonstration helped participants understand the background of the dance and prepared them for the learning activities that followed.



Figure 2.

Introduction
to Papuan Traditional Dance

Introduction

Exchange of Art and Other Aspects of Culture

After receiving information about Papuan traditional dance, the participants proceeded to the practical dance session. The internship students first demonstrated the basic dance movements while participants observed each sequence. The demonstration was carried out gradually to ensure that students could clearly understand the movements before practicing them together.

Following the demonstration, the participants practiced the dance collectively under the guidance of the internship students. During the activity, the facilitators repeatedly demonstrated several movement sequences while providing direct assistance to students who experienced difficulties. The song *Tabola Bale* was used as a supporting learning medium throughout the practice session to help participants synchronize the dance movements with the rhythm of the music. This learning approach created an enjoyable atmosphere and encouraged students to participate actively during the activity.

In addition to learning the dance movements, participants were introduced to several cultural elements related to Papuan traditional dance, including the use of traditional costumes and the cultural values represented through movement and performance. Although the activity was conducted within a limited time, students were given the opportunity to experience Indonesian culture directly through dance practice rather than only receiving theoretical explanations.

According to Manette Gonzales, cultural activities that involve direct participation enable students to experience Indonesian culture in a more meaningful way. She explained that practical learning activities encourage students to interact with cultural expressions while creating enjoyable learning experiences in an international educational environment.

The observation results showed that the participants enthusiastically followed the dance demonstration and practice session. Most students were able to imitate the basic movements after several repetitions and remained actively engaged until the end of the activity. The interaction between the facilitators and participants during the practice session also created a positive learning atmosphere, with students showing confidence and enjoyment while performing the Papuan traditional dance together.



Figure 3. Papuan Traditional Dance Practice Using the Song Tabola Bale

3.1.2 Students' Responses and Appreciation

The implementation of the cultural diplomacy program received positive responses from the students of UPHSD Calamba. Based on the observation results, participants showed enthusiasm from the beginning until the end of the activity. During the dance learning session, students actively paid attention to the facilitators' explanations, followed the demonstrated movements, and willingly participated in every stage of the practice. Most participants were able to imitate the basic movements after several repetitions and remained actively engaged throughout the program.

The observation also indicated that the use of the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium contributed to creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere. The cheerful rhythm of the music encouraged students to participate confidently while practicing the dance movements together. Throughout the activity, participants interacted actively with the internship students by asking questions, responding to instructions, and practicing the movements enthusiastically.

The interview results also demonstrated positive responses toward the introduction of Papuan traditional dance. Max Abalos, a Grade 10 student at UPHSD Calamba, stated that before participating in the program, he had only limited knowledge of Indonesian traditional dance. He explained that learning Papuan traditional dance through direct practice was an enjoyable experience, although some movements were initially challenging. He also mentioned that he had previously heard the song Tabola Bale through social media, which made the learning activity more interesting and familiar.

Similar responses were expressed by Jazzlyn A. Deguzman, a Grade 6 student at UPHSD Calamba. She stated that she had not previously been familiar with Papuan traditional dance but became interested after participating in the cultural activity. According to her,

the dance practice was enjoyable because it combined movement, music, and direct interaction with the facilitators, allowing students to experience Indonesian culture in an engaging way.

According to Manette Gonzales, Secretary of the Education and Culture Attaché Office at KBRI Manila, the students showed positive participation throughout the program. She explained that the participants were enthusiastic in following the dance activities and demonstrated curiosity about Indonesian culture during the interaction sessions. She also observed that introducing culture through practical activities enabled students to become more actively involved in the learning process compared to conventional classroom explanations.

The documentation collected during the activity further supports the observation and interview findings. Photographs and video recordings show students actively participating in the dance practice, following the facilitators' demonstrations, and interacting with the internship students throughout the program. These documents illustrate the students' enthusiasm and participation during the implementation of the cultural diplomacy activity at UPHSD Calamba.



Figure 4. Students' Participation During the Dance Practice

3.2 Discussion

Exchange of Ideas

The findings show that the cultural diplomacy program began with direct interaction between Indonesian representatives and the UPHSD Calamba community through institutional collaboration, cultural performances, and communication with participants. This interaction created a positive atmosphere before the dance learning activities and encouraged students to participate actively throughout the program.

These findings are consistent with Milton C. Cummings (2003), who states that cultural diplomacy begins with the exchange of ideas through communication and interaction between communities. Likewise, Alunaza (2018) explains that cultural performances can function as an effective medium for strengthening international relations through cultural exchange.

Exchange of Information

The introduction of Papuan traditional dance before the practical session provided participants with knowledge about the dance's origin, characteristics, cultural values, and the use of the song *Tabola Bale* as a supporting learning medium. This information helped students understand the cultural background before participating in the dance practice.

This finding supports Cummings' (2003) concept that cultural diplomacy includes the exchange of information to increase understanding of another culture. It also aligns with Paranti et al. (2023), who emphasize that introducing cultural background before dance

practice helps foreign learners better understand and appreciate the learning material.

Exchange of Art and Other Aspects of Culture

The dance demonstration and practice session allowed participants to experience Indonesian culture directly through movement, music, and interaction with the facilitators. Students actively followed the dance movements and participated throughout the activity.

This finding reflects the concept of Exchange of Art and Other Aspects of Culture proposed by Cummings (2003), which views artistic activities as an effective medium for cultural exchange. Similarly, Putri (2022) found that dance workshops implemented through cultural diplomacy programs provide meaningful cultural experiences for international participants

Students' Responses and Appreciation

The positive responses shown by UPHSD Calamba students indicate that the cultural diplomacy strategy successfully encouraged participation and interest in Indonesian culture. The use of the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium also contributed to creating a more engaging learning atmosphere during the dance activities.

These findings support Nugroho (2024), who argues that traditional dance can serve as an effective medium of cultural diplomacy because it enables international audiences to experience Indonesian culture directly. The results also reinforce Paranti et al. (2023), who state that practical dance activities encourage appreciation of Indonesian culture among foreign learners.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe the implementation of a cultural diplomacy strategy through the introduction of Papuan traditional dance using the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) Calamba, Philippines. The findings indicate that the cultural diplomacy strategy was implemented through three stages based on Milton C. Cummings' concept, namely Exchange of Ideas, Exchange of Information, and Exchange of Art and Other Aspects of Culture. The implementation involved cultural interaction, the introduction of Papuan traditional dance and its cultural background, and direct dance practice using the song Tabola Bale as a supporting learning medium. The program received positive responses from the participants, as reflected in their active participation, enthusiasm, and appreciation toward Indonesian culture throughout the activity. These findings demonstrate that traditional dance can serve as an effective medium for cultural diplomacy in international educational settings by providing participants with direct cultural experiences while supporting the preservation and promotion of Indonesian cultural heritage. This study contributes to the field of dance education by demonstrating that combining traditional dance with appropriate learning media can

strengthen cultural exchange and encourage cross-cultural appreciation among international students.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author was responsible for the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and manuscript preparation.

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