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Implementing a Comparative Syntax–Phonology Model to Strengthen Multilingual Academic Communication: A Community Engagement Program

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Abstract

This community engagement program addressed the limited integration of comparative multilingual approaches in language learning at Beijing Foreign Studies University particularly for Mandarin-speaking students learning Indonesian and being introduced to Javanese language and culture. The program aimed to implement a comparative syntax–phonology model as a practical resource for strengthening cross-linguistic awareness and multilingual communication. A research-based participatory approach was employed through institutional coordination, needs analysis, classroom implementation, observation, partner discussion, and reflective evaluation. The program was conducted on May 2026 through collaboration between Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) and Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU). The principal implementation involved 16 students in an Indonesian-language class and was extended to an Indonesian-language master's class. Findings showed that the comparative module provided a systematic framework for connecting learners' existing linguistic resources with Indonesian and Javanese, while multilingual mediation and authentic cultural materials supported classroom comprehensibility and engagement. The evaluation also identified the need for stronger visual support, more high-frequency communicative vocabulary, richer cultural materials, and more systematic multilingual mediation. The program concludes that comparative multilingual learning can serve as an adaptable model for international language education when linguistic comparison, cultural contextualization, partner participation, and iterative evaluation are integrated.

Keywords: Comparative Language Learning, Cross-Linguistic Awareness, Multilingual Communication; Multilingual Mediation, Syntax–Phonology Model

INTRODUCTION

The increasing mobility of students and academics across national borders has made multilingual communication an increasingly visible part of higher education. This situation is particularly relevant in language programs where students encounter languages that differ considerably in their grammatical organization, sound systems, and sociocultural conventions. The academic community of the School of Asian Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) represents such a context. Mandarin-speaking students

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at BFSU study Indonesian as an additional language, while exposure to Javanese introduces another linguistic and cultural system that differs from both Mandarin and Indonesian. The community engagement program developed through the collaboration between Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) and BFSU therefore addressed an academic community in which multilingual learning was already taking place, but where explicit opportunities to compare linguistic systems remained limited. The needs analysis conducted with the partner institution also indicated differences in students' previous learning experiences and Indonesian proficiency, requiring the learning materials and instructional strategies to be responsive to the actual classroom context.

Multilingual learners do not approach an additional language with an empty linguistic repertoire. Knowledge developed through previously acquired languages may shape how new linguistic forms are perceived, interpreted, and produced. Cross-linguistic transfer has been documented across phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, and morphological awareness, suggesting that prior linguistic knowledge can provide both facilitative resources and potential sources of difficulty (Yang et al., 2017). In multilingual education, this has contributed to a broader shift away from rigid separation between languages toward pedagogical approaches that deliberately draw on learners' existing linguistic resources. Cenoz and Gorter (2020), for example, conceptualize pedagogical translanguaging as the planned use of more than one language to promote language learning, metalinguistic awareness, and the development of multilingual repertoires. More recently, Westheim et al. (2025) identified structured cross-linguistic awareness activities as a distinct form of multilingual intervention through which learners are encouraged to notice and compare relationships across languages. This perspective builds on the concept of cross-linguistic influence, which recognizes that previously acquired languages can shape additional language learning (Odlin, 1989). Moving from this theoretical foundation to classroom practice, Cenoz and Gorter (2022) emphasize the planned activation of learners' linguistic repertoires. Leonet et al. (2020) provide a specific example showing that a translanguaging intervention involving Basque–Spanish primary school learners of English supported morphological awareness. This evidence illustrates the potential of explicit cross-language connections, although its linguistic focus and educational context differ from those of the present program.

Such comparison is especially important when the languages involved differ substantially at both syntactic and phonological levels. Mandarin and English, for example, show both transferable commonalities and important differences in linguistic organization, and the degree of transfer varies according to the linguistic domain under consideration (Yang et al., 2017). Comparative work on English and Chinese has also demonstrated differences in sound systems, word order, grammatical organization, and other features that require different instructional responses rather than direct one-to-one mapping between the languages (Bogush et al., 2020). In the Indonesian context, English phonology differs from Indonesian in areas such as vowel complexity, word stress, and spelling–sound correspondence (Fitria, 2024), while Mandarin presents additional challenges associated with tone, aspiration, and language-specific articulatory patterns. Javanese further broadens the multilingual landscape through its own phonological variation, syntactic flexibility, speech levels, and close relationship between linguistic choice and sociocultural context. In a nutshell, these differences make comparative analysis potentially useful not merely for identifying linguistic interference, but for helping learners understand why apparently comparable forms may operate differently across languages. Pronunciation pedagogy also offers a practical link between linguistic description and instruction. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), for example, connect sound-system explanations with classroom activities and examples of spoken language, providing a pedagogical reference for translating phonological comparison into guided practice.

The pedagogical value of multilingual comparison, however, depends on how it is translated into classroom practice. Systematic reviews of pedagogical translanguaging suggest that multilingual approaches

can support learning in particular contexts, although their effectiveness depends strongly on instructional design, target skills, and the way learners' languages are incorporated into learning activities (Huang & Chalmers, 2023). This means that allowing several languages to appear in a classroom is not in itself sufficient. Learners need opportunities to notice linguistic relationships, test their assumptions, and connect differences in form with differences in communicative function. In the present partner context, this issue was particularly relevant because Mandarin was the students' primary linguistic resource, Indonesian was already being learned as an additional language, and Javanese introduced both a new linguistic system and a culturally embedded form of communication. The comparative module was therefore intended to make these relationships more explicit rather than presenting each language as an isolated system.

Community engagement studies also indicate that capacity-building activities are more meaningful when conceptual input is combined with guided practice, interaction, and feedback. Wijayanto and Qana'a (2024) used interactive workshops, simulations, and individual coaching to strengthen participants' communication skills, demonstrating the importance of combining explanation with opportunities for practical performance. Similarly, Rochma and Mahmudi (2024) addressed a language-teaching problem through initial discussion of teachers' difficulties, conceptual training, and subsequent mentoring in the development of instructional assessment materials. Other community-service initiatives have likewise combined socialization, training, technological application, and evaluation to strengthen participants' capacity rather than relying on one-way knowledge transmission (Candraloka et al., 2024). These practices provide a useful precedent for designing community engagement as a participatory learning process in which the intervention is adapted to the partner's needs and refined through implementation. At the partnership level, Bringle and Hatcher (2002) highlight reciprocity, equity, and relationship development as important considerations in campus–community engagement. For programs incorporating intercultural experiences, Deardorff (2006) further emphasizes the need to define and assess intercultural competence explicitly. These perspectives support attention to partner participation and culturally contextualized learning while cautioning against treating participation alone as evidence of competence development.

Nevertheless, translating these complementary perspectives into the partner's instructional context requires further consideration. The literature discussed above addresses several relevant components. Yang et al. (2017) synthesize Chinese–English transfer across selected linguistic domains, Leonet et al. (2020) examine morphological awareness through a multilingual classroom intervention, and Cenoz and Gorter (2022) explain how learners' linguistic repertoires can be activated through planned instruction. Meanwhile, the community engagement studies reviewed above illustrate participatory approaches to communication training, teacher development, and instructional support. These contributions provide foundations for the present program. The gap addressed here therefore concerns the contextual integration and implementation of these components, rather than an assumed absence of comparable initiatives. Based on this focused synthesis, the present article contributes an account of how a four-language comparative module was adapted and implemented through UNY–BFSU collaboration, including the instructional support required and the adjustments identified during implementation.

The need for such an intervention became particularly clear in the BFSU setting. The program involved students learning Indonesian against a Mandarin linguistic background, with Javanese introduced as an additional language and cultural resource. The implementation subsequently included a regular Indonesian-language class of 16 students as well as an Indonesian-language master's class. The partner context also revealed that learners differed in their Indonesian-language experience and that English could not always function consistently as the sole mediating language. This made multilingual mediation, contextualized examples, visual support, and strategic use of Mandarin particularly relevant to classroom comprehensibility.

Rather than treating Mandarin as interference to be suppressed, the program positioned learners' existing linguistic resources as points of reference from which Indonesian and Javanese could be understood more systematically.

To address these needs, the UNY–BFSU community engagement program implemented a Comparative Syntax–Phonology Model for Mandarin, English, Indonesian, and Javanese through a research-based participatory approach. Although the model incorporated four languages, its classroom implementation at BFSU foregrounded Indonesian and Javanese learning, with Mandarin and English functioning as comparative or mediating resources where appropriate. The intervention combined institutional coordination and needs analysis, implementation of a multilingual comparative module, guided language practice, cross-linguistic comparison, multilingual mediation, and the use of authentic Javanese cultural resources. The program therefore connected linguistic awareness with meaningful language use and intercultural experience rather than presenting phonology and syntax as decontextualized linguistic knowledge.

METHODS

This community engagement program employed a research-based participatory approach, in which findings from comparative linguistic research were translated into classroom-oriented activities and implemented collaboratively with the partner institution. The program was conducted through cooperation between Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) and the School of Asian Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), Beijing, China, on 8–10 May 2026. The main target group consisted of Mandarin-speaking BFSU students learning Indonesian as an additional language. The principal classroom implementation on 9 May involved 16 students in an Indonesian-language class, while an additional implementation was conducted on 10 May with students in the Indonesian-language master's program. The program was designed not as a one-way training activity but as a collaborative implementation in which the comparative module could be adapted to the linguistic background, prior learning experience, and classroom needs of the partner community.

The implementation consisted of three interconnected stages: preparation and needs analysis, classroom implementation, and evaluation and follow-up. During the preparation stage, the UNY and BFSU teams coordinated the program schedule, division of responsibilities, instructional materials, and classroom arrangements. Needs analysis was conducted through initial observation and academic discussion with BFSU representatives to identify students' previous experience in learning Indonesian, their general linguistic profiles, their learning needs, and the challenges associated with introducing Javanese in a Mandarin-dominant learning environment. The information obtained was used to adjust the content, examples, and delivery of the comparative module before classroom implementation. The first day, 8 May 2026, therefore combined institutional coordination with a needs-analysis session involving representatives of the School of Asian Studies.

The classroom implementation was conducted on 9 and 10 May 2026. The comparative module served as the principal instructional resource and brought together Indonesian, Javanese, Mandarin, and English according to their respective pedagogical functions. Indonesian and Javanese constituted the main learning targets during the BFSU activities, while Mandarin and English were used as comparative or mediating resources when necessary. The activities included explanations of selected linguistic features, comparison of language forms, guided language practice, interactive discussion, and opportunities for students to identify similarities and differences across languages. Existing knowledge of Indonesian was used as a bridge for introducing Javanese, enabling students to connect newly introduced linguistic forms with structures and meanings that were already more familiar to them. On the third day, the module was also implemented in an

Indonesian-language master's class to examine its applicability to learners with a different academic level and learning experience.

Language learning was integrated with cultural experience to provide a more contextualized form of multilingual engagement. Authentic cultural materials included one set of women's Javanese traditional clothing, one set of men's Javanese traditional clothing, and *bakpia* as a traditional food from Yogyakarta. These materials were incorporated into classroom interaction to connect linguistic expressions with their sociocultural contexts. When explanations in Indonesian or English were not sufficiently accessible to all students, BFSU lecturers provided clarification in Mandarin. This multilingual mediation was used strategically to maintain comprehensibility while keeping Indonesian and Javanese as the principal target languages. The implementation therefore combined written module content, oral explanation, language practice, authentic objects, visual demonstration, and multilingual mediation rather than relying on verbal explanation alone.

The implementation and practical applicability of the program were evaluated through classroom observation, students' responses and participation, discussions with BFSU partners, and post-implementation reflection by the implementation team. These sources were used to assess how well the module supported comparative language learning, the extent to which students engaged with the activities, the comprehensibility of the materials and instructional language, and the practical adjustments needed for subsequent implementation. Particular attention was given to students' responses to the comparative activities, the use of cultural materials, difficulties arising from differences in Indonesian and English proficiency, and occasions on which Mandarin mediation was required. The implementation was also observed across the regular and master's classes to identify whether the module could be adapted to learners with different academic and linguistic backgrounds. During the classroom activities on 9–10 May 2026, students' participation in comparative language activities, guided practice, and classroom interaction were observed. Additional clarification in Mandarin was provided by BFSU lecturers when needed. Particular attention was given to students' responses to the learning materials, their engagement with language and cultural activities, and the communication difficulties encountered during instruction. These observations were summarized descriptively in the implementation report, including students' interest in the cultural materials and instances in which explanations in Indonesian or English required further Mandarin mediation. Partner feedback was obtained through discussions with BFSU lecturers concerning the learning context and the applicability of the module. Following implementation, classroom experiences and partner feedback were reviewed to identify strengths, constraints, and priorities for improvement. The resulting synthesis was documented in the evaluation section of the final activity report, particularly in relation to visual support, everyday vocabulary, cultural resources, and multilingual mediation.

For the descriptive evaluation, participant engagement was considered in relation to involvement in guided exercises, contributions to classroom discussion, and responses during language and cultural activities. Comprehensibility was considered through students' responses to instructions and explanations, their participation in the associated practice, and the occasions on which further clarification or Mandarin mediation was needed. These observations were treated as indications of access to the activities, rather than as measures of language proficiency. Module suitability was considered in relation to its usability in the regular and master's classes, the accessibility of its examples and explanations, and its relevance to the learning needs identified with BFSU lecturers. The need for adjustment was identified through difficulties encountered during implementation and feedback concerning visual support, communicative vocabulary, cultural materials, and multilingual mediation. These aspects provided descriptive reference points for reviewing the activities; no numerical success thresholds or proficiency gains were inferred from them.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Implementation of the comparative multilingual learning program

The community engagement program was implemented at the School of Asian Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), on 8–10 May 2026. Rather than beginning directly with classroom instruction, the program started with institutional coordination and a needs-analysis discussion between the Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) team and BFSU representatives. The discussion examined the existing Indonesian- and Javanese-language learning context, students' previous learning experiences, their general levels of Indonesian proficiency, and the types of support required for the subsequent classroom activities. The same meeting also included the signing of an Implementation Arrangement between UNY and BFSU, providing an institutional framework for further collaboration in teaching, research, community engagement, and academic exchange.

The needs analysis revealed that the BFSU students did not constitute a linguistically homogeneous group. Although Mandarin was their main linguistic resource and they had already received Indonesian-language instruction, their previous experience with Indonesian varied. English could not consistently function as a mediating language for all participants, and Javanese constituted a relatively new linguistic and cultural system for most students. These conditions required the implementation team to adapt the module rather than apply it as a fixed instructional package. The comparative model was consequently used to connect students' existing knowledge of Mandarin and Indonesian with newly introduced Javanese forms, while English was retained as an additional comparative or mediating resource when appropriate.

On 9 May 2026, the comparative module was implemented in a regular Indonesian-language class involving 16 BFSU students. The activities combined Indonesian-language learning, an introduction to and practice of Javanese, and explicit comparison across linguistic systems. Students were encouraged to notice how linguistic forms and meanings could be related across languages rather than studying each language as an isolated body of knowledge. On 10 May, the program continued with similar multilingual activities and was extended to an Indonesian-language master's class, enabling the team to observe the adaptability of the module across learners with different academic and language-learning backgrounds.

Table 1. Summary of Program Implementation and Main Outcomes

Date	Activity	Form of implementation	Main outcome
8 May 2026	UNY–BFSU institutional meeting	Coordination and signing of the Implementation Arrangement	Institutional basis for continued academic collaboration
8 May 2026	Needs-analysis discussion	Identification of students' backgrounds, prior learning, and instructional needs	Contextual information for adapting the comparative module
9 May 2026	Regular Indonesian-language class with 16 students	Comparative module, Indonesian and Javanese learning, linguistic comparison	Opportunities to develop cross-linguistic awareness
9 May 2026	Javanese cultural introduction	Traditional clothing and bakpia as authentic cultural resources	Greater contextualization and student engagement
10 May 2026	Continued multilingual learning	Further module implementation and language practice	Reinforcement of comparative language learning
10 May 2026	Indonesian-language master's class	Adapted module implementation	Evidence of flexibility across different academic levels

Cross-linguistic comparison as a learning resource

The comparative module was provided a practical structure for directing students' attention to relationships among languages. Because the participants already had experience learning Indonesian, this existing knowledge could be used as an entry point for introducing Javanese. Students were not simply presented with lists of equivalent vocabulary; instead, instructional activities encouraged them to notice how linguistic forms could resemble or differ from patterns they already knew. The classroom implementation therefore transformed comparison from descriptive linguistic information into a learning activity aimed at strengthening *cross-linguistic awareness*.

The implementation also demonstrated that cross-linguistic comparison needed to remain responsive to learners' actual repertoires. Mandarin played an important role because it was the students' strongest shared linguistic resource, while Indonesian functioned both as a target of continued learning and as a bridge to Javanese. English remained useful in particular instructional situations but could not be assumed to be equally accessible to all students. The learning environment therefore operated through different combinations of languages according to communicative need rather than through rigid separation of the four languages.



Figure 1. Integration of Javanese Language and Cultural Content in the Multilingual Learning Activities

Another notable outcome was the strong role of cultural contextualization. The introduction of Javanese was accompanied by authentic cultural materials, particularly one set of women's traditional Javanese clothing, one set of men's traditional Javanese clothing, and bakpia as a food associated with Yogyakarta. Students responded positively to these materials, and their presence encouraged more active interaction than verbal explanation alone. The cultural artifacts provided visible and concrete contexts through which language could be associated with social practices and cultural meanings. This component was especially useful because Javanese cannot be adequately introduced without attention to its social and cultural dimensions. Its linguistic choices are closely related to interpersonal relationships, politeness, and speech levels. The activity became a small-scale intercultural exchange in which students encountered language together with tangible representations of the cultural context in which it is used.

The implementation further showed that multilingual mediation was necessary rather than incidental. In several instructional moments, Indonesian and English alone were insufficient to ensure that all students fully understood the explanation. BFSU lecturers therefore provided clarification in Mandarin when necessary. This support enabled instruction to continue without abandoning Indonesian and Javanese as the principal target languages. The experience demonstrated that learners' first language could function productively as an instructional bridge. Mandarin was not treated as interference to be eliminated. Instead, it was used strategically when communication would otherwise have broken down. This mediation also highlighted that BFSU lecturers contributed not only organizational assistance but also linguistic and pedagogical knowledge that the visiting team could not independently provide.

Evaluation of the comparative module and areas for improvement

Classroom observations, students' responses, discussions with BFSU partners, and implementation-team reflections indicated that the comparative module was applicable to both the regular Indonesian class and the master's-level class. It provided a systematic structure for instruction and supported the introduction of Indonesian and Javanese through comparative activities. At the same time, implementation produced concrete evidence about aspects requiring revision.

However, the most prominent limitation concerned visual support. The existing module did not provide enough contextual illustrations for learners whose Indonesian proficiency varied and whose English proficiency could not always support detailed explanation. The implementation therefore indicated a need for more photographs, illustrations, visual scenarios, and other multimodal resources. A second issue concerned the range of Indonesian vocabulary. Students required more immediately usable, high-frequency expressions related to greetings, self-introduction, campus life, food and drink, shopping, asking for information, travel, and everyday social interaction.

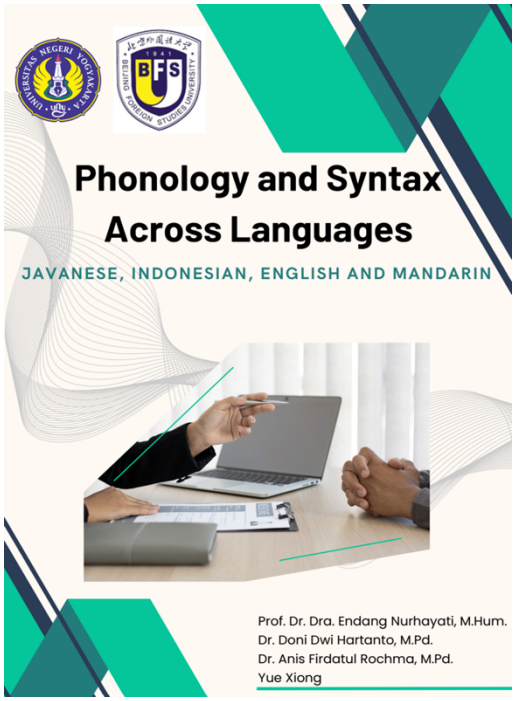


Figure 2. Comparative Multilingual Learning Module Used in the UNY–BFSU Community Engagement Program

The cultural component also required expansion. Although the Javanese clothing and bakpia attracted considerable interest, only one male and one female set of traditional clothing were available. Future versions should therefore include more cultural objects or compensate for transport limitations through photographs, video, visual cards, and digital resources. Additionally, multilingual mediation needed to be planned more systematically. The evaluation suggested developing Mandarin–Indonesian–Javanese glossaries, simplified multilingual instructions, and stronger visual scaffolding.

Discussion

Comparative learning and the development of cross-linguistic awareness

The usefulness of the comparative module can first be understood in relation to current perspectives on multilingual learning. Multilingual learners do not process each additional language independently; knowledge from previously acquired languages can contribute to the processing of new linguistic information. Yang et al. (2017), for example, found cross-language relationships between Chinese and English in phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, and morphological awareness, although the strength of transfer varied across domains. Similarly, Bogush et al. (2020) showed that English and Chinese differ systematically in phonetics, vocabulary, grammatical organization, and reading processes, arguing that such differences should inform instructional design rather than be ignored.

The present community engagement activity operationalized this principle through structured comparison. Rather than asking students to suppress Mandarin while learning Indonesian or Javanese, the program encouraged them to notice relationships among language systems. This approach corresponds closely with Cenoz and Gorter's (2020) concept of pedagogical translanguaging, in which learners' multilingual resources are intentionally incorporated to promote language and metalinguistic awareness. It is also consistent with Westheim et al.'s (2025) systematic review, which identifies structured cross-linguistic awareness activities as a distinct form of multilingual intervention and notes that such tasks can help learners examine similarities and differences among languages in their repertoires.

The relevance of explicit comparison is particularly strong where language systems differ substantially. English and Indonesian, for instance, differ in vowel complexity, stress patterns, and spelling–sound correspondence (Fitria, 2024), while Mandarin introduces tonal and phonotactic characteristics that differ considerably from English and Indonesian. These linguistic contrasts strengthen the rationale for a module that does not merely provide multilingual vocabulary but guides learners in noticing how linguistic systems organize sounds and structures differently. In this respect, the community engagement activity extends comparative linguistic research into an instructional application.

The strategic use of Mandarin by BFSU lecturers is one of the most significant pedagogical findings of the program. This practice illustrates that multilingual mediation can maintain access to instruction when target-language proficiency is still developing. It parallels the pedagogical translanguaging literature, where learners' stronger languages are used selectively to clarify concepts, sustain interaction, and support progression toward target-language use. Huang and Chalmers' (2023) systematic review found that pedagogical translanguaging can benefit EFL learning when multilingual resources are integrated purposefully, although outcomes depend on context and instructional design.

The pattern also resembles findings from Indonesian multilingual classrooms. Khafshoh et al. (2025) showed that teachers use translanguaging for explaining material, questioning, task management, and feedback in a CLIL context, demonstrating that multilingual resources can support comprehension without necessarily displacing the instructional target. Hidayati et al. (2024) likewise reported that combining translanguaging with multimodal learning contributed to a more engaging and inclusive EFL environment,

while also noting that learners with lower proficiency may require additional support. In a more recent ESP setting, Chieu et al. (2026) found that students used translanguaging strategically for conceptual clarification and vocabulary learning.

The positive responses to Javanese clothing and bakpia suggest that culture-based multimodal materials can play a meaningful role in multilingual language learning. They provided concrete referents that reduced dependence on verbal explanation and enabled students to connect linguistic content with cultural practices. This was particularly relevant in a context where proficiency in Indonesian and English varied across students. The finding is compatible with Hidayati et al. (2024), whose study suggests that multilingual and multimodal resources can jointly increase engagement and support understanding. It also reflects a wider principle in contextualized language pedagogy: language forms become easier to interpret when they are situated within meaningful communicative and sociocultural contexts. For Javanese in particular, separating linguistic forms from politeness, social relationships, and cultural conventions would provide learners with only a partial understanding of how the language operates.

This finding also resonates with previous community engagement studies that emphasize concrete, participatory, and practice-oriented learning rather than one-way information delivery. Wijayanto and Qana'a (2024), for instance, combined interactive workshops, simulations, practical exercises, and individual guidance in communication training; their evaluation showed positive participant responses across communication skills, confidence, and feedback. Similarly, Fitri et al. (2026) incorporated conceptual explanation, example analysis, audiovisual media, direct observation, writing practice, and reflection, reporting measurable improvement in participants' writing and critical-thinking performance. These examples support the decision to combine explanation, comparison, authentic materials, and learner participation in the BFSU program.

Additionally, another important finding concerns the program design itself. The initial discussion with BFSU enabled the intervention to respond to students' existing knowledge and linguistic constraints instead of assuming that a module developed in one institutional setting could be transferred without modification. This participatory orientation is consistent with other community engagement activities. Rochma and Mahmudi (2024), for example, began their intervention with a discussion of teachers' actual difficulties before providing conceptual input and guided assistance in developing language-assessment instruments. Nurhabibah et al. (2026) similarly used a participatory service-learning sequence that included needs analysis, material strengthening, training, learning-by-doing assistance, monitoring, and evaluation. The same pattern appears in technology-oriented community engagement. Candraloka et al. (2024) combined socialization, training, technology implementation, and evaluation, while Subaidi et al. (2024) used workshop activities, tutorials, practice, mentoring, discussion, and questionnaires to improve partner capacity. Together, these studies indicate that effective community engagement generally involves a sequence of problem identification, participant-oriented intervention, supported practice, and evaluation, rather than a single training session detached from partner conditions.

The signing of the Implementation Arrangement and the active involvement of BFSU lecturers suggest that institutional collaboration itself was an important program outcome. The community engagement activity was not organized as a short-term visit in which the external team independently delivered instruction. Instead, the partner institution contributed contextual knowledge, classroom access, linguistic mediation, and feedback. This increased the ecological relevance of the intervention and created a basis for future revision and implementation.

Such collaboration is particularly valuable for multilingual programs because linguistic appropriateness cannot be determined solely by the visiting institution. Local lecturers understand students' educational histories, language proficiency, and classroom routines. Their participation consequently allowed

the intervention to adapt to situations in which English was an unreliable mediation language and Mandarin support became necessary. The result supports the broader participatory orientation found in recent programs, where meaningful involvement of partners and follow-up mechanisms are treated as components of sustainable capacity building rather than as logistical additions (Candraloka et al., 2024; Nurhabibah et al., 2026; Subaidi et al., 2024).

Despite the positive implementation, the program had several limitations. First, the classroom implementation was relatively short, taking place over three days, which restricts conclusions about sustained changes in students' multilingual competence. Second, although the original program design contemplated multiple forms of evaluation, the evidence available from this implementation was primarily derived from classroom observation, participant responses, partner discussion, and team reflection. Consequently, the present results demonstrate applicability, engagement, and identified learning needs, but should not be interpreted as evidence of statistically established learning gains. Third, the module required substantial improvement in visual design and communicative vocabulary. The number of authentic cultural objects was also limited, and some students required Mandarin mediation because their Indonesian and English proficiency did not always allow detailed explanations. These limitations are consistent with Huang and Chalmers' (2023) caution that multilingual pedagogies are highly dependent on implementation conditions and with Westheim et al.'s (2025) observation that multilingual interventions vary considerably in design and outcome measurement.

Future implementation should therefore extend the intervention over a longer period and include a clearer impact-measurement framework, such as matched pre- and post-activity assessments of selected linguistic features, learner reflection data, and systematic evaluation of cross-linguistic awareness. The module should incorporate more contextual illustrations, audio-visual pronunciation resources, high-frequency communicative vocabulary, multilingual glossaries, and varied cultural materials. A subsequent implementation could also compare regular and postgraduate learners more systematically to examine how language proficiency and academic experience influence the usefulness of comparative instruction. Such iterative evaluation would allow the UNY–BFSU collaboration to move from demonstrating module applicability toward establishing stronger evidence of learning outcomes and long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The UNY–BFSU community engagement program demonstrated that a comparative multilingual learning model can be implemented meaningfully in an international higher-education context by connecting students' existing linguistic resources with Indonesian, Javanese, and their associated cultural contexts. The program addressed the partner's needs by combining needs analysis, comparative language learning, authentic cultural materials, multilingual mediation, and collaborative classroom practice. Its main contribution lies in providing BFSU students with structured opportunities to recognize relationships among languages while supporting the practical learning of Indonesian and Javanese, and in providing lecturers with an adaptable model for multilingual instruction. The use of Mandarin as strategic mediation, together with authentic cultural resources such as Javanese traditional clothing and Yogyakarta culinary products, also showed the importance of integrating linguistic, visual, and cultural support when learners have varied levels of target-language proficiency. At the institutional level, the program strengthened the UNY–BFSU partnership and created a basis for continued collaboration in multilingual teaching, research, and community engagement. However, the relatively short implementation period, differences in students' language proficiency, limited visual materials, and the restricted range of communicative vocabulary indicate areas for further development. Subsequent implementation should therefore extend the duration of the program, enrich the module with

more contextual visuals, high-frequency expressions, multilingual glossaries, and diverse cultural resources, and employ more systematic measures of learning outcomes to examine the longer-term contribution of comparative instruction to cross-linguistic awareness and multilingual communication.

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