



## **Implementation of Classical Chinese Philosophical Values to Contemporary Chinese Language Learning in Indonesia**

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### **Keywords**

*Classical Chinese,  
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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore how classical Chinese philosophical values can be integrated into Mandarin language learning in Indonesia. This research used qualitative approach, The data was collected through interviews and open questionnaire. The main technique used was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to gain in-depth understanding from participants. The informants consist of five university teachers in Indonesia, 5-7 years of teaching experience. Open questionnaire was distributed to students of Chinese study programs in Indonesia. The study reveals that the integration of Chinese philosophical values—particularly Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism—into education in Indonesia occurs through both implicit and explicit approaches. Implicit implementation is more prevalent, where moral values such as ethics, justice, honesty, wisdom, trust, humanity, and respect are naturally embedded in daily learning interactions. Explicit implementation is primarily confined to specialized courses, such as Chinese literature, culture, and philosophy, where classical texts, proverbs, and case studies are used to teach philosophical concepts.

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## INTRODUCTION

Implementing classical Chinese philosophical values to Chinese language learning in Indonesia involves integrating cultural knowledge with language skills to enhance intercultural competence and character education (Cen & U, 2014). This approach is rooted in the understanding that language and culture are inseparable, and that effective communication requires cultural empathy and understanding. Integrating classical Chinese texts and philosophies, such as Confucianism and Taoism, into the curriculum can provide a rich context for students to engage with these values (Li & Huang, 2016). This integration is essential to fostering intercultural communicative competence and character development in students.

The development of Chinese language learning in Indonesia is increasingly rapid in line with the increasing bilateral relations between Indonesia and China in various fields, such as economics, education and culture. Chinese language is not only studied as a means of communication, but also as a window into understanding China's rich culture and thought. One important aspect of Chinese culture is its classical philosophy, such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism, which have shaped social, moral, and educational values in China for thousands of years (Cen & U, 2014) ;(Zhang & Bai, 2015).

The values of classical Chinese philosophy are not only relevant in the context of Chinese society, but can also make a positive contribution to the development of character and ethics of learners in Indonesia. However, so far, Chinese language learning in Indonesia has focused more on linguistic and practical aspects, while understanding the philosophical values underlying the language is often neglected.

Classical Chinese texts such as the *Dao de Qing* and *The Analects* are used to teach core philosophical values, such as harmony, respect, and social responsibility, which are central to Confucianism and Daoism (Budianto, 2016) (Zhang & Bai, 2015). These texts offer insight into deeply held cultural values, facilitate meaningful intercultural dialogue, and enhance students' understanding of Chinese culture (Sun et al., 2024). Teaching Chinese through classical texts helps develop intercultural communicative competence by providing students with a global perspective on Chinese culture (Sun et al., 2024).

The lesson model based on these texts equips teachers with strategies to integrate cultural values into language teaching, promoting empathy and cultural understanding (Sun et al., 2024). Language learning is viewed through a socio-cultural lens, emphasizing a balance between linguistic skills and cultural understanding (Azhra et al., 2024).

Successful communication not only involves linguistic proficiency but also the ability to empathize and understand the culture of communication partners (Azhra et al., 2024). This holistic approach prepares students for academic success while fostering integrity, empathy, and social harmony (Suastra et al., 2024).

In addition, integrating classical Chinese philosophical values into language education can significantly enhance students' cultural awareness and interpersonal skills, promoting a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives (Cen & U, 2014); (Hung, 2015).

This integration not only enriches language education but also aligns with traditional Confucian values, which emphasize social responsibility and harmony in communication (Chou et al, 2013). The application of these values in the context of language education in Indonesia can help students understand the importance of strong interpersonal relationships and high work ethics, as taught in Confucianism. Thus, the application of these values is not only beneficial in an academic context but also in shaping students' better and socially responsible characters (Rahim et al., 2022); (Duo & Liao, 2016).

This study aims to explore how classical Chinese philosophical values can be integrated into Mandarin language learning in Indonesia, and to analyze its impact on students' learning motivation, cultural understanding, and character formation. Using a qualitative approach and case studies, this study will examine effective teaching methods to convey these philosophical values without neglecting the main objectives of language learning.

It is hoped that the results of this study can provide recommendations for Mandarin language educators in Indonesia to enrich the curriculum with a cultural and philosophical approach, so that learning not only improves language competence, but also deepens cross-cultural understanding and universal values that are beneficial for the formation of the character of the young generation of Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical method. This study aims to explore how the values of classical Chinese philosophy are implemented in Chinese language learning in Indonesia through the perspectives of teachers and students. The data was collected through interviews and open questionnaire. The main technique used was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to gain in-depth understanding from participants. The informants consist of five university teachers in Indonesia, 5-7 years of teaching experience. Other Criteria of the informants is teachers have living experience in China. Open questionnaire was distributed to students of Chinese study programs in Indonesia. To strengthen the findings, triangulation data through curriculum and education system observation is used.

Data from the interviews will be analysed through:

1. Transcription: Interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim.
2. Coding: Identifying key themes based on participant responses.
3. Thematic analysis: Grouping response patterns to find similarities and differences in perspectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Chinese Classical Philosophy Values can be divided into implicit and explicit point of view.

**Table 1.** Implicit and explicit implementation

Implicit Implementation	Explicit Implementation
Ethic	Classical text
Justice	Idioms
Honesty	Case Study
Wisdom	Material include in lesson plan
Trust	
Firmness	
Humanity	
Nature engagement	
Respect	

### a. Implicit Implementation Forms

Based on the data results, it appears that implicit values are more implemented in learning process. Both consciously and unconsciously, it is implemented naturally. Most of these values are moral values that are widely applied by teachers. The source of these values is derived from classical Chinese philosophy such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism. The values of Confucianism are ethics, justice, honesty, wisdom, trust, humanity, and respect. The values of Taoism are like being one with nature. And the value of Legalism is firmness.

*“In language learning, these philosophical values are not taught directly, but rather applied in the process, such as emphasizing manners in the classroom or polite behavior towards lecturers.” (Informant 1)*

*“The values of classical Chinese philosophy are generally not presented very directly. Their application is more implicit.” (Informant 3)*

*“From the philosophical value of Taoism, namely being with nature, sometimes I invite students to study outside the classroom in the open air, to get students used to appreciating nature. (Informant 1)*

The form of implementation of ethics is manners and social ethics, for example shaking hands with teachers when entering and leaving the classroom (integrated with Indonesian culture). the values of justice, honesty, wisdom, and trust are evident from learning activities, especially when working on assignments and exams. For example, the use of AI in learning is permitted but will still be adjusted to needs and must be supervised. The implementation of the philosophical value of legalism (法) is a strict rule during learning and exams. This is related to the firmness of implementing the learning contract. In the culture of lectures in Indonesia, before starting lectures at the beginning of the semester, lecturers and students must agree on a joint lecture contract. In humanity values, even though there are strict rules, there is still tolerance in certain circumstances such as illness or other urgent matters. Confucian philosophical values about respect, the form of implementation is respecting teachers (Widiuseno, 2018).

*“Implementation of manners such as greeting lecturers before and after class is also an Indonesian culture. Compliance with the lecture contract agreed upon at the beginning of the semester.” (Informant 1)*

*“The values of freedom and wisdom applied, such as the use of AI in learning, must still be closely monitored.” (Informant 1)*

From the implicit values applied, it is actually in line with the principles of educational and cultural values in Indonesia. These values have also been applied for a long time in the education system in Indonesia which is mainly based on Pancasila.

*“The Indonesian education system based on Pancasila is different from other cultures. However, the moral values of Chinese philosophy that are in line can also be applied” (Informant 2)*

*“The application of moral values is more mixed between Indonesian and Chinese cultural values. Taking the lecturer's life experience in China as a good example to be applied to the learning life of Indonesian students, such as discipline, hard work, and the culture of cooperation in Indonesia are also integrated together.” (Informant 5)*

## **b. Explicit Implementation Forms**

The explicit implementation of Chinese philosophical values occurs mostly in particular courses, such as Chinese literature, culture and philosophy. In the course learning plan, there

are sub-topics on the basics of philosophy such as Taoism and Confucianism, especially in the Chinese language and Culture Study Program. In language skills courses, the form of implementation is by using classical literature as a learning medium, such as using classical texts, folk tales, proverbs. However, in Chinese language skills classes, there is no specific material for studying philosophical values.

*“As in comprehensive courses, sometimes using cultural context in learning Mandarin, such as proverbs or idioms” (Informant 3)*

*“Chinese philosophy learning is applied to courses related to literature, such as introduction to literature and literary appreciation. (Informant 4)*

*“In the introductory literature course, discussing poetry, prose, and drama. For example, about poetry, discussing the poems of Li Bai and Du fu. The poems contain morals and themes of freedom, and are related to the background of the poet's life.” (Informant 4)*

*“So, learning Chinese philosophy has been included in the teaching materials in philosophy courses.” (Informant 3)*

In language learning, there is the use of classical poetry to practice Chinese pronunciation and also as an introduction to the philosophical meaning of classical Chinese. In addition, in learning Mandarin vocabularies and sentences, it also inserts the use of idioms as examples.

*“The use of classical literary works, such as poetry, to practice pronunciation in speaking skills learning. Then discussing the meaning and philosophy of the poem.” (Informant 2)*

Some forms of learning are using case studies to be solved using these philosophical values. In addition, case studies also play a role in improving students' critical thinking skills regarding the differences and similarities between classical Chinese philosophical values and Indonesian cultural values. This can also increase morality understanding and cultural understanding. Another method used in learning is field studies, where students visit Chinese cultural sites and communities. Besides, the teachers are alumni of universities in China who have been exposed to the Chinese learning and social environment. Experiences that they gain can be shared with students.

*“Applying case study in culture class, for example I give one case to be solved together. Like the case in China if it happened in Indonesia how would they solve it.” (Informant 2)*

*“Using simulation methods to understand Chinese cultural values. Students play the role of characters in the story to explore these values.” (Informant 4)*

*“Visits to Chinese cultural sites and communities can provide opportunity for students to directly explore and gain cultural experience that is different from books and films.”*  
(Informant 4)

Benefits and challenges are also found in the implementation of classical Chinese philosophical values, described as follows.

**Table 2.** Benefits and Challenges

Benefits	Challenges
Build-up better character	Conceptual differences
Morality understanding	Lack of knowledge
Cultural understanding	Education system differences
Enrich educational values	Lack of References in Indonesian Language
Essential values for Chinese language Students	

### c. Benefits

The benefits obtained by implementing Chinese philosophical values are that it can build better character among students. Morality values that exist in life can be better understood. in addition, the differences in culture and ideological foundations between Indonesia and China can actually increase cultural understanding. While Indonesia has its own rich and diverse cultural heritage, introducing Chinese philosophical values can be considered beneficial for several reasons. These values can provide a framework for understanding social dynamics, ethical considerations, and historical perspectives, potentially enriching the national cultural landscape.

*“These values are very important, especially for Chinese literature study programs, because apart from being required to master Mandarin language skills, language is also inseparable from Chinese culture and philosophical values.”* (Informant 4 and 2)

*“The philosophy forms the character and ethics of students, for example, the teachings of Confucius in general that we can understand emphasize the importance of the values of politeness and respect for elders and others. And foster a sense of responsibility.”* (Informant 4 and 5)

*“Even though Indonesia has its own culture, introducing Chinese philosophical values is considered important.”* (Informant 1)

These philosophical values are also very appropriate to be implemented in education. this can enrich educational values among students and lecturers. The main thing is that the implementation of these classical Chinese philosophical values is something that is very important for departments and study programs of Chinese language, literature, and culture in Indonesia.

#### **d. Challenges**

Some of the challenges faced by lecturers when teaching classical Chinese philosophical values are conceptual differences between Indonesian and Chinese cultures, lack of sources of information and material references, and different education systems. Indonesia adheres to a religion system, so sometimes students question these philosophical matters, but basically these moral values are not contradictory. What lecturers do is provide an understanding of the similarities in values that are actually very good and not contradictory.

*“Facing challenges in teaching cultural aspects and philosophical values, especially to non-Chinese students. Cultural differences are a major obstacle, triggering many questions from students.” (Informant 1 and 2)*

*“The Indonesian education system, which is based on Pancasila, is different from other cultures.” (Informant 1)*

A common problem faced by lecturers is the lack of reading references to deepen knowledge related to classical Chinese philosophy. Current teaching methods as mentioned before that are effectively implemented are case studies, field studies, role play, and lecture methods to better explain these values.

*“Difficulty in studying Chinese philosophy because teachers lack in-depth understanding.” (Informant 2)*

*“The challenge is how to filter culture, how to provide understanding in comparing Indonesian and Chinese cultural values.” (Informant 3)*

*“The application of Chinese cultural philosophy is still less than optimal due to the lack of knowledge and sensitivity of the values of the teachers. Students need to explore further. (Infromant 4)*

*“The lack of references using Indonesian language is an obstacle, especially regarding philosophy, culture and literature.” (Informant 4)*

#### **e. Students Response**



**Table 3.** Students Response of Chinese Classical Philosophy in Learning

Strenghts	Weakness
Interested	Lack of knowledge
Relevant in life	Need more exploration
Cultural understanding	
Integrate in language learning	
influence the way of behaving and interacting	

Based on the data obtained, students' responses to the implementation of classical Chinese philosophical values can be categorized into strengths and weaknesses. Here, it can be seen that there are more strengths than weaknesses.

Students are generally very interested in learning Chinese philosophy, culture, and literature. They feel excited and gain cultural understanding when studying the philosophy material. They also consider this to be very relevant to everyday life, both in learning and interacting with others. Although not all language skills courses study philosophy, but by integrating philosophy, literature, and culture into cultural skills can make the lessons more interesting.

*“I think it is interesting, knowing more about Chinese culture especially the terms in it will increase our insight into the country. In addition, we can also get an idea of the perspective of the values of China and make a comparison with the values in our country.” (Lili)*

*“More interesting because of curiosity and openness to culture, the learning process becomes more enjoyable.” (Thomas)*

*“Yes, these values are closely related to Indonesian culture, especially in terms of mutual cooperation and good manners.” (Fifi)*

*“Yes, it is relevant, because these values are relevant because they are in line with Indonesian culture which upholds caring, politeness and harmony in everyday life.” (Heri)*

*“In my opinion, when someone decides to learn a language, then that person must also be ready to get to know more deeply the understanding of the country in that language. In addition to focusing on grammar and vocabulary, it would be better if we expand our understanding of its cultural and philosophical values. So that later we will have a better view of the country whose language we are learning.” (Vira)*

After studying morals in the values of classical Chinese philosophy, mostly students generally feel that they can influence their attitudes to be better in interacting with others.

*“Yes, values such as manners and mutual respect make me more respectful of the people around me, as well as more active in listening and cooperating in class.” (Kina)*

*“Yes, I am more concerned about maintaining class order, respecting my classmates, and appreciating my friends' opinions.” (Toni)*

In addition, some students still feel deficiencies in learning classical Chinese philosophy. For example, when they first started studying, they still did not understand because they were still confused about the concepts. In general, most students learn the basics of classical Chinese philosophy. Some of students feel they need more exploration for experiencing Chinese classical philosophy, culture, and literature.

*“I had never heard of terms like Ren (compassion), Li (politeness), or He (harmony), so I had no understanding of them.” (Reni)*

*“I have heard of these terms but I learned them autodidactically based on information from the internet. 仁 “emphasizing affection” 礼 “values of politeness and grammar and manners towards elders” 和 “balance in life and social relationships between fellow living beings” (Mila)*

*“I just heard it briefly. That it is part of the teachings of Ancient Chinese religion. Sometimes I used to listen to my Indonesian friends who believe in Ancient Chinese (Taoism) talk about the term.” (Rony)*

*“However, the complexity of these values can also cause confusion. A good approach is to learn these values gradually, while continuing to practice the language and interact with native speakers. Thus, the existing challenges can be overcome and these values can enrich the Mandarin learning experience. (Michael)*

*“So far, I still haven't felt touched because basically I am not satisfied with the learning method that only shows photos without visiting the place. Because I am the type of person who is less trusting and less satisfied if I don't see it directly.” (Oscar)*

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the integration of Chinese philosophical values—particularly Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism—into education in Indonesia occurs through both implicit and explicit approaches. Implicit implementation is more prevalent, where moral values such as ethics, justice, honesty, wisdom, trust, humanity, and respect are naturally embedded in daily learning interactions. These values align well with Indonesian cultural and educational principles, particularly Pancasila, demonstrating a harmonious blend despite differing ideological roots. For instance, Confucian respect for teachers manifests in local customs like handshaking, while Legalist firmness is reflected in strict adherence to academic contracts. Meanwhile, Taoist harmony with nature subtly influences perspectives on balance and tolerance in education.

Explicit implementation is primarily confined to specialized courses, such as Chinese literature, culture, and philosophy, where classical texts, proverbs, and case studies are used to teach philosophical concepts. Methods like field studies and comparative analysis further enhance students' critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding. However, challenges persist, including conceptual gaps between Indonesian and Chinese cultural frameworks, limited reference materials, and occasional student skepticism at first due to Indonesia's religious-based education system. Lecturers address these by emphasizing universal moral compatibilities and employing interactive pedagogies like role-playing and case discussions.

The benefits of this integration are significant: it fosters ethical reasoning, enriches cultural literacy, and strengthens character education. While philosophical differences exist, they serve as opportunities for deeper intercultural dialogue rather than conflict. For Chinese language and culture programs in Indonesia, these classical values offer invaluable frameworks for ethical and historical understanding, ultimately enhancing the academic and moral development of students and educators alike. Future efforts should focus on expanding accessible resources and refining teaching strategies to maximize these synergies.

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