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DEVELOPING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH BATIK TRAINING: THE EXPERIENCE OF XU YATING AS A FOREIGN PARTICIPANT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study explores the experience of Xu Yating, a foreign national from China, in participating in a batik training program in Indonesia. Batik is not only a traditional textile art but also a significant part of Indonesia's cultural identity. The training program provided an opportunity for foreign participants to learn the craft of batik directly while gaining insights into local cultural values. Using a qualitative approach through observation and interviews, this research reveals how the training process contributed to both technical skill development and intercultural learning. The findings show that batik training can serve as an effective tool for cultural diplomacy, fostering understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity across nations.

Keywords: Batik training, foreign nationals, intercultural learning, cultural diplomacy, traditional crafts.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is not merely a legacy of the past, but also a bridge that connects societies across nations in the present day. Amid the rapid currents of globalization, the preservation of local culture becomes increasingly important—not only to safeguard national identity, but also as a means of fostering intercultural understanding. One of Indonesia's cultural treasures that has gained international recognition is *batik*. This traditional fabric is renowned not only for

the beauty of its patterns, but also for the philosophy and life values embedded in every design drawn with wax and natural dyes.

In an effort to introduce Indonesia's cultural heritage to the international community, various institutions have begun organizing batik training programs for foreign nationals. These programs not only focus on mastering the technique of *batik*-making but also encourage participants to understand the historical context and the socio-cultural values behind batik itself. One institution that actively promotes this approach is the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik Yogyakarta*, an organization that combines skills training with a humanistic and cross-cultural approach.

This is where Xu Yating, a foreign national from China, becomes interesting to highlight. Xu Yating participated in a batik training program at the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik Yogyakarta* as part of a cultural exchange initiative that encourages direct involvement in learning local traditions. Through this experience, she not only learned the basic techniques of batik-making but also interacted with local artisans, gained an understanding of the deeply meaningful philosophies behind batik motifs, and experienced the cultural dynamics of Indonesia firsthand. This process provided Xu Yating with new insights and demonstrated how training based on traditional arts can serve as an effective medium for cross-cultural learning that touches the empathetic side of humanity.

The phenomenon of foreign nationals participating in cultural training programs like this deserves deeper examination—not only as a form of skill development, but also as a space for meaningful encounters that foster understanding, tolerance, and international cooperation. Therefore, this research will highlight Xu Yating's experience during her participation in the batik training at the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik Yogyakarta* as a case study to further explore how culture can serve as a medium for strengthening human connections amid differences.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach through a case study method. This approach is considered the most suitable, as it enables an in-depth exploration of Xu Yating's personal experience as a participant in the *batik* training program at the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik Yogyakarta*. By using a case study, the research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the training context, learning process, and the social and cultural interactions that occurred throughout the program.

Main subject in this research method is Xu Yating, a foreigner from China who participating in cultural training program at *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik*, Indonesia. Beside that, supporting data or evidence who got from the *batik* instructure, and the training coordinator also took part in the implementation of the program.

The research was conducted directly at the training site, at the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik Yogyakarta*. The *Balai Besar Standardisasi dan Pelayanan Jasa Industri Kerajinan dan Batik (BBSPJIKB)*, more commonly known as the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik (BBKB)*, is a technical implementation unit under the Agency for Standardization and Industrial Services Policy of the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia. It is responsible for implementing industrial standardization, optimizing the use of industrial technology and Industry 4.0, promoting green industry, and providing industrial services related to crafts and batik (Batik, 2025).

The research was carried out over a period of five days during the training program, covering the entire batik-making process. Data were collected using several techniques, including:

- Participant observation: The researcher directly observed the training process, starting from the introduction of materials, pattern making, coloring process, up to the final batik product.

- Semi-structured interviews: Conducted with Xu Yating as the main participant, as well as with the instructor
- Documentation: took a photos, videos, and Notes taken during the training process were used as supporting data to strengthen the results of the observations.

This *Batik*-making training who attended by Xu Yating, Included a series of important stages in the *batik*-making process, namely:

1. Introduction to batik and batik theory.
2. Introduction to Tools and Materials: Participants were introduced to mori fabric, canting (wax pen), malam (wax), natural and synthetic dyes, as well as other supporting tools.
3. Pattern Making (Motif Design): Xu Yating learned how to apply hot wax using a canting onto pre-drawn batik patterns provided by the center.
4. Fabric Dyeing: The dyeing process was carried out using the resist-dye technique, depending on the motif and desired colors. In this stage, participants learned how to control color concentration, mix base dyes, carry out the fixation process, and anticipate the final result after the wax is removed.
5. Wax Removal: After the dyeing was completed, the fabric was boiled in hot water mixed with soda ash to remove the wax layer, allowing the *batik* patterns to appear clearly.
6. Finishing: The final stage included drying and inspecting the batik results, followed by an evaluation session with the instructor to discuss challenges, outcomes, and the meanings behind the created motifs.

Data analysis was carried out through the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The researcher conducted a thematic review of the field findings and compared them with theories of cross-cultural learning and culture-based training. Data validity was tested through source and

method triangulation to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The batik training attended by Xu Yating at the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik Yogyakarta*, which lasted for five days, proceeded very well. This training program not only focused on mastering the technical skills of *batik*-making, but also introduced participants to cultural values, the philosophy behind *batik* motifs, and the traditional processes that have long been a part of Indonesia's cultural identity.

Throughout the training days, Xu Yating experienced firsthand how a plain piece of fabric could be transformed into a high-value work of art through a manual process that combines hand skills, creativity, and patience. The training offered two main approaches: *batik tulis* (hand-drawn batik) using a *canting*, and *batik cap* (stamped batik) using copper stamps.

1. Hand-Drawn Batik Experience: Process, Techniques, and Challenges

The training process began with a basic introduction to the history of batik, the variety of motifs, as well as the tools and materials used. Xu Yating was informed that hand-drawn batik (*batik tulis*) is the most traditional method, requiring a high level of precision. In the initial stage, she was taught by a *batik* instructor about the fundamentals of *batik* and natural dyeing techniques (*Zat Alam*).

In the second stage, Xu Yating began using the *canting cap*, the main tool for *batik cap* (stamped batik), which is used to apply hot wax (*malam*) in order to create patterns. At first, she struggled to control the *canting cap*, as her hands were not yet accustomed to holding and applying it in a stable position. Wax that was too hot would drip easily, causing the pattern to be damaged, while wax that was too cool would result in uneven patterns or fail to penetrate the fabric properly. However, through guidance from the instructor and repeated practice,

she gradually learned how to control the wax temperature, position the *canting* correctly, and apply steady hand pressure.



Figure 1.1 Batik Stamp Process on Fabric

The *Batik* Stamp technique requires full concentration and perseverance. Each line must be stamped one by one, and Xu Yating spent hours just to complete a small section of the fabric. Despite the lengthy process, Xu Yating expressed that the experience made her feel deeply connected to the values embodied in *batik*—such as calmness, harmony, and discipline.

2. *Batik* Stamp Technique: Efficiency and New Skills

After gaining an understanding of *batik* techniques, Xu Yating was introduced to the *batik* stamp method, which uses copper stamps shaped into specific motifs. This technique is considered faster and more efficient compared to hand-drawn batik, yet it still requires skill in balancing pressure and aligning the stamps to ensure the patterns are printed perfectly.

In practice, hot wax is poured into a special pan, then the copper stamp is dipped into the wax before being pressed onto the fabric. Xu Yating tried printing several repeating motifs and soon realized that *batik* stamp does not necessarily mean “easier.” It still demands visual sensitivity to the stamp’s positioning and hand pressure. Even a slight misalignment could cause the motifs to overlap or break apart, leading her to appreciate the process—often perceived as “industrial” by some people—in a new light.



Figure 2.1 – Pattern Formation Stamping Technique

The use of *batik* stamp in this training was not intended to replace the artistic value of hand-drawn batik, but rather to serve as an alternative form of batik expression with its own unique characteristics. Xu Yating successfully produced a piece of stamped *batik* fabric with neat, symmetrical patterns, although there were still some imperfections in the first few prints. She noted that this technique made her more aware of the importance of consistency, measurement, and attention to detail.

3. Coloring Process: Exploring Colors and Gradation

After the canting and stamping processes were completed, the *batik* fabric moved on to the coloring stage. Xu Yating learned the *dip-dyeing technique*, which must be carried out carefully to ensure the color is evenly absorbed into the fabric. In this stage, she applied the *resist-dyeing technique* (*tutup celup*), which involves an initial dyeing, followed by covering certain motifs with hot wax using a canting tool or brush, and then dipping the fabric again into a prepared dye solution.

The training taught her how to mix colors, determine the intensity of the dye solution, and apply layered dyeing strategies to create smooth color gradations without overlapping or muddying the hues.

She was also introduced to various types of dyes and fixatives, including both synthetic and natural dyes derived from plants such as indigo, *secang*, and *soga*. In this process, Xu Yating used natural dyes such as *tegeran*, *jolawe*, and *tingi*, as well as synthetic indigo dye. During the coloring phase, the fabric was

dipped five times to ensure the color became visible and vibrant. After the dyeing process, the fabric underwent a fixation stage, where the colors were locked in to enhance durability and prevent fading.

The process used several fixatives, namely lime stone, ferrous sulfate, and alum. Once the dyeing was completed, the fabric was sun-dried before proceeding to the *pelorodan* stage, which involves removing the wax from the fabric.



Figure 3.1 – Dyeing Process

Pelorodan stage was done by boiling the fabric in hot water. The wax that had previously covered the motifs melted away, revealing the patterns that had been hidden, now clearly visible with colors that had fully absorbed into the fabric. Xu Yating expressed her amazement at this stage, as the final result brought a deep sense of satisfaction: a batik piece created entirely by hand and through a thoughtful, intricate process.



Figure 3.2 – Wax Removal (Pelorodan) Process

The training resulted in 17 pieces of batik fabric in the form of shawls, created by Xu Yating. These works were made using two techniques: hand-drawn *batik* (*batik tulis*) and stamped *batik* (*batik cap*). Both demonstrated a solid basic understanding of pattern design, line consistency, and color application. Although she has not yet reached the skill level of a professional artisan, her results were quite impressive for a beginner.

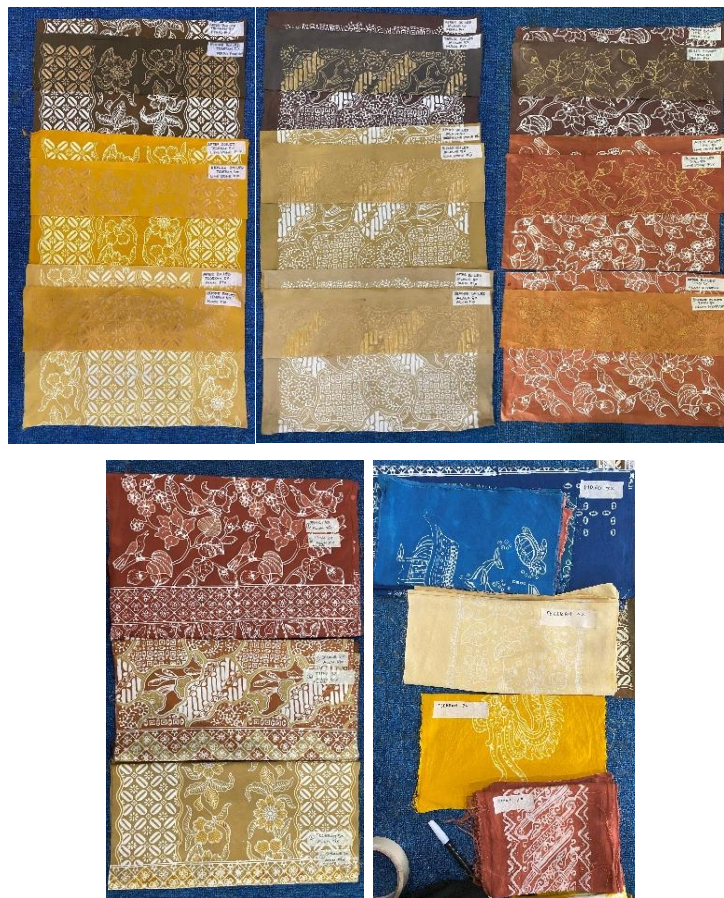


Figure 3.3 – Result

More than just technical skills, Xu Yating absorbed the cultural values embedded in the batik-making process. She began to understand that batik is not merely an artistic activity, but also a form of meditation, self-expression, and a tribute to tradition. Her interactions with local artisans and fellow trainees also created opportunities for the exchange of stories, experiences, and cross-cultural understanding.

This training became a transformative experience for Xu Yating. She did not only take home the batik fabrics she had created herself, but also brought with her a newfound understanding of Indonesia, its collective culture, and the values embodied in every stroke of wax. From a cross-cultural education perspective, this training demonstrated how cultural heritage like batik can serve as a living tool of cultural diplomacy—one that deeply touches the personal and emotional sides of its participants.

CONCLUSION

The batik training held at the *Balai Besar Kerajinan dan Batik Yogyakarta* provided a comprehensive experience for international participants, particularly Xu Yating, in both understanding and practicing the art of batik as part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. Through a hands-on and practice-based approach, the training not only equipped Xu Yating with technical skills in batik-making using two primary methods—hand-drawn batik with *canting* and stamped batik with pattern blocks—but also introduced her to the philosophical, aesthetic, and historical values embedded in each stage of the batik-making process.

Xu Yating successfully completed her own batik piece, showcasing her understanding of the dyeing process, tool control, and manual pattern design. She experienced firsthand the intricate nature of *batik*-making, which demands precision, patience, and consistency. At the same time, the training became a meaningful space for cross-cultural exchange—encouraging the sharing of values, empathy, and human connection.

In this way, the training served not only as a platform for skill development, but also as a vibrant form of cultural diplomacy. It offered a deeply engaging and emotional introduction to Indonesian culture for international participants. Programs like this are worth expanding and promoting as inclusive and transformative models of heritage-based education.

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