

BUNKASAI AS AN EDUCATIONAL ARENA: A Case Study at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar

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Abstract

This study examines the practice of the *Bunkasai* as an educational arena at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar. The festival, which has been regularly held by the Japanese Literature Study Program, is not only a medium for celebrating Japanese culture but also a space for learning, interaction, and knowledge exchange among students, lecturers, and the wider community. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document studies to reveal how various forms of practice, such as *Shodo Workshops*, *Yukata Booths*, *Kana Contests*, *Cosplay and Coswalk Competitions*, *Aikido Demonstrations*, and *Bon Odori Dances* function as educational practices. The theoretical framework is based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, Michel Foucault's concept of power and knowledge relation, and constructivist learning theory. The findings show that *Bunkasai* not only serves as a cultural celebration but also creates implications in the social, cultural, and educational spheres, while simultaneously raising challenges related to ideological negotiation, and cultural commodification.

Keywords: *Bunkasai*; Japanese Culture; Educational Arena; Globalization; Hybridity.

Introduction

Globalization has intensified transnational cultural flows, enabling cultural forms to circulate rapidly across national boundaries (Appadurai, 1996). Among these flows, Japanese popular and traditional culture have gained significant visibility in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. Anime, manga, martial arts, language education, and cultural festivals increasingly occupy educational and public spaces, reshaping youth cultural identities and institutional practices.

Within this broader cultural circulation, *Bunkasai*—Japanese cultural festivals, originally a Japanese school cultural festival has been adapted in Indonesian universities as a platform for celebrating Japanese culture. In Japan, *Bunkasai* functions as a school-based cultural festival organized by students to showcase artistic and creative activities while strengthening collective

engagement (MEXT, 2018). Its adaptation in Indonesian higher education contexts raises important questions regarding cultural transmission, localization, and educational transformation. The *Bunkasai* has also been organized annually since 2013 by the Japanese Literature Program of Mahasaraswati University Denpasar. Initially conceived as a cultural appreciation event, the festival has gradually evolved into a structured educational arena involving lecturers, students, alumni, high school participants, general visitors, the Japanese Consulate General in Denpasar, and commercial tenants. The 2024 and 2025 editions, which form the scope of this study, demonstrate increasing institutionalization and diversification of activities.

Despite the proliferation of Japanese cultural festivals in Indonesia, limited scholarly attention has been paid to how such festivals function as pedagogical arenas within higher education. Most existing studies focus on popular culture consumption or cultural diplomacy, rather than examining the internal educational dynamics of the festival as a structured social practice. This gap underscores the urgency of analyzing *Bunkasai* not merely as entertainment, but as an arena where knowledge, identity, capital, and power relations intersect.

This study therefore investigates: (1) how *Bunkasai* is practiced as an educational arena at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar; (2) why it becomes a site of ideological negotiation; and (3) what social, cultural, educational, and economic implications emerge from its implementation. By positioning *Bunkasai* within the intersection of social practice, power and knowledge relations, as well as experiential learning processes, this study contributes to broader discussions in Cultural Studies perspective and qualitative education research regarding the pedagogical potential of cultural festivals in higher education.

Literature Review

Studies on Japanese cultural festivals in Indonesia have increasingly highlighted their socio-cultural and educational dimensions. However, most existing research has not fully explored *Bunkasai* as a structured educational arena embedded within broader social practices and power relations. This section reviews relevant scholarship to identify the research gap and establish the novelty of the present study.

Lubis et al. (2022) examined the marketing strategies employed by the Japanese Language and Literature Student Association at Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) in promoting *Bunkasai* 2022. The study emphasized communication strategies, promotional packaging, audience targeting, and both online and offline dissemination methods. The research demonstrated that *Bunkasai* is not merely an entertainment event but part of campus social dynamics involving students, lecturers, and the public. Importantly, it showed how cultural events

serve as platforms for developing practical skills such as communication management and promotional strategy.

While relevant, the study by Lubis et al. (2022) primarily focused on promotional mechanisms rather than on the educational, symbolic, and power-related dimensions of the festival. In contrast, the present research conceptualizes *Bunkasai* as an arena of value exchange, knowledge production, symbolic negotiation, and social practice within the academic field. Rather than examining audience engagement or communication tactics alone, this study investigates how *Bunkasai* operates as a complex educational space shaped by social interaction and ideological negotiation. This distinction establishes a clear research gap and demonstrates the novelty of analyzing *Bunkasai* through a Cultural Studies perspective.

Adistu et al. (2023) explored the phenomenon of Japanese popular culture hegemony in Indonesia from the perspective of Koentjaraningrat's cultural theory. Their findings suggested that Japanese popular culture, such as anime, cosplay, J-Pop, and Japanese fashion, may contribute to the erosion of national identity and weaken appreciation for local cultural wisdom. The study framed Japanese cultural influence as a form of hegemonic penetration into youth identity formation. Although this perspective provides important insights into cultural globalization and identity politics, it focuses primarily on cultural consumption and symbolic dominance. The present study differs in that it examines Japanese culture not merely as a consumptive phenomenon but as an actively practiced cultural form within a university setting. The *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University functions not only as a celebration of Japanese culture but also as an educational arena where knowledge transfer, skill development, and social interaction occur. By shifting attention from cultural domination to cultural practice and pedagogical transformation, this study expands the analytical framework beyond classical anthropological approaches and incorporates contemporary perspectives on social practice, and knowledge and power relations.

Rochim et al. (2024) investigated learning experiences among digital natives participating in the *Nihongo Tesuto Bunkasai* Competition organized by PGBJ Jabodetabek in 2023. Their research highlighted how technology based testing platforms, such as the *Shiguru* web application, facilitated Japanese language assessment within a festival context. The study emphasized informal learning processes and digital adaptation among vocational high school students. This research is relevant in demonstrating that *Bunkasai* can function as an informal educational platform. However, its scope was limited to language testing and technological mediation. The present study extends this discussion by analyzing *Bunkasai* as a broader socio-cultural event encompassing artistic performances, culinary stands, sponsorship dynamics, institutional involvement, and

intercultural interaction. Rather than focusing solely on digital natives and language proficiency, this study conceptualizes *Bunkasai* as a multi-layered educational arena involving students, lecturers, alumni, visitors, cultural communities, and diplomatic institutions. The inclusion of these diverse actors enables a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural festivals operate within higher education contexts.

Gu & Deng (2024) approached Japanese language and cultural promotion from a soft power perspective. Their study demonstrated that the global dissemination of Japanese culture is strategically structured through institutional mechanisms such as The Japan Foundation. They argued that language and culture function as instruments of national influence and global cultural diplomacy. This perspective is crucial for understanding the macro-level structures underpinning Japanese cultural globalization. However, it primarily analyzes state driven cultural policy and institutional promotion. The present research complements this macro level analysis by examining how such global cultural strategies are localized, internalized, and rearticulated within a university environment. *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University is not treated as a passive extension of Japanese cultural diplomacy; rather, it is analyzed as a dynamic educational space where symbolic meanings, knowledge systems, and power relations are negotiated among local actors.

Across these prior studies, *Bunkasai* is generally recognized as a cultural event that transcends entertainment. Nevertheless, none of the reviewed research specifically examines the practice of *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University from a Cultural Studies perspective that integrates educational processes, symbolic exchange, and ideological negotiation within higher education. This gap underscores the novelty of the present study. Through this approach, the study contributes to Cultural Studies scholarship by demonstrating how a localized cultural festival becomes a site of pedagogical transformation and ideological negotiation within Indonesian higher education. It also expands qualitative research in education by illustrating how non-formal cultural events can function as arenas of experiential learning and social capital formation. The identification of this research gap establishes both the scientific contribution and the novelty of examining *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar.

Research Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in depth the meanings, experiences, and social dynamics underlying the practice of *Bunkasai* as an educational arena at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for understanding social phenomena holistically by capturing participants' behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions within their natural contexts (Moleong, 2019:6).

Fieldwork was conducted during the 10th (2024) and the 11th *Bunkasai* (2025) at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Japanese Literature Program, Mahasaraswati University Denpasar, following formal institutional approval. Informants were selected purposively using a criteria-based selection strategy (Maladji, 2013:87), ensuring that participants possessed direct involvement and contextual knowledge of *Bunkasai* practices. This approach enabled the collection of rich and relevant data aligned with the research focus.

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and literature review, allowing for triangulation across sources. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles & Huberman (as cited in Winarni, 2018:171), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings are presented using an informal analytical method, in which interpretations are articulated through descriptive and analytically informed narrative language (Sudaryanto, as cited in Mahsun, 2005:123).

This narrative form is particularly effective for capturing how individuals and groups such as students, organizing committees, lecturers, and visitors construct and articulate meanings surrounding cultural practices within the festival. Such informal data are inherently narrative, as they encompass personal memories, experiential accounts, and subjective interpretations situated within specific social contexts. As Riessman (2008) argues, narrative functions as a key medium through which identities are formed and lived experiences are communicated in society.

Results and Discussion

Bunkasai Festival Form at Mahasaraswati University

The *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar serves not only as a cultural celebration, but also as a structured educational arena embedded in the institutional life of the university. The festival includes *Shodo Workshop*, *Yukata Booths*, *Kana Competitions*, *Cosplay and Coswalk Performances*, *Aikido Demonstrations*, and *Bon Odori Dance*. While these activities appear diverse and festive on the surface, collectively they form an organized cultural field in which knowledge, values, and social roles are produced and negotiated.

The *Shodo Workshop*, or Japanese calligraphy, is one of the most prominent academic activities in the *Bunkasai* Festival at Mahasaraswati University. This activity is usually guided by lecturers or Japanese calligraphy practitioners in collaboration with students of the Japanese Literature Study Program. In this workshop, participants are introduced to the basics of writing Japanese characters (*kana* and *kanji*) using brush and ink, while also learning the philosophy behind this art of writing. The form of the *Shodo Workshop* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar can be seen in the image below.

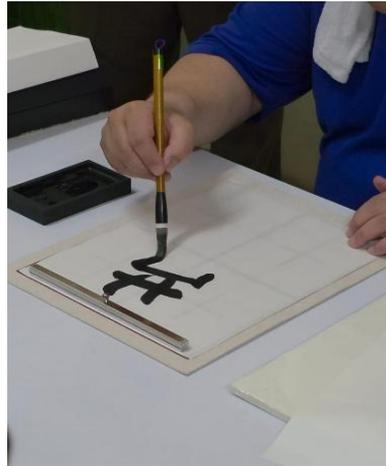


Figure 1: *Shodo Workshop* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University

(Source: Author's documentation, 2024)

The *Yukata Booth* is one of the most popular attractions in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar. This booth offers visitors the opportunity to try on the *yukata*, a traditional Japanese garment typically worn during the summer season and folk festivals. During its implementation, student committee members from the Japanese Literature Study Program guide visitors on how to wear the *yukata* properly while also explaining the symbolic meanings of the attire. The form of the *Yukata Booth* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar can be seen in the image below.



Figure 2: *Yukata Booth* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University

(Source: Author's documentation, 2025)

The *Kana Contest* is one of the academic competitions that characterizes the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar. This contest tests participants' ability to read and write the basic characters of the Japanese language, namely hiragana and katakana, which serve as the fundamental foundation for mastering Japanese. Field data shows that the contest is attended by beginner-level university students, high school students, and even members of the public with an interest in Japanese. The competition format usually consists of written tests, character identification, and speed challenges in writing characters determined by the committee. The form of the *Kana Contest* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar can be seen in the image below.



Figure 3: Yukata Booth in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University
(Source: Author's documentation, 2025)

Cosplay and Coswalk Performances are among the main attractions of the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar. Based on observations, in 2024 the committee organized two competitions: the *Cosplay Contest* (a full competition with costumes and character performances) and the *Coswalk Contest* (a short parade or catwalk in costume). However, in 2025, the cosplay contest was canceled due to an insufficient number of registrants. Instead, coswalk continued to be held in almost the same format. The form of the *Cosplay and Coswalk Performances* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar can be seen in the image below.



Figure 4: *Cosplay and Coswalk Performances* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University
(Source: Author's documentation, 2025)

The *Aikido Demonstration* is martial arts that has always been a permanent feature of the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University. Field observations show that *Aikido Demonstration* is presented during the festival's main event, performed by one of the *Aikido* studios in Denpasar with the involvement of a Japanese instructor who serves as sensei. The presence of a Japanese sensei lends an authentic impression, while the participation of local students highlights cross-cultural integration.



Figure 5: *Aikido Demonstration in the Bunkasai at Mahasaraswati University*
(Source: Author's documentation, 2025)

The last one is *Bon Odori Dance* which is always been one of the main attraction of *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar. The performance takes place in an open area, where dancers including students, lecturers, the Japanese community, and even general visitors dance in circles to the rhythm of traditional Japanese music, with the beat of *taiko* drums as the main accompaniment. On a small stage, a lead dancer demonstrates the movements that are then followed by the participants, as in the following picture.



Figure 6: *Bon Odori Dance in the Bunkasai at Mahasaraswati University*
(Source: Author's documentation, 2025)

The Bunkasai as an Arena for Ideological Negotiation

In Bourdieu's framework, practice emerges from the dynamic relationship between habitus, capital, and field (Bourdieu, 1977:72). *Bunkasai* can therefore be understood as an 'arena' or 'field' within the university an arena structured by rules, hierarchies, and symbolic recognition, where students mobilize linguistic competence, cultural knowledge, and organizational skills. The repeated organization of *Bunkasai* since 2013 has institutionalized it as an annual cultural practice, shaping the dispositions (*habitus*) of Japanese Literature students who perceive participation as both academic responsibility and cultural performance.

The field data show that students are not passive implementers of predetermined cultural scripts. Instead, they actively negotiate roles, committee members, performers, instructors, cultural mediators, thus transforming classroom knowledge into embodied cultural practice. This reflects Bourdieu's notion that social practices reproduce structures while simultaneously allowing strategic agency (Bourdieu, 1990:52). In this context, *Bunkasai* functions as an arena where cultural capital is accumulated and displayed. Participation in *Bunkasai* enables students to accumulate capital in several forms. Linguistic capital is demonstrated through *Shodo Workshop* and *Kana Booth*. Embodied cultural capital is visible in *Aikido Demonstration*, *Yukata Booth*, *Cosplay and Coswalk Performance*, and *Bon Odori Dance*. Organizational capital is developed through event management, sponsorship coordination, and collaboration.

The *Shodo Workshop* creates a learning experience that integrates cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions. In Japan, *shodo* has been taught from an early age in elementary schools as part of formal education and is recognized as one of the classical Japanese arts (Anderson, 2012:88). In Bali, by contrast, *shodo* is introduced through non-formal pathways such as cultural festivals like *Bunkasai*. This difference highlights the dynamics of glocalization (Robertson, 1995), where a global cultural practice (*shodo* from Japan) is adapted to the local context. While in Japan *shodo* is institutionalized within the formal education system, in Bali it becomes part of a campus festival that is both recreational and educational.

The *Shodo Workshop* demonstrates how Japanese cultural practices can be transformed into arenas of cross-cultural education. Bourdieu's framework emphasizes that *shodo* functions as cultural capital providing social distinction for participants. Foucault's perspective uncovers how power and knowledge operates through the regulation of writing forms and aesthetic norms. Meanwhile, constructivism highlights the importance of learning through direct, sensory, and reflective experiences. Yet, challenges remain in balancing educational values with the potential commodification of culture. The *Shodo Workshop* should be positioned not merely as a visual attraction but as a reflective medium for understanding that language and writing can serve as gateways to a broader appreciation of Japanese culture. Thus, *shodo* in the *Bunkasai* is not merely a medium for introducing Japanese characters but also an arena of cross-cultural practice, where values, knowledge, and experiences converge within an educational space.

The *Kana Contest* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University demonstrates how academic practices and popular culture intersect in one space. On the one hand, it becomes an important arena for introducing the basics of the Japanese language more broadly, making the festival not merely entertainment but also an educational arena. On the other hand, the contest reveals how educational

practices are not free from the logic of power, symbolism, and commodification. In other words, the *Kana Contest* is a concrete example of how the globalization of Japanese culture is mediated within the Balinese context, creating a hybrid space that is both educational and negotiated.

The *Kana Contest* can also be understood as a response to the globalization of Japanese culture in Indonesia. As Sugimoto (2014:87) argues, language is an important medium in the global dissemination of Japanese culture. The presence of the *Kana Contest* in the *Bunkasai* demonstrates that Japanese language proficiency is not merely an academic skill but also part of global cultural consumption. At the same time, participants from Bali relate their experiences of learning kana to their local identities.

The *Yukata Booth* at *Bunkasai* demonstrates how Japanese popular cultural practices can be mediated into educational spaces that are also fraught with ambivalence. Compared to the practice of wearing *yukata* in Japan, usually tied to summer festivals (*natsu matsuri*) or fireworks celebrations (*hanabi taikai*), the *Yukata Booth* at Mahasaraswati University represents a reinterpretation within a transnational context. In Japan, the use of *yukata* remains closely linked to seasonal rituals and local identities. In Bali, however, the *yukata* is represented within the framework of a campus festival, serving both educational and entertainment purposes. This contrast highlights how cultural practices undergo processes of glocalization (Robertson, 1995), where global elements (the *yukata* as a Japanese cultural symbol) are adapted to local contexts (a campus festival in Bali).

Through Bourdieu's framework, this practice serves as a medium for the acquisition of cultural capital and social distinction. Foucault's perspective emphasizes the role of power and knowledge relations in disciplining the body through the representation of attire. Meanwhile, constructivism explains how direct experiences of wearing the *yukata* create more contextual and meaningful learning. Yet, the potential for commodification cannot be ignored. In the digital age, visual depictions of visitors in *yukata* often become more prominent on social media than reflections on its cultural values. Here lies the challenge for *Bunkasai* organizers: to ensure that the *Yukata Booth* remains an educational space rather than solely an arena of aesthetic consumption. Thus, the *Yukata Booth* can be understood as a transnational cultural practice that brings together values, identity, and consumption within a single festival space. It simultaneously highlights the dynamics of cultural globalization, where representations of Japan are transformed into cross-cultural learning experiences in Bali.

Ideological negotiation is also found in the context of *Aikido Demonstration*. Through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), *Aikido* can be understood as a practice that mobilizes cultural and symbolic capital. Cultural capital is evident in the technical skills acquired by local practitioners through intensive training with

Japanese instructors. The presence of a *sensei* reinforces symbolic authority, as “authentic” knowledge of *Aikido* is legitimized by a teacher directly connected to Japanese tradition. Meanwhile, from Foucault’s (1977) perspective, the *Aikido* performance demonstrates power and knowledge relations. The Japanese *sensei* holds authority as a knowledge bearer, teaching techniques and philosophies of *Aikido* to local practitioners. However, this knowledge does not remain a passive reproduction. Through the festival, *Aikido* is reinterpreted by the local Balinese community, which imbues it with meanings shaped by their own cultural lens.

Aikido Demonstration in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar illustrates how Japanese culture is mediated in a festival space as part of globalization and cultural hybridity. From Bourdieu’s perspective, *Aikido* mobilizes cultural and symbolic capital that strengthens the festival’s prestige. From the Foucault’s perspective, it highlights power and knowledge relations between Japanese authority and local reception. Meanwhile, constructivism demonstrates that *Aikido* is an experience-based learning space that encourages students to grasp cross-cultural values. Moreover, the presence of *Aikido* also reveals how a campus festival functions as a site of negotiation between entertainment, education, and commodification. In other words, *Aikido* not only showcases Japan’s cultural face in Bali but also becomes part of a distinctive cultural hybridity practice, where Japanese values of discipline and spirituality intersect with Balinese performative traditions.

One notable finding was the absence of Japanese judges in either the *Cosplay* or *Coswalk Competitions*. Instead, the judges were Indonesian *cosplayers* who also served as guest stars of the event. From Michel Foucault’s (1977) perspective, the absence of Japanese authority in the evaluation structure highlights a negotiation of power/knowledge. While authority over knowledge is typically associated with the cultural origin (Japan), in this practice, the standards of evaluation were entirely managed by the local community. A committee member affirmed:

“We chose judges from Indonesia because they understand the *cosplay* trends here and are closer to the participants. So, it was fairer and more relevant” (Interview, 11/6/2025).

This phenomenon marks a shift from the dominance of Japanese cultural authority toward local appropriation, where Indonesian communities establish their own standards in representing Japanese popular culture. From a constructivist perspective (Fosnot, 2013), *cosplay* and *coswalk* can be seen as informal learning arenas where participants build identity through direct experience. By designing costumes, selecting characters, and performing on stage, participants develop creativity while practicing values of collaboration and self-expression. A student who joined the *cosplay* contest in 2024 stated that from *cosplay*, he taught time management, teamwork with friends to make costumes, and the courage to perform in public (Interview, 18/5/2024).

This shows that the festival is not merely an entertainment arena but also a constructive, experience-based learning space. *Cosplay* originated in Japan in the 1980s and has since developed into a global popular culture (Sugimoto, 2014, p. 212). In Indonesia, *cosplay* is present in various festivals, including *Bunkasai*. However, at Mahasaraswati University, the practice undergoes localization: *cosplay* often emphasizes local participants' creativity, while *coswalk* is more popular because it aligns with the digital entertainment logic of being short, visual, and easily viral on social media. An audience member stated that *coswalk* is more exciting because it's fast, lively, and easy to record for Instagram. *Cosplay* can sometimes feel too long and detailed (Interview, 8/6/2025).

This highlights how global logic (Japanese popular culture) intersects with local logic (Balinese audience preferences) within the festival arena. *Cosplay* and *Coswalk* also reveal the ambivalence between educational functions and commodification. From an educational perspective, these activities provide space for students to learn about characters, narratives, and symbols of Japanese culture. However, from the commodification perspective, these activities are also leveraged as attractive spectacles to draw sponsors, the public, and media exposure. The committee explained that *coswalk* is easier to promote to sponsors because many audiences enjoy it (Interview, 11/6/2025).

Thus, the festival serves a dual function: as a cross-cultural educational arena and as an entertainment product subject to market logic. *Cosplay* and *Coswalk* demonstrate the dynamics of how Japanese popular culture is received, localized, and negotiated in the Balinese context. From Bourdieu's perspective, both are arenas of symbolic capital competition where participants gain social recognition. From Foucault's view, the absence of Japanese judges marks a shift in power/knowledge toward the autonomy of local communities. Meanwhile, constructivism shows that *cosplay* and *coswalk* are experience-based learning spaces that allow students to build new identities and skills.

Lastly is how ideological negotiations also take place in the context of *Bon Odori Dance*. From Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) perspective, *Bon Odori* embodies both social capital and cultural capital. Social capital is reflected in the networks of solidarity formed among students, lecturers, and the Japanese community through shared participation in the dance. Cultural capital is expressed in the knowledge of movements and symbolic meanings of the dance, transmitted from Japanese tradition to local participants. A student spectator remarked:

"Joining Bon Odori was fun, I felt like I could directly immerse myself in Japanese culture, even though at first I was just curious" (Interview: 8/6/2025).

This statement underscores *Bon Odori's* role as both a medium of cultural capital acquisition and a site for building social solidarity within the festival space. From Foucault's (1977) view, *Bon Odori Dance* illustrates how power and

knowledge is mediated through collective dance practices. The lead dancer on the stage holds authority to direct the movements, while the other participants follow, creating a productive relation of power. This power is not manifested as domination but as a mechanism of knowledge distribution that enables inclusive participation. It illustrates what Foucault calls the “discipline of the body,” where participants’ bodies are directed to move uniformly, producing a collective experience that generates social order (Foucault, 1977:136).

Cross-regional comparison reveals differences in the function of *Bon Odori*. In Jakarta, *Bon Odori*, which is held on a larger scale, is often positioned as a cultural spectacle, attracting thousands of visitors with the support of corporate sponsors (Setiawan, 2020:92). Meanwhile, at Mahasaraswati University, *Bon Odori* is more intimate and participatory, emphasized as a collective learning space that integrates entertainment, education, and cross-cultural interaction. In other words, *Bon Odori* at Mahasaraswati University is closer to pedagogical practice that fosters local solidarity, while in Jakarta it leans more toward the commodification of culture for mass consumption.

Like other practices in *Bunkasai*, *Bon Odori Dance* also contains an ambivalence between entertainment and education. For some visitors, the dance is a festive and enjoyable attraction. However, for the committee and the Japanese community, it is also a medium of cultural education that introduces values of harmony, discipline, and collective interaction. This aligns with Storey’s (2018:102) view of popular culture, which always oscillates between educational function and mass entertainment consumption. Thus, *Bon Odori* in the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar demonstrates how cultural practices can mediate both pedagogical and entertainment logics.

The *Bon Odori Dance* highlights the complex dimensions of transnational cultural practice. Through Bourdieu’s framework, it underscores the importance of social and cultural capital in strengthening community solidarity. Foucault’s perspective helps explain how the distribution of power and knowledge in dance produces collective experiences that discipline the body. Meanwhile, the constructivist approach emphasizes that direct participation in the dance is a learning experience that fosters cross-cultural awareness. Furthermore, *Bon Odori* also reflects the dynamics of cultural globalization. Within the campus festival space, a dance rooted in Japanese ancestral rituals is reinterpreted as a cross-cultural collective practice. This transformation demonstrates that *Bunkasai* does not merely reproduce Japanese culture but also forms a hybrid arena distinctive to Bali, where Japanese values of solidarity intersect with local traditions of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation).

Bourdieu (1986:243) explains that cultural capital exists in embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms. The *Bunkasai* illustrates these forms simultaneously. Embodied capital appears in students’ mastery of Japanese

etiquette, pronunciation, and performance skills. Objectified capital is present in cultural artifacts such as calligraphy tools (*fude*, *bunchin*, and *washi*) and traditional attire. Institutionalized capital emerges when participation is formally recognized within academic structures or contributes to students' professional credibility. Moreover, the symbolic prestige attached to organizing *Bunkasai* strengthens its educational legitimacy. Students report that involvement enhances confidence, leadership skills, and public speaking ability. Symbolic capital, recognized honor and legitimacy, thus reinforces the festival's status within the campus hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1991:170). Through this process, *Bunkasai* becomes more than a cultural showcase; it becomes a pedagogical mechanism through which students acquire recognized competencies.

Beyond capital accumulation, *Bunkasai* also reflects dynamics of power and knowledge production. The selection of activities, invited guests, and sponsorship partners demonstrates institutional filtering of what counts as "authentic" Japanese culture. According to Foucault (1980:27), knowledge is inseparable from power relations that determine what is considered legitimate truth. Within *Bunkasai*, traditional elements such as *Aikido* and *Bon Odori* are consistently prioritized, indicating a regulated cultural narrative aligned with institutional and diplomatic interests.

The involvement of the Japanese Consulate General reinforces this dimension of cultural diplomacy. Certain representations of Japanese culture gain legitimacy through official endorsement, while others, such as subcultural or alternative interpretations, remain peripheral. This selective framing illustrates what Foucault (1977:170) describes as disciplinary mechanisms operating through normalization rather than coercion. However, the presence of cosplay, anime based competitions, and contemporary performances introduces counter discursive spaces. Students creatively reinterpret Japanese popular culture, sometimes blending it with local Balinese aesthetics. This hybridization demonstrates that cultural transmission is not linear but negotiated. As Hall (1997:25) argues, representation is always constructed and contested. *Bunkasai* thus becomes a site where dominant and alternative cultural narratives coexist and interact.

The coexistence of traditional martial arts and pop culture cosplay illustrates how educational practice intersects with ideological negotiation. Rather than a simple instrument of cultural soft power, *Bunkasai* functions as a dynamic arena where students mediate between authenticity, popularity, and institutional expectations. From an educational perspective, the findings show that learning within *Bunkasai* occurs primarily through participation and experiential engagement. Students prepare workshops, design promotional strategies, negotiate sponsorship packages, rehearse performances, and

coordinate inter-program collaboration. These processes exemplify experiential learning, defined as learning through reflective action (Kolb, 1984:38).

The study also identifies three ideological dimensions shaping *Bunkasai*: cultural hegemonization, paternalistic ideology, and market ideology. First, hegemonization appears in the normalization of Japanese cultural superiority within symbolic structures. Gramsci's concept of hegemony explains how dominance operates through consent rather than force (Gramsci, 1971:12). Students often internalize Japanese cultural discipline, aesthetic minimalism, and martial arts ethics as exemplary models. While this admiration fosters appreciation, it also risks reinforcing cultural hierarchy. Second, paternalistic ideology manifests in hierarchical decision-making. Senior lecturers and institutional authorities play guiding roles in shaping festival direction. While mentorship strengthens quality control, it may limit student autonomy. This dynamic reflects structured power relations within educational institutions. Third, market ideology emerges through ticket sales, sponsorship packages, bazaar systems, and booth rentals. Commercialized cultural activities reflect what Adorno & Horkheimer (2002:94) describe as the logic of commodification of the cultural industry. However, in *Bunkasai*, economic mechanisms also ensure sustainability and resource mobilization. The tension between pedagogy and commodification becomes a central dialectic within the festival.

The social implications include strengthened networks among students, alumni, and external communities. The *Bunkasai* fosters collaboration across disciplines, especially in the 2025 festival, where English Literature students participated in organizing committees. This interdisciplinary expansion indicates adaptive institutional transformation. Culturally, *Bunkasai* promotes hybridization. Japanese traditions are localized within Balinese contexts, generating intercultural dialogue rather than simple replication. However, concerns about degradation of local values also arise, particularly when commercial elements overshadow cultural reflection. Educationally, the festival contributes to cognitive, affective, and behavioral development, supporting global citizenship formation. Students gain intercultural competence and ethical awareness aligned with contemporary higher education missions. Economically, *Bunkasai* generates revenue through ticketing, sponsorship, and booth rentals. These mechanisms illustrate the interplay between cultural practice and market structures. While commodification is present, it does not fully displace educational intent; instead, it coexists within a negotiated balance.

Overall, the findings confirm that the *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar operates as an educational arena shaped by social practice, power relations, and constructivist learning processes. Through the interaction of capital accumulation, ideological negotiation, and experiential engagement, the festival becomes a pedagogical space embedded within institutional and global

cultural dynamics. Rather than viewing *Bunkasai* solely as entertainment or soft power instrument, this study positions it as a locally mediated educational field where students construct knowledge, negotiate identity, and accumulate symbolic capital. The integration of social practice theory, power and knowledge analysis, and constructivist learning perspective enables a comprehensive view of *Bunkasai* as an ideological negotiation.

Bunkasai as Constructivist Learning

Jean Piaget's constructivist perspective emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction between individuals and their environment (Piaget, 1972:3). *Bunkasai* embodies this principle: students construct cultural understanding by performing, teaching, and organizing rather than merely receiving information. The cognitive dimension involves language mastery and historical-cultural knowledge. The affective dimension includes appreciation of cultural diversity and increased self-confidence. The behavioral dimension manifests in teamwork, communication, and leadership skills.

Interview data confirm these multidimensional outcomes. Students reported increased intercultural awareness and improved collaborative skills after participating in committee work (Personal communication, June 2025). Learning therefore extends beyond technical competence toward identity formation and social responsibility. Moreover, *Bunkasai* facilitates informal learning processes. Eraut (2004:247) argues that informal learning often occurs through participation in workplace or organizational activities. Although situated within a university context, *Bunkasai* replicates real world project management environments, preparing students for professional and intercultural engagement.

"I felt challenged, because writing Japanese characters with a brush is not as easy as I imagined. But that is precisely where its appeal lies, as I gained values of patience and concentration" (Interview, 8/6/2025).

This statement emphasizes that *shodo* is not merely a technical practice of writing characters, but also a process of learning deeper values. In Japanese tradition, *shodo* is regarded both as an art and a spiritual path. The emphasis on brushstrokes simple yet meaningful reflects Japanese aesthetic views of harmony, simplicity, and discipline (Addiss, 1995:24). In Indonesia, particularly through *Bunkasai*, this practice is introduced not only as a language skill but also as a symbol of Japanese philosophical values that can be appreciated by the wider public. Thus, *shodo* becomes a medium of cultural representation that highlights the interconnectedness between aesthetics, language, and spirituality.

Although serving as an educational arena, the *Shodo Workshop* also contains an ambivalence. Many visitors are drawn to the visual aesthetics of brush-written works, often turning them into photo objects to be shared on social media. This

phenomenon resonates with Storey's (2018:106) critique of popular culture, where cultural practices are often reduced to visual commodities consumed without deeper understanding. The challenge for organizers lies in ensuring that the *Shodo Workshop* does not become confined to aesthetic consumption alone but continues to foreground its educational values.

The *Yukata Booth* also becomes a space where visitors directly experience this cultural symbolism while simultaneously constructing new understandings of the relationship between clothing, identity, and cultural celebration. Using Bourdieu's (1986) perspective, the *Yukata Booth* demonstrates how cultural capital operates. Knowledge of how to wear a *yukata* correctly including folds, the tying of the obi, and the use of accessories becomes a form of symbolic capital accessible only to those with exposure to Japanese cultural knowledge. Participation in this booth reflects visitors' efforts to acquire such cultural capital. For some, the experience of wearing the *yukata* serves as a means of obtaining distinction, a form of social differentiation that marks them as individuals with firsthand cultural experience of Japan.

This statement underscores that symbolic experiences through clothing can create a sense of cultural authenticity. From Foucault's (1977) perspective, the *Yukata Booth* reveals the workings of power and knowledge in the realm of bodily representation. Committee members, acting as guides, possess the authority to instruct visitors on how to dress properly while simultaneously disciplining their bodies to conform to Japanese aesthetic norms. This power is not repressive but productive, as it generates new cultural experiences that participants internalize. Thus, the practice of wearing a *yukata* at the festival demonstrates how the body becomes a medium for cross-cultural reproduction.

Through a constructivist approach (Fosnot, 2013), the *Yukata Booth* can be understood as a form of experiential learning. Visitors do not only gain knowledge through explanations but also through the embodied practice of wearing the *yukata*. This process fosters deeper understanding because it involves simultaneous sensory, emotional, and cognitive interactions. This was confirmed by a visitor's experience that cultural education becomes more effective when framed as direct participation.

Like other practices of popular culture, the *Yukata Booth* also carries ambivalences. On the one hand, it provides educational value by introducing new knowledge about Japanese attire. On the other hand, it is vulnerable to commodification, especially when visitors are primarily interested in taking photos with the *yukata* for visual consumption on social media without grasping its cultural significance. This analysis resonates with Storey's (2018:106) critique that popular culture often undergoes shifts in meaning when consumed en masse, with symbolic values being reduced to mere visual styles.

One of interviewee also state that the *Yukata Booth* functions not only as a visual entertainment space but also as an interactive medium for cultural education. In Japanese tradition, the *yukata* was once everyday wear but is now more commonly used during festivals and informal events. Its symbolism is closely associated with simplicity, elegance, and closeness to nature (Dalby, 2001: 142). Thus, wearing the *yukata* outside Japan becomes a way to revive these values while also introducing Japanese cultural identity to a global audience.

Like the *Yukata Booth*, the *Kana Contest* also presents a tension between its educational function and its commodified dimension. On the one hand, the contest encourages participants to take the study of Japanese more seriously. On the other hand, it is also packaged as part of the festival that attracts sponsors and public attention. Prizes, certificates, and media exposure become part of the market logic surrounding the educational practice. As one committee member explained:

"Many schools encourage their students to participate because the certificate can be used for their portfolio. So this contest also has practical value" (Interview, 11/6/2025).

This illustrates how academic practices in the festival are also influenced by pragmatic logic inherent in modern education. The *Kana Contest* is designed to introduce Japanese characters in a more enjoyable way. So it's not only about learning in class but also testing abilities in a festival atmosphere (Interview, 11/6/2025). This statement highlights that the *Kana Contest* is not merely an academic competition but also a strategy to educate the public and broaden interest in Japanese language studies. From a constructivist perspective (Fosnot, 2013), the *Kana Contest* presents a context-based and applied learning experience. Participants not only study theory in the classroom but also practice it in competitive, challenging situations. This process enables them to construct deeper understanding through direct experience.

A high school student who joined the contest stated, "Learning *kana* at school sometimes feels boring, but participating in this contest makes it more fun. It feels like playing a game, but at the same time, I'm learning" (Interview, 2025). This statement shows how a constructivist approach can be realized within *Bunkasai* practices, where the festival becomes an alternative space for learning. One participant shared, "Learning *kana* is unique. Even though it's different from Balinese script, I feel there are similarities in the strict and symbolic writing rules" (Interview, 18/5/2024). This statement illustrates the dialogue between Japanese script and Balinese script, creating a form of cultural hybridity as conceptualized by Bhabha (1994).

From Bourdieu's (1986) perspective, the *Kana Contest* can be understood as a medium for the accumulation of cultural capital. The ability to recognize and use Japanese characters provides a certain legitimacy to participants, both in

academic settings and within communities of Japanese culture enthusiasts. Students or learners who excel in the contest gain cultural prestige that strengthens their identity as individuals 'possessing competence' in Japanese culture. This statement illustrates how the contest provides symbolic value while reinforcing participants' academic habitus. From Foucault's (1977) perspective, the *Kana Contest* can be read as a practice of power and knowledge. Knowledge of Japanese characters is not only a learning instrument but also a mechanism of selection that distinguishes between participants who are "competent" and those who are "less competent." The committee, acting as judges, occupy a position of authority in setting standards of knowledge. However, this power relation is productive, as it motivates participants to improve their abilities.

Just like the previous festival, *Cosplay and Coswalk Performances* also have an important function as an educational arena. Some of interviewee state that the dynamics of the event's forms while also showing the committee's flexibility in adapting to audience interests and festival conditions. Using Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) framework, *cosplay and coswalk* can be understood as arenas for the accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital. Participants who appear in detailed costumes with creative performances gain recognition from the audience and the community. This capital is not only technical (such as designing costumes) but also symbolic, in the form of prestige and social recognition.

A *coswalk* participant stated, "Even though it was just walking on stage, I felt appreciated. Many people took photos and uploaded them on Instagram. That made me feel more confident." (Interview, 8/6/2025). This emphasizes how *coswalk* serves as a symbolic medium that provides social legitimacy, even without the same technical complexity as *cosplay*. However, these practices also carry ambivalence: education often coexists with the logic of commodification. The greater popularity of *coswalk* compared to *cosplay* illustrates how market demands and digital entertainment influence cultural practices. Thus, *cosplay* and *coswalk* are not merely entertainment but also reflections of the globalization of Japanese culture negotiated within the local sphere, producing a hybrid form unique to the campus festival context in Bali.

Aikido Performance is always anticipated every year. The presence of a sensei from Japan also makes the event feel more authentic and adds educational value for the audience. This quotation shows that *Aikido* is not merely entertainment but a routine tradition of the festival that functions as a cultural bridge. *Aikido* is a modern martial art developed by Morihei Ueshiba in the early twentieth century. Unlike competitive martial arts, *Aikido* emphasizes harmony, discipline, and the use of an opponent's energy to control attacks without causing injury (Stevens, 2010:45). Its philosophy is rooted in Shinto spirituality, Buddhism, and Zen emphasizing balance, peace, and an ethical way of life. Within the context of *Bunkasai*, this philosophy is translated into performances showcasing rhythmic,

harmonious, and disciplined movements, which not only display physical skills but also convey the philosophical values of Japanese culture to the audience. A student spectator remarked:

"Watching *Aikido* feels different. The movements are neat, and there's a philosophy to learn, not just physical combat" (Interview, 8/6/2025).

This statement illustrates how the audience perceives *Aikido* not only as a physical spectacle but also as symbolic capital associated with discipline, ethics, and spirituality. One spectator compared *Aikido* with local art, "Watching *Aikido* feels like watching Balinese dance; both involve bodily discipline and a sense of spirituality," (Interview, 8/6/2025). This quotation demonstrates a process of reception, where knowledge from Japan is recontextualized within the Balinese cultural framework, producing new and distinctive meanings.

From a constructivist perspective (Fosnot, 2013), *Aikido* in *Bunkasai* can be understood as a form of experiential learning. Audiences and students are not merely passive spectators but participants who observe values of discipline, ethics, and cooperation through the martial art practice. Indeed, some students were inspired to join *Aikido* studios after watching the performance at *Bunkasai*, indicating that the festival opens new learning pathways beyond formal classrooms. The presence of *Aikido* is part of the broader globalization of Japanese culture. Since its introduction in Indonesia in the late twentieth century, *Aikido* has grown through local communities and dojos (Puspitasari, 2018:63).

In Denpasar, *Aikido* holds a special place, as Bali is known as a meeting ground for global cultures. *Bunkasai* thus acts as a medium that connects Japanese traditions with the Balinese local context. A committee member emphasized, "*Aikidō* has become like a signature of *Bunkasai*. Without this performance, the festival would feel incomplete." (Interview, 19/5/2024). This highlights how *Aikido* has become part of the festival's identity, while also affirming the cultural hybridity formed through the encounter between Japan and Bali.

Although educational in nature, *Aikido* carries an entertainment dimension. Attractive movements, dramatic actions, and demonstrations of techniques become visual appeals for audiences. This creates ambivalence: on one hand, *Aikidō* serves as a medium for learning values of discipline; on the other, it is consumed as entertaining spectacle. This ambivalence aligns with Storey's (2018: 102) analysis of popular culture, which always exists between education, commodification, and mass entertainment. Thus, *Aikido* at *Bunkasai* cannot be reduced solely to martial arts but should be seen as a cultural spectacle uniting pedagogical and entertainment dimensions.

The last one is the *Bon Odori Dance* as one of the most awaited events. People from various backgrounds join in the dance together, and the atmosphere is full of solidarity. The *Bon Odori Dance* is not merely a performance but a cultural

practice that engages the audience as active participants. *Bon Odori* is a traditional Japanese dance usually performed during the Obon Festival, a ritual of ancestral reverence deeply rooted in Japanese Buddhism (Nakamura, 2016:73). Its simple movements allow for collective participation, emphasizing the values of togetherness (*kyodosei*) and social harmony. In the context of *Bunkasai*, *Bon Odori* is no longer presented within a religious frame but as a folk dance with an inclusive character. This enables audiences from diverse backgrounds including Balinese society to take part and interpret the experience as a space of cross-cultural interaction.

Bon Odori at *Bunkasai* can also be understood through a constructivist approach (Fosnot, 2013), as a learning space based on direct experience. Audience members who participate actively learn not only by observing but also by practicing values of togetherness, collective rhythm, and cultural harmony. A spectator stated that *Bon Odori* is not just a performance. He said that, "When I joined the dance, I truly learned the meaning of solidarity" (Interview, 19/5/2024). This quotation demonstrates that *Bon Odori* becomes a cross-cultural learning experience that fosters collective awareness.

The discussion of various *Bunkasai* practices such as *Shodo Workshops*, *Yukata Booths*, *Kana Contests*, *Cosplay and Coswalk*, *Aikido Performances*, and *Bon Odori Dance* shows that the festival is not only a celebration of Japanese culture but also a learning platform involving cross-cultural interaction, knowledge transfer, and the creation of educational experiences for both students and the broader community. This reinforces the role of *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar as an educational arena that brings together aesthetic, social, and cultural dimensions within the framework of constructivist learning.

Conclusion

This study found that *Bunkasai* at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar functions as a structured educational arena shaped by social practice, power relations, and experiential learning processes. Rather than being a mere cultural entertainment event or soft power instrument, *Bunkasai* constitutes a dynamic pedagogical field where students construct knowledge, accumulate cultural capital, and negotiate ideological meanings.

Through the integration of social practice, power and knowledge dynamics, and constructivist engagement, *Bunkasai* illustrates how cultural festivals in higher education can operate as alternative learning spaces that extend beyond formal curricula. The findings contribute to Cultural Studies by highlighting the intersection of culture, education, and institutional power, and to qualitative education research by demonstrating how experiential cultural events foster cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies. Future research may explore

comparative analyses across universities or examine long-term impacts on students' professional trajectories and intercultural citizenship formation.

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