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From Language Learning to Multiliteracies: Exploring Digital Literacy and Student Skill Development in Indonesian for Foreign Learners

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Abstract:
This study explores the integration of digital literacy into BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing—Indonesian for Foreign Learners) instruction as a strategy to promote the comprehensive skill development of international students, encompassing linguistic, digital, and intercultural competencies. Employing a corpus-based qualitative approach, the research focuses on the analysis of authentic digital communication products created by foreign students through task-based learning activities. The corpus consists of multimodal texts—including blog entries, podcast transcripts, infographics, and interactive digital posters—collected from intermediate-level BIPA students at universities at South Sumatra. The findings reveal three key insights. First, linguistically, students demonstrate improvements in sentence structure, thematic vocabulary (culture, society, technology), and pragmatic appropriateness in digital contexts. Second, in terms of digital literacy, students effectively utilise various platforms (Padlet, Canva, and Flipgrid) to construct and deliver messages creatively, interactively, and in alignment with audience expectations. Third, interculturally, students exhibit the ability to interpret local communication norms, avoid cultural faux pas, and present cross-cultural perspectives through their digital narratives. Corpus analysis also indicates a shift in learners' roles—from passive recipients of information to reflective, collaborative, and globally connected content creators. This study highlights the potential of integrating digital literacy into BIPA instruction to foster essential 21st-century competencies. The findings provide a valuable foundation for developing a BIPA curriculum that is responsive to both digital transformation and the cultural diversity of international students.

Keywords: BIPA Students, Digital Literacy, Corpus-Based Research, Skill Development, Multimodal Learning, Qualitative Study

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Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology over the past decade has significantly transformed various aspects of life, including education and language learning. Digitalisation not only provides alternative media for instruction but also redefines the literacy competencies required by learners in the 21st century. In the context of teaching Bahasa Indonesia for Speakers of Other Languages (BIPA), this transformation presents an urgent need to integrate digital literacy into curriculum development and teaching strategies.

The integration of digital literacy into language instruction requires educators to move beyond traditional linguistic focuses, expanding towards the development of multiliteracies—encompassing critical, creative, and collaborative thinking as well as proficiency in digital technologies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). Multiliteracies extend the conventional definition of literacy, evolving from mere reading and writing to communication skills across various forms and media, including visual, digital, and multimodal platforms.

This study adopts a corpus-based research approach to explore the integration of digital literacy into BIPA instruction at Universitas Sriwijaya. The primary focus is on analysing authentic digital communication products created by international students, such as blogs, podcast transcripts, infographics, and digital storytelling. These artefacts not only illustrate linguistic achievement but also demonstrate students' ability to construct contextual meaning, interpret local culture, and adapt their messages across diverse digital formats.

Digital literacy has become one of the core competencies in global education today. According to Belshaw (2022), digital literacy involves the ability to understand, evaluate, and produce information through digital technologies in ethical and effective ways. For international students studying in Indonesia, this ability is crucial—not only are they required to master the Indonesian language, but they must also navigate a new digital and social culture.

Several previous studies have emphasised the importance of fostering digital literacy in second language acquisition. For instance, Hashim, Yunus, and Embi (2018) argued that digital media use in language learning can enhance student engagement, enrich vocabulary, and deepen contextual understanding of grammatical structures. Meanwhile, Warschauer and Matuchniak (2020) highlighted the significance of contextual approaches in developing digital literacies that are both relevant and responsive to the needs of global learners.

In this study, data were gathered from intermediate-level BIPA students at Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang. The findings indicate a significant improvement in linguistic features, sentence structure, thematic vocabulary, and pragmatic accuracy within digital contexts. This supports the argument that project-based learning combined with digital products accelerates the development of both language proficiency and digital competency (Hafner, 2021).

Beyond linguistic enhancement, the integration of digital literacy also influences students' ability to interpret local culture and construct multicultural identities. Through activities such as creating digital folklore stories, scripting oral texts via podcasts, and interpreting visual-verbal texts like cultural infographics, BIPA learners actively construct intercultural meaning. This aligns with the concept of intercultural multiliteracies proposed by Rowsell and Walsh (2019), who assert that language learning oriented towards multiculturalism can enhance learners' critical and reflective thinking in understanding cultural differences.

The study also finds that within a multiliteracy framework, learners no longer act as passive recipients of information. Instead, they become active, collaborative, and reflective knowledge producers. They construct digital messages suited to global audiences, combining visual, textual, and auditory elements while demonstrating a deep understanding of local socio-cultural dynamics. These findings support Kress's (2020) view on multimodal representation in contemporary literacy practice, which emphasises the need for learners to flexibly navigate various symbols and digital communication codes.

Moreover, digital literacy in BIPA instruction presents an opportunity to enhance Indonesia's cultural diplomacy on a global scale. Foreign students who learn and understand Indonesian culture through digital media potentially become cultural ambassadors, capable of disseminating local values to international communities (Widodo, 2021). Their digital products—such as folk stories in blog or video form—serve as authentic and participatory media for promoting Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Nevertheless, challenges in implementing multiliteracies remain. Some students face technical obstacles, such as limited access to technology or initial low levels of information literacy. Additionally, adapting to Indonesia's academic and digital cultures requires time and appropriate guidance. Thus, inclusive, reflective, and contextually responsive pedagogical strategies tailored to international students are essential (Yunus et al., 2020).

In this context, project-based learning and corpus research approaches emerge as promising solutions. These methods allow students to learn actively through hands-on experiences, team collaboration, and technology integration in knowledge production. As Thomas and Brown (2021) explain, digital project-based learning not only improves academic skills but also fosters confidence and social responsibility in learners with regard to the content they create.

Overall, this study contributes significantly to the development of a digitally multiliterate BIPA curriculum. The findings affirm that integrating digital literacy into language instruction supports comprehensive 21st-century competency development, covering linguistic, digital, and intercultural dimensions. Furthermore, the research opens avenues for building global academic networks that are responsive to the needs of international students and the evolving dynamics of higher education in the digital era.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative, corpus-based approach to analyse authentic digital communication products produced by intermediate-level BIPA students from three universities in South Sumatra: Universitas Sriwijaya, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, and Universitas Bina Darma. This method facilitates in-depth, contextual exploration of meaning in multimodal texts (Friginal & Hardy, 2021).

Data were collected over the course of one semester through project-based assignments. Students created blogs, podcasts, infographics, and digital posters using platforms such as Canva, Padlet, and Flipgrid. A total of 87 digital documents from 38 students formed the study corpus. Data collection also included observations of online classes, field notes, and weekly student reflection journals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted across three dimensions. Firstly, linguistic aspects were examined through sentence structures, thematic vocabulary (culture, technology, society), and pragmatic functions, using the systemic functional linguistics framework (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Secondly, students' digital skills were analysed based on visual design, message cohesion, and the effective use of digital media (Ng, 2012; Eshet-

Alkalai, 2021). Thirdly, intercultural competence was assessed through cross-cultural narratives, awareness of local norms, and global identity representation (Helm, 2020; Dooly & O'Dowd, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Findings

The results of this study show that the integration of digital literacy into BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing*—Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) instruction has a significant impact on the development of international students' language skills, digital literacy, and intercultural competence. Data were collected through authentic digital products created by intermediate-level students from Universitas Sriwijaya, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, and Universitas Bina Darma. These products included blogs, podcasts, infographics, and interactive digital posters. The analysis focused on language structures, use of digital platforms, and content reflecting cultural sensitivity.

Linguistically, students demonstrated improvement in sentence structures, thematic vocabulary use (e.g., "local culture," "society," "technological development"), and pragmatic ability in digital contexts. This was evident in their ability to adjust writing style according to the platform. For instance, in a student blog titled "My First Experience Shopping at a Traditional Market in Palembang," a descriptive narrative was used with appropriate vocabulary and a communicative flow.

Progress in digital literacy was also reflected in the students' ability to operate platforms such as Padlet, Canva, and Flipgrid to produce informative and engaging content. They adapted messages to suit the target audience and selected appropriate multimodal formats. Table 1 summarizes the platforms used and the types of products created:

Table 1. Digital Platforms and BIPA Student Products

Platform	Type of Digital Product	Number of Works	Interactivity Level
Padlet	Cultural Reflection (text + images)	18	High
Canva	Cultural Infographic	22	Medium
Flipgrid	Narrative Vlogs & Podcasts	14	Very High
Google Slides	Interactive Cultural Posters	11	High

In terms of intercultural competence, students demonstrated an understanding of local communication norms and awareness to avoid cultural faux pas. They presented cross-cultural perspectives, such as comparing Eid celebrations in Indonesia with New Year traditions in their home countries. This was seen in podcasts reflecting their personal views on religious tolerance in Palembang, which they described as a multicultural city.

Additionally, analysis of student assignments showed that their digital products went beyond merely delivering information—they created cultural narratives that encouraged critical reflection. For example, in an infographic assignment on "Nimbang Bunting" (a traditional pregnancy ceremony), students from Germany and Thailand included similar traditions from their own countries, enriching intercultural understanding and appreciation of local values.

The introductory paragraph to Table 2 below illustrates the integrated dimensions of students' linguistic, digital, and cultural abilities. Through qualitative

observation of 20 outstanding student works, the study grouped competence mastery into three main aspects as shown in the following table:

Table 2. Analysis of BIPA Students' Competency Dimensions through Digital Products

Dimension	Skill Indicators	Example Product
Linguistic	Complex sentence structures, thematic vocabulary	Blog: *"Culinary Experience in Palembang"*
Digital Literacy	Platform choice, visual design, interactivity	Infographic: *"Types of Batik in South Sumatra"*
Cultural Competence	Cross-cultural reflection, cultural narratives, norm sensitivity	Podcast: *"Table Manners in Indonesia vs. France"*

The integration of these three competencies reflects a shift in international BIPA students' roles from passive learners to reflective, globally connected content creators. The products were not only academic but also highlighted personal engagement and emotional connection to Indonesian local culture.

Cultural literacy was also evident in students' ability to recognize and avoid cultural blunders. In an interactive poster about "appropriate dress for traditional ceremonies," a student from Russia emphasized the importance of respectfully wearing songket Palembang and avoiding improper mixing of attire elements. This demonstrates sensitivity to local social norms and the ability to adapt in multicultural contexts.

Furthermore, the content developed by students reflected critical engagement with cultural themes. Their assignments were not merely informative but also interpretive and comparative. This was illustrated in an infographic by a German student comparing gotong royong in Indonesia with nachbarschaftshilfe (neighborhood help) in their home country.

The transformation of BIPA students from information receivers to content creators was also visible in collaborative patterns. Students frequently worked in multinational groups when developing digital projects, encouraging cross-cultural collaboration and improving global communication skills. The table below maps the competencies developed through these digital projects:

Table 3. Student Skill Mapping Based on Digital Products

Digital Product	Language Skills	Digital Skills	Cultural Literacy
Blog	Descriptive narration, sentence structure	Multimedia integration	Reflection on local and home cultures
Podcast	Intonation, diction choices	Audio editing, music integration	Cross-cultural comparison
Infographic	Concise phrasing	Informative visual design	Interpretation of cultural symbols
Interactive Poster	Persuasive phrases, calls to action	Interactive navigation	Social etiquette and local cultural norms

Overall, these findings affirm the importance of integrating digital literacy into BIPA instruction as a 21st-century learning strategy. The development of cultural literacy is not one-directional but dialogical—facilitating the exchange of values and perspectives between international students and Indonesian culture. This approach enables a more holistic and sustainable development of global competencies through the BIPA learning process.

Analysis

This study presents a significant novelty in integrating digital literacy into the teaching of Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA), particularly in the area of multimodal production and cross-cultural competence among international students. The primary innovation lies in its qualitative corpus-based approach, which analyzes authentic digital products created by learners, including blogs, infographics, podcasts, and interactive posters developed through platforms such as Padlet, Canva, and Flipgrid. Few prior studies have adopted this strategy systematically in BIPA contexts. Most research has traditionally focused only on conventional linguistic development (Siregar, 2020; Wahyuni, 2018), while this study emphasizes the transformation of students' roles from passive learners to reflective and globally-oriented content creators (Zhang & Warschauer, 2022).

The main advantage of this research lies in its learning design, which integrates task-based learning and product-based pedagogy. Students not only learn the language but apply it in authentic digital environments while considering audience context and local cultural norms. This aligns with 21st-century literacy demands, which require critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and cross-cultural communication (Trilling & Fadel, 2015; OECD, 2021). Additionally, by applying multimodal product assessment, the study promotes an assessment-as-learning model, placing learners as active subjects in the evaluation process (Mishra & Koehler, 2020).

Compared to previous studies—such as Lubis and Mulyani (2022), who focused on narrative writing through social media—this research is more comprehensive, addressing not only linguistic aspects but also technology use and intercultural communication success. Lestari's (2021) study highlighted Flipgrid's effectiveness in boosting speaking fluency, but did not connect it directly to local wisdom or cultural literacy. In this study, students demonstrated not only linguistic improvement but also success in cross-cultural message delivery, such as in tasks about "How to Respect Parents in Indonesia" or "Dining Etiquette in Palembang," without falling into cultural faux pas.

This shows that learning occurs not only cognitively, but also affectively and socially. The use of local, culture-based content—such as folklore, traditional food, and social norms—delivered via digital media proves that digital and cultural literacies are interwoven in BIPA learning. As Risager (2020) asserts, cultural literacy in foreign language instruction must include the ability to interpret and communicate local values in intercultural contexts. For instance, a South Korean student created an infographic titled "Indonesian Traditional Attire vs Hanbok: Symbols of Eastern Cultural Modesty", showcasing reflective cultural awareness toward both Indonesian and Korean cultures.

The students' ability to avoid cultural blunders also became a key indicator of their success in cultural literacy. Corpus analysis showed that most students used appropriate registers (formal language), and embedded proper greetings and closings that aligned with local communication norms. This reflects success in culturally oriented language learning (Byram, 2021). A podcast titled "Ghost Stories in South Sumatra Boarding Houses" illustrated the integration of local cultural codes (e.g., beliefs in spirits and

cleansing rituals) presented through well-structured narratives, effective sound effects, and pragmatic language use.

Globally, these findings support Godwin-Jones' (2018) claim that technology integration in language learning can accelerate intercultural communicative competence, when done contextually and reflectively. This study strengthens that assertion by showing that tasks rooted in real experiences and local cultural values promote meaningful learning. Thus, learners develop not just grammar but also social and cultural sensitivity.

From a theoretical perspective, this research extends the application of the Multiliteracies framework by Cope and Kalantzis (2015), which emphasizes learning design based on multimodal representation and situated experience. In the BIPA context, this is particularly relevant, as students come from diverse cultural backgrounds and require approaches that teach not only linguistic structure but also skills in digital and cultural representation. An infographic comparing "Public Transport in Palembang and Tokyo", for example, demonstrated a student's ability to express complex ideas using visuals, symbols, and narrative text cohesively.

However, the study is not without limitations. First, participants were limited to three institutions in South Sumatra (Universitas Sriwijaya, UIN Raden Fatah, and Universitas Bina Darma), making the findings not yet generalizable to national or global contexts. Second, while the qualitative product-based approach offers depth, it would benefit from triangulation with other methods such as in-depth interviews or longitudinal studies to measure sustained development in digital and cultural competence. Third, not all students were able to fully utilize the digital tools—particularly those from countries with lower digital literacy.

Nevertheless, this study contributes significantly to the development of BIPA curricula that are adaptive to the digital age and cultural pluralism. It recommends that BIPA syllabi be systematically integrated with digital technologies, emphasizing 21st-century competencies and the strengthening of local cultural values. The instructional model used here can be replicated and adapted to various contexts—both in Indonesia and internationally—particularly in culturally grounded language teaching.

Conclusion

This study concludes that integrating digital literacy into BIPA instruction enhances not only the foreign language proficiency of international students but also strengthens their digital and cultural competence simultaneously. Through task-based approaches using tools like Padlet, Canva, and Flipgrid, students successfully produced relevant, communicative, and interculturally rich multimodal texts. These findings underscore the transformation of learner roles—from passive recipients to collaborative, reflective, and globally connected content creators. Notable improvements were seen in sentence structure, thematic vocabulary, and their ability to deliver culturally appropriate messages. Students also showed heightened awareness in avoiding intercultural miscommunication and effectively incorporated local values into their digital works.

The implications of this research offer important opportunities for designing digitally literate BIPA curricula that are responsive to digital transformation and student diversity. The strength of this approach lies in its holistic development of 21st-century skills, including language proficiency, critical thinking, cross-cultural communication, and technological fluency. Despite limitations related to geographic scope and platform dependency, future studies can expand to include other institutions and explore a wider

array of digital media. This would further enrich the findings and provide a more robust foundation for developing digitally grounded, culturally responsive BIPA pedagogy.

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