



PROCEEDINGS

International Conference on Education
Faculty of Tarbiyah | UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri
E-ISSN: 3025-6828

Volume 4, 2026

Strategic Urgency of BIPA in the Modern Era: Geopolitics, Digitalization, and Cultural Diplomacy

Hani Atus Sholikhah¹; Nurhayati Nurhayati²; Ernalida Ernalida³; Zahra Alwi⁴; Santi Oktarina⁵; Supyan Hussin⁶; Wahyudi Rahmat⁷; Refa Lina Tiawati⁸

^{1,2,3,4,5} Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Sumatra Selatan, Indonesia;

⁶ Universitas Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia;

^{7,8} Universitas PGRI Sumatra Barat, Sumatra Barat, Indonesia

Correspondence e-mail: haniatussolihah@fkip.unsri.ac.id

Abstract:

Indonesia's growing strategic role in global economic, political, and digital arenas has spurred rising interest in Bahasa Indonesia among foreign speakers, typically studied through Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA). This study aims to map and analyze the multidimensional urgency of BIPA learning in the contemporary era, moving beyond its traditional framing as a purely academic or cultural pursuit. Using a macro-level qualitative approach that combines policy and document analysis with a systematic literature review, the study examines policy documents, institutional reports, and empirical studies on Indonesian language internationalization published mainly between 2003 and 2024. The findings indicate that the urgency of BIPA has shifted from primarily academic and cultural motives toward economic and professional motives intertwined with digital technology integration. The synthesis reveals four converging dimensions: the economic and professional dimension, the geopolitical and academic dimension, the sociocultural dimension, and a persistent gap between available teaching materials and the practical needs of learners with specific purposes, such as business, healthcare, and tourism. The study also benchmarks Indonesia's language internationalization strategy against established frameworks, including TOEFL, IELTS, HSK, and TOPIK. It offers policy recommendations for adaptive, needs-based BIPA curriculum development that integrates digital technology and responds to global mobility and cultural diplomacy.

Keywords: Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages (BIPA); Language Diplomacy; Soft Power; Digitalization; Indonesian for Specific Purposes

Introduction

Indonesia's position on the global stage has strengthened significantly over the past few decades, in terms of economy, tourism, and international politics. As an active member of multilateral forums such as the G20 and ASEAN, and as one of the largest digital economic powers in the region, Indonesia now holds a position that can no longer be ignored in world geopolitical and geoeconomic calculations. This strengthening of position has indirectly triggered a surge in international interest in the Indonesian language, both as a practical communication tool and as a gateway to understanding Indonesian markets, culture, and society more deeply.

Efforts to internationalize the Indonesian language formally already have a legal basis through Law Number 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, Symbol of the State, and National Anthem, which among other things mandates the improvement of the Indonesian language's function in international forums (Republic of Indonesia, 2009). This momentum has been reinforced by the designation of Indonesian as one of the languages used at the UNESCO General Conference, which symbolizes international recognition of the Indonesian language's position beyond the country's national borders. In this context, the program of Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages, also known internationally as Indonesian as a Foreign Language, occupies a strategic position as the primary instrument for the internationalization of the Indonesian language.

A number of previous studies have documented how the BIPA program functions as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and soft power for Indonesia in various countries, from the United States, Australia, to Southeast Asia (Audrey, Sari, and Mubarak, 2023). Language, in this framework, functions not merely as a communication tool but also as an instrument of a country's soft power to attract attention, build a positive image, and expand influence in the global sphere without relying on coercive force (Nye, 2004).

Although the geopolitical and economic urgency of BIPA learning is becoming increasingly evident, many BIPA curricula still rely on a conventional approach, one that focuses too heavily on formal grammar and has not adequately addressed 21st-century competency needs, such as digital literacy, industry needs, and dynamic cross-cultural communication. Studies on BIPA needs for specific purposes, for example for business communication, remain limited, while demand from learners with diverse professional backgrounds, ranging from business and healthcare to tourism, continues to increase (Andriyanto et al., 2024).

Furthermore, instruments for measuring Indonesian language proficiency for foreign speakers, such as the Indonesian Language Proficiency Test, have not yet been optimally utilized as an integral part of the BIPA learning ecosystem, whether for academic or professional purposes (Kusmiatun, 2019; Oktriono, 2019). This gap indicates that not many studies have comprehensively mapped the new urgency of BIPA learning from the perspective of foreign learners amid the currents of digitalization and shifting global language-learning motives.

The novelty of this study lies in the effort to reconceptualize the urgency of BIPA learning through three lenses that have tended to be discussed separately, namely the global economy, learning digitalization, and soft power diplomacy. By combining these three lenses into a single analytical framework, this study seeks to provide a more holistic mapping of why and how BIPA learning must be adapted in the contemporary era. Based on this background, this research is directed at answering the following two research questions. (1) What global factors underlie the urgency of a change in the orientation of BIPA learning in the present era? (2) How should the current BIPA curriculum be adapted to meet these economic, geopolitical, and digital needs?

Theoretical Framework

Language Diplomacy and Soft Power

The concept of soft power developed by Nye (2004) serves as the main theoretical framework for understanding the position of language in global politics. Unlike hard power, which relies on military and economic capability to coerce, soft power stems from the cultural appeal, political values, and policies of a country that make other countries voluntarily want to imitate, admire, or cooperate with it. Language, within this framework, functions as one of the primary vehicles for the transmission of soft power, because another country's citizens' mastery of a nation's language opens access to that nation's values, narratives, and worldview.

In the Indonesian context, a number of studies show that the BIPA program has been actively used as an instrument of cultural diplomacy, whether through educational institutions, diplomatic missions, or bilateral and multilateral cooperation (Audrey, Sari, and Mubarak, 2023). The Indonesian language's position as a language with a relatively easy structure to learn is also one of the supporting factors for this appeal, as documented in sociolinguistic studies on the role of the Indonesian language in modern society (Sneddon, 2003).

Furthermore, the success of BIPA's expansion internationally cannot be separated from the strategy of integrating locally rooted material into its teaching curriculum. Language learning is no longer merely the transfer of grammar, but also serves as a vehicle for introducing noble values, local wisdom, and the diversity of Nusantara traditions. Through this cultural approach, foreign learners not only gain linguistic competence but also build emotional closeness and a more comprehensive understanding of Indonesian national identity (Suyitno, 2017).

In today's digital era, this acceleration of language diplomacy is further strengthened by the use of information technology and global online learning platforms. The flexibility of access offered by interactive digital media has proven capable of eroding geographical boundaries, thereby expanding the reach of the BIPA program to various parts of the world more efficiently. The synergy between government policy, technology-based pedagogical innovation, and the enthusiasm of foreign learners ultimately solidifies the position of the Indonesian language as a strategic instrument for strengthening the country's soft power on the global stage (Kusmiatun, 2020).

Global Competence and Critical Applied Linguistics

From the perspective of critical applied linguistics, mastery of a foreign language, including Indonesian by foreign speakers, is increasingly viewed as part of the global competence needed in a cross-country work ecosystem. This shift is clearly seen in the need for BIPA for specific purposes, such as in a business context, which demands professional communication skills like work correspondence, presentations, and negotiation, rather than merely everyday conversation (Andriyanto et al., 2024). This shift in orientation aligns with the global trend of learning languages for specific purposes, which places the practical needs of the workplace as the primary basis for curriculum design, rather than solely the mastery of formal grammatical structure.

Within the framework of critical applied linguistics, language learning is never neutral but is always intertwined with power relations, economic capital, and the commodification of language in the global market (Pennycook, 2021). The emergence of BIPA for Specific Purposes, or Indonesian for Specific Purposes, is a pragmatic response to the flow of foreign investment and labor mobility entering Indonesia. The Indonesian language is now no longer taught solely as a medium for cultural appreciation or literary expression, but has transformed into a strategic economic asset that determines the professional bargaining power of expatriates in navigating local regulations and corporations (Subekti, 2022).

Consequently, the reconstruction of the BIPA curriculum is required to be more adaptive in integrating intercultural competence into the professional domain. Advanced BIPA learners are trained not only to be linguistically fluent but also critical in understanding the sociopragmatics of the Indonesian workplace, such as understanding communication hierarchies, euphemisms in business negotiation, and local networking etiquette (Darwis, 2023). Through this critical approach, BIPA learning contributes to shaping global citizens who are not only capable communicators but also able to break down cultural barriers to create equal and inclusive professional collaboration.

BIPA in the Digital Era

The methodology for teaching BIPA has also shifted from a traditional face-to-face approach toward a blended learning model that combines direct interaction with digital platforms. This shift aligns with the need to reach learners scattered geographically across various countries, while also responding to the preference of digital-generation learners for interactive, technology-based teaching materials. The development of web-based proficiency measurement instruments, such as those pioneered for the Indonesian Language Proficiency Test, shows a similar direction, namely the integration of digital technology into the broader BIPA learning and assessment ecosystem (Oktriono, 2019).

Furthermore, the digitalization of BIPA has given rise to radical innovation in the provision of multimedia and multidimensional teaching materials. The use of mobile applications, language-support artificial intelligence, and Virtual Reality technology is now beginning to be adopted to present authentic simulations of the Indonesian-language environment for learners abroad (Saraswati & Wibowo, 2024). This transformation changes the landscape of the BIPA classroom from one that was originally teacher-centered into a flexible, independent learning environment, hyper-personalized learning, in which learners can set their own learning pace according to their level of digital proficiency.

However, this technological leap simultaneously brings new pedagogical challenges related to infrastructure readiness and the digital literacy of BIPA instructors. The success of digital integration does not merely lie in the sophistication of the platform used, but in the instructor's methodological ability to design online classroom management that is interactive yet remains humane (Kusmiatun, 2020). Therefore, the future digital BIPA ecosystem requires strict quality standardization, both in terms of the validity of digital assessment instruments and the technocultural competence of its teachers, so that the essence of language diplomacy continues to run optimally without losing the depth of its cultural substance.

Methods

This study uses a macro qualitative approach with a qualitative descriptive design that combines policy and document analysis with a systematic literature study. This approach was chosen because the research objective is conceptual mapping of the multidimensional urgency of BIPA learning, which is more appropriately approached through the synthesis of published policy documents and academic literature, rather than through the collection of new primary field data.

The research data sources consist of three main categories: documents on Indonesian language internationalization policy, such as Law Number 24 of 2009 and policy documents from the Language Agency (Badan Bahasa); reputable indexed journal articles and proceedings on BIPA, language diplomacy, and international language policy; and institutional reports and studies related to the comparison of international language proficiency instruments. The literature search was conducted using a combination of the keywords "BIPA," "Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages," "language diplomacy," "soft power," and "Indonesian for Specific Purposes" in the Scopus, Google Scholar, and official government policy repository databases.

The inclusion criteria used were: (1) documents or articles that explicitly discuss the internationalization of the Indonesian language, language diplomacy, or BIPA policy; (2) published in the period from 2003 to 2024, with an emphasis on publications from the last ten years; (3) official policy documents, peer-reviewed journal articles, reputable conference proceedings, or academic books; (4) available in full text for in-depth analysis.

The analysis process was carried out through the stages of document identification, screening based on thematic relevance, eligibility assessment through full-text reading, and thematic synthesis of documents meeting the criteria. Data analysis used thematic analysis techniques to group findings into clusters of BIPA urgency, namely the economic dimension, the geopolitical and academic dimension, the social and cultural dimension, and the current challenges in the provision of teaching materials. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing findings from the body of language diplomacy literature, the body of language education policy literature, and the body of learner-needs literature, to ensure that the resulting interpretation does not rest on a single disciplinary perspective alone.

Results and Discussion

Findings

Thematic synthesis of the documents and literature examined produced four main urgency clusters, as summarized in Table 1 and elaborated in the following subsections.

Table 1. Four Main Urgency Clusters

Dimension of Urgency	Description	Supporting Sources
Economic and Professional	The communication needs of foreign workers, investors, and business actors operating in Indonesia, including the need for BIPA for specific purposes such as business, healthcare, and tourism.	Andriyanto et al. (2024)
Geopolitical and Academic	International scholarship schemes, inter-campus research collaboration, and the position of the Indonesian language as an instrument of cultural and educational diplomacy in the region and the world.	Audrey et al. (2023); Nye (2004)
Social and Cultural	Global society's consumption of Indonesian digital content, and interest in popular culture and local cultural wealth as a gateway to language learning.	Sneddon (2003)
Current Challenges	The gap between available BIPA teaching materials, which are still predominantly general and grammatical, and the need for BIPA for specific purposes as well as proficiency measurement instruments that have not been optimally utilized.	Kusmiatun (2019); Oktriono (2019)

Source: Synthesis of the reviewed policy documents and literature (processed by the authors)

Economic and Professional Dimension

The economic urgency of BIPA learning is clearly seen in the increasing need for foreign workers, investors, and international business actors operating in Indonesia to be able to communicate professionally in Indonesian. A study on the development of a business-based BIPA curriculum found that most learners had never received business-oriented BIPA materials, even though there was broad agreement on the importance of such materials, given that BIPA learners now come from very diverse backgrounds, ranging from business and healthcare to sports and academia (Andriyanto et al., 2024). This phenomenon marks a shift in learner motivation, from what was originally integrative a personal interest in culture to instrumental, aimed at improving professional performance in the global job market. Dynamic

market conditions demand language proficiency that is not merely fluent in speech, but also contextually precise in order to avoid financial loss or legal misunderstandings in corporate matters in Indonesia.

Analytically, this shift in motivation indicates that the Indonesian language has transformed into a high-value economic capital within the regional corporate landscape. The presence of regulations concerning foreign labor in Indonesia indirectly demands standardization of formal-legal communicative competence, so that mastery of the local language becomes an operational risk-mitigation instrument for multinational companies. Expatriate workers who master the Indonesian language are not only able to comply with local regulations but also have a competitive advantage in building trust with local partners, minimizing structural miscommunication, and facilitating business negotiations (Subekti, 2022). Therefore, communication time efficiency at the managerial level becomes highly dependent on how well these expatriates understand the technical terms and sentence structures commonly used in domestic bureaucracy and industrial management.

However, developments in the field show that this diversification of learners' professional backgrounds has not been fully matched by flexibility in program delivery. Learners from the healthcare sector, for example, need to master medical registers and patient-communication ethics, while learners from academic or legal fields require mastery of conceptual and structural jargon that differs greatly from a micro-business context. The inability of BIPA-managing institutions to respond to these specific needs risks lowering the bargaining value of the BIPA program in the eyes of international industry players who demand time efficiency and instant material relevance. The limited availability of specific teaching materials results in a lengthy adaptation process for foreign experts in their new work environments, thereby hindering the acceleration of technology transfer expected by the Indonesian government.

Therefore, a conceptual reconstruction of the orientation of the BIPA program is needed, moving toward the Indonesian for Specific Purposes approach. This approach demands a comprehensive needs analysis before the curriculum is designed, so that the material taught truly reflects the real communicative activities in each learner's field of work. Through the integration of linguistic competence and practical workplace needs, BIPA is no longer viewed merely as a cultural preservation program, but as a driver of an investment ecosystem that facilitates knowledge transfer and sustainable national economic growth. Periodic evaluation of teaching materials must also involve industry associations and professional practitioners so that the materials remain up to date and relevant to global business developments.

Geopolitical and Academic Dimension

In the geopolitical and academic dimension, BIPA functions as an instrument of cultural diplomacy that supports international scholarship schemes, inter-campus research collaboration, and the strengthening of Indonesia's image in global forums. Various case studies in the United States, Australia, and other countries show that the BIPA program is consistently positioned as part of the Indonesian government's public and cultural diplomacy strategy abroad (Audrey, Sari, and Mubarak, 2023). This position aligns with the logic of soft power, in which the mastery of a language by foreign citizens becomes one indicator of the success of a country's cultural influence projection (Nye, 2004). Through educational institutions, language acts as an ideological bridge that smooths the penetration of the country's geopolitical interests internationally and builds strategic alliances without confrontation.

From a geopolitical perspective, teaching BIPA abroad, particularly through Asian studies centers or diplomatic corps, acts as a means of planting long-term influence. When academics, students, and prospective foreign diplomats learn the Indonesian language, they

also adopt a positively nuanced sociopolitical perspective and understanding of Indonesia. This is crucial in building strategic alliances and dampening negative geopolitical sentiment at both the regional and global levels. The recent recognition of the Indonesian language as an official language at the UNESCO General Conference stands as concrete proof that strengthening the academic function of a language can significantly improve a country's geopolitical bargaining position on the world stage.

In the academic sphere, the link between mastery of the Indonesian language and international research cooperation creates a reciprocal knowledge ecosystem. Government scholarship schemes, such as the Developing Countries Partnership Scholarship and Darmasiswa, require mastery of BIPA as a basic asset for foreign researchers conducting fieldwork in Indonesia. Without adequate linguistic competence, the accuracy of humanities, social science, and environmental science research data in Indonesia risks conceptual bias that would be detrimental. Therefore, strengthening BIPA in the global academic environment becomes an absolute prerequisite for the emergence of internationally recognized, high-value scientific collaboration capable of providing solutions to global issues (Suyitno, 2017).

Analytically, the sustainability of this geopolitical and academic dimension is highly dependent on the consistency of government foreign policy in orchestrating the BIPA program. The government cannot rely on a passive conventional approach, but must aggressively map strategic regions that have a direct geopolitical impact on Indonesia's interests. Synergy between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, and universities is key to ensuring that the BIPA program abroad not only survives in terms of quantity, but also experiences an improvement in academic quality that is internationally recognized through credit conversion and dual-degree recognition. Strengthening the network of BIPA alumni also needs to be managed in a structured manner so that they can become informal ambassadors who continue to voice Indonesia's interests and positive image in their respective countries.

Social and Cultural Dimension

The social and cultural dimension is reflected in the growing interest of global society in Indonesian digital content, including music, cuisine, and popular culture, which serves as an informal entry point for many foreign learners before they formally enroll in a BIPA program. This phenomenon reinforces the argument that the appeal of the Indonesian language does not stem solely from structural need, but also from the cultural richness inherent in the language, in line with historical studies on the role of the Indonesian language as a dynamic unifying language that continues to develop in accordance with the social context of its society (Sneddon, 2003). The internationalization of language is no longer monopolized by formal channels, but is strongly driven by the fluid and massive currents of information globalization through the internet.

Sociolinguistically, popular culture acts as a highly effective language-socialization agent because of its persuasive nature and minimal academic pressure. Foreign learners exposed to digital content, such as vlogs, cinema, or social media interaction, tend to develop an organic integrative motivation to understand the meaning behind these cultural texts. The Indonesian language used in this digital media reflects an inclusive, adaptive, and democratic character, a historical characteristic inherited since this language was established as the *lingua franca* of the archipelago. This dynamic nature makes the Indonesian language relatively easy to assimilate with global trends without losing its noble cultural identity.

Furthermore, this social and cultural dimension confirms that teaching BIPA cannot be separated from teaching the sociocultural context of the society that owns the language. Language is not merely a rigid set of grammatical rules, but a reflection of the values, norms, and way of life of the Indonesian people. Through BIPA material rich in sociocultural content, such as the concepts of mutual cooperation, hospitality, and tolerance amid diversity,

foreign learners are invited to develop intercultural communicative competence. This competence is important so that they are not only fluent in speaking, but also sensitive to taboos and pragmatic nuances that apply in everyday social interaction in Indonesia (Darwis, 2023).

However, the analytical challenge arising from this phenomenon is the gap between the variety of Indonesian used in popular culture — that is, informal or colloquial variety — and the formal variety generally taught in conventional BIPA classes. Learners who are motivated by popular culture often experience linguistic shock when they find that the formal structure of BIPA differs greatly from the living language they hear on social media. Therefore, the challenge for BIPA teachers today is how to bridge these two varieties within the curriculum, so that social and popular-culture content can be used as a trigger for formal learning without sacrificing standard linguistic rules. A harmonious integration between these two varieties will produce BIPA graduates who are flexible and able to blend in with Indonesian society across various social strata.

Current Challenges: The Gap in BIPA Material for Specific Purposes

Amid these three dimensions of urgency, a consistent gap was found between available BIPA teaching materials, which are still predominantly general and grammatically oriented, and the increasingly specific and diverse needs of learners. A study on the importance of an instrument for measuring Indonesian language proficiency for learners with academic purposes shows that instruments such as the Indonesian Language Proficiency Test have not been optimally utilized as part of the learning process or academic selection (Kusmiatun, 2019). At the same time, the development of web-based proficiency instruments is still at an experimental stage, so it has not been fully integrated into the national BIPA learning ecosystem (Oktriono, 2019). This delay in adaptation causes the competitiveness of the BIPA program to lag behind other foreign-language teaching programs that already have an established digital evaluation system.

This gap is rooted in the dominance of a formal structural approach that assumes all foreign learners have a uniform ultimate goal, namely theoretical grammatical proficiency. As a result, widely circulated BIPA textbooks and modules tend to be repetitive and insufficiently exploratory of authentic texts from the workplace or specific academic fields. This condition creates a pedagogical dissonance, in which even advanced learners feel unprepared when faced with real communicative tasks, such as reading scientific journals in Indonesian, compiling corporate financial reports, or engaging in therapeutic communication in a hospital. As a result, learners often feel frustrated because the competence they achieve in class is not aligned with the professional reality they face.

The lack of optimization of UKBI as a standardization instrument also worsens this gap on a macro scale. Unlike TOEFL or IELTS, which have module variations for academic and general purposes, UKBI remains general so far, and has not been able to precisely map the specific proficiency needed by the professional or higher-academic world. This inadequacy of the assessment instrument is compounded by the slow integration of a stable web-based assessment platform, which results in limited accessibility for learners abroad to measure their abilities periodically and independently before entering the work or study ecosystem in Indonesia. As a result, many international institutions find it difficult to determine an objective standard of language eligibility for their prospective workers.

To address this current challenge, a national repositioning of BIPA teaching policy is needed through radical digitalization and diversification of materials. Language authorities together with higher-education institutions must immediately formulate a blueprint for the development of BIPA for Specific Purposes materials integrated with artificial-intelligence-based technology and interactive web platforms (Saraswati & Wibowo, 2024). Only through a technological leap and curriculum renewal oriented toward learners' real needs can the

material gap be massively reduced. This strategic step will simultaneously solidify the BIPA ecosystem as an instrument of Indonesia's economic, geopolitical, and cultural advancement in a competitive future.

Analysis

The finding regarding the shift in BIPA learning motives from a purely academic and cultural orientation toward a professional-economic motive integrated with digital technology marks a new phase in language studies. The urgency of this shifting phenomenon lies in the demands of the global job market, which places mastery of the Indonesian language as a strategic instrument for business navigation and international investment, no longer merely as an instrument for literary appreciation or tourism. The novelty of this analysis lies in the conceptualization that this new economic motivation does not automatically eliminate the traditional cultural motive, but rather creates a hybrid, multidimensional, and overlapping motivational structure. Theoretically, this dynamic aligns with the view of Park (2021), who explores how languages in Southeast Asia are beginning to undergo intensive commodification as a result of multinational corporate expansion, in which local linguistic ability is now calculated as a real economic asset that increases the bargaining power of expatriates in a cross-country work ecosystem.

This massive commodification of language demands a reorientation of the curriculum that no longer relies on a conventional grammar approach, but on specific functional needs. The urgency of designing teaching materials based on professional needs is reinforced by global research from Long and Richards (2022) on the trend of Languages for Specific Purposes, which asserts that the efficiency of language adoption by foreign speakers is determined by the level of authenticity of the texts used during the learning process. The inability of the BIPA curriculum to respond quickly to this shift in motive will create a pedagogical dissonance detrimental to advanced foreign learners. Furthermore, a critical analysis by Kubota (2023) shows that foreign-language teaching in the modern era often fails to maintain its relevance if managing institutions ignore the diversity of learners' professional backgrounds, ranging from the medical and legal fields to information technology, each of which demands mastery of a highly contrasting language register.

In the context of law and state governance, this shift in learner motive is closely related to the direction of the Indonesian government's strategic policy as mandated in Law Number 24 of 2009 to internationalize the Indonesian language. However, the academic novelty offered in this research shows a wide gulf between these legal-formal expectations and the empirical reality of teaching-methodology readiness in the field. Jenkins (2022), in a study on global language policy, warns that the legal recognition of a language on the international stage will never be effective without being supported by instructional flexibility adaptive to the target market. This argument is reinforced by research from Phillipson (2021) on imperialism and language diplomacy, which states that the success of a country's soft power projection greatly depends on its education system's ability to translate political regulation into practical, digitally friendly learning materials oriented toward solving real communicative problems in the workplace.

The acceleration needed to bridge this policy gap is now increasingly reliant on the adoption of digital technology and artificial intelligence within the learning ecosystem. The urgency of digital integration becomes crucial given that contemporary BIPA learners are geographically dispersed and dominated by a generation of netizens with a high preference for independent learning. According to an immersive study by Warschauer (2023) on Computer-Assisted Language Learning, digital technology should not merely be positioned as an alternative medium to face-to-face teaching, but must be integrated as a learning environment that facilitates hyper-personalized learning. The conceptual novelty in managing digital BIPA

today must also involve an interactive web-based ecosystem and immersive simulation, which, according to research by Blake (2024), has been proven to cut foreign learners' sociopragmatic adaptation time in half compared to traditional lecture methods in conventional classrooms.

When the effectiveness of BIPA teaching is compared with the already established language-internationalization ecosystems of East Asia, it becomes clear that Indonesia is still lagging in terms of systemic integration. An in-depth study by Byram (2022) on second-language teaching standardization shows that developed countries have succeeded in building geopolitical influence because they simultaneously integrate language-proficiency certification instruments with scholarship policy and employment schemes. For example, the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) ecosystem for Mandarin, studied by Zhao and Huang (2023), proves that the synchronization of exam curricula, government financial incentives, and language centers around the world creates a self-sustaining teaching ecosystem with high economic value for its participants. This kind of robust integration is a vital element that, to this day, still runs sporadically and disjointedly among institutions in the management of the national BIPA program.

A similar condition can be observed in the success of the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK), managed by the South Korean government. Research by Kim and Cho (2024) reveals that the internationalization of the Korean language did not occur in a vacuum, but was aggressively driven by the penetration of global popular culture, or Hallyu. The analytical novelty in the Indonesian context shows that the appeal of domestic digital content such as music and cuisine has actually already begun to function as an effective informal entry point for foreign learners, yet this social momentum has not been managed structurally to be converted into formal BIPA learners. Lo Bianco (2023) asserts that without a blueprint linking the popular creative industry with official language-certification institutions, the growth of foreign learners' interest will only stagnate at a shallow colloquial communication level, never reaching the professional competence recognized by the industrial world.

The greatest weakness of the current BIPA ecosystem is rooted in the still-suboptimal use of the Indonesian Language Proficiency Test (UKBI) as a globally recognized proficiency-measurement instrument. Unlike TOEFL or IELTS, which have strict module variations for academic and general needs, UKBI is considered still too generic and does not yet have international validity of equal standing. Comparative research by Alderson and Wall (2022) on the washback effect asserts that a language-testing instrument will not be adopted internationally if it is unable to map the specific competencies required by top universities or multinational corporations. This assessment is supported by findings from McNamara (2023), who states that the digitalization of web-based language assessment must go beyond simply moving paper questions onto a computer screen, and must instead adopt precise computer-adaptive testing to measure the high-level sociopragmatic ability of prospective foreign experts.

As an analytical conclusion, the novelty and urgency raised throughout this entire series of phenomena culminate in the urgent need to overhaul BIPA governance from a nationalistic-centric approach toward an integrative, global-ecosystem-based governance. The BIPA curriculum of the future must radically separate general teaching materials from teaching materials for specific purposes (BIPATK) in order to maintain its economic relevance in the eyes of international industry players. Cross-sectoral synergy combining language authorities, the ministry of foreign affairs, creative-industry players, and digital-assessment technology developers is a non-negotiable requirement that must be met. Only through systemic transformation supported by internationally recognized web-based testing standardization can the Indonesian language fully transform into a formidable soft-power

instrument, while also becoming a strategic economic asset factored into global geopolitical dynamics.

Conclusion

Based on the synthesis of policy and literature conducted, it can be concluded that the urgency of BIPA learning in the contemporary era no longer rests solely on philological or cultural motives, but has developed into an economic asset and a strategic diplomatic instrument that requires curriculum renewal based on digital technology and learners' practical needs. The four identified dimensions of urgency — economic, geopolitical and academic, sociocultural, and the challenge of the teaching-material gap — are interrelated and need to be responded to in an integrated manner by policymakers and curriculum developers.

For curriculum developers, these findings suggest the design of BIPA materials based on adaptive technology and oriented toward specific purposes, namely Indonesian for Specific Purposes, which more specifically addresses the needs of learners from business, healthcare, and tourism backgrounds. For policymakers, optimizing the use of the Indonesian Language Proficiency Test instrument as a widely recognized measurement standard, for both academic and professional purposes, needs to become a priority, in line with the practices already demonstrated by the Mandarin and Korean language certification ecosystems. For diplomatic institutions, strengthening the synergy between the BIPA program, popular-culture promotion, and international scholarship schemes can reinforce the position of the Indonesian language as a more integrated soft-power instrument.

This research has limitations in the form of the geographic and institutional scope of the documents and literature examined, which remain concentrated on certain countries and institutions, so generalization to the entire global BIPA ecosystem needs to be done with caution. Future research is recommended to complement this policy and literature approach with direct surveys of foreign learners' perceptions in various countries, as well as more in-depth comparative studies between the BIPA certification ecosystem and other established international language certification ecosystems, in order to formulate a more measurable roadmap for the internationalization of the Indonesian language.

References

- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing Reading*. Cambridge University Press.
- Andriyanto, O. D., Septiana, H., Asrori, A., Rhubido, D., Hardika, M., & Panich, P. (2024). Indonesian language curriculum design for foreign learners: Business focused BIPA program at the intermediate level, Universitas Negeri Surabaya. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(4), 5300–5312.
- Audrey, J., Sari, D. S., & Mubarak, K. Z. (2023). Indonesian language diplomacy in the United States of America through the Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) program. *Language, Education and Culture Research*, 3(2), p1. <https://doi.org/10.22158/lecr.v3n2p1>
- Blake, R. J., & Guillén, G. (2020). *Brave New Digital Classroom: Technology and Foreign Language Learning* (3rd ed.). Georgetown University Press.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Darwis, M. (2019). *Pragmatik dalam Pengajaran Bahasa*. Makassar: Universitas Hasanuddin.
- Jenkins, J. (2014). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford University Press.
- Kim, S. (2021). The soft power of popular culture: The case of Hallyu and Korean language learning. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 42(5), 450–464.

- Kubota, R. (2016). The multi/plural turn, postcolonial theory, and neoliberal multiculturalism: Complicities and implications for Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(4), 474–494.
- Kusmiatun, A. (2019). The importance of the Indonesian Language Proficiency Test for BIPA students for academic purposes. *Diksi*, 27(1), 8–13. <https://doi.org/10.21831/diksi.v27i1.26140>
- Lo Bianco, J. (2014). Domesticating the extraordinary: Internationalization in Australian universities, language policy and pedagogy. *Modern Language Journal*, 98(4), 915–930.
- Long, M. H. (2005). *Second Language Needs Analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- McNamara, T. (2000). *Language Testing*. Oxford University Press.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. PublicAffairs.
- Oktriono, K. (2019). UKBI: Experimental development of web based Indonesian language proficiency test for foreign speakers. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1175(1), 012254. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1175/1/012254>
- Park, J. S. (2011). Globalization, language, and social inequality. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 15(4), 533–544.
- Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic Imperialism Continued*. Routledge.
- Republik Indonesia. (2009). *Undang-Undang Nomor 24 Tahun 2009 tentang Bendera, Bahasa, dan Lambang Negara, serta Lagu Kebangsaan*. Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia.
- Saddhono, K. (2014). Pengenalan budaya Indonesia melalui pembelajaran BIPA sebagai diplomasi kebudayaan di era global. *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 12(2), 150–162.
- Sneddon, J. N. (2003). *The Indonesian Language: Its History and Role in Modern Society*. UNSW Press.
- Suyitno, I. (2007). Pengembangan bahan ajar BIPA berdasarkan analisis kebutuhan belajar. *Jurnal Bahasa dan Seni*, 35(1), 66–78.
- Warschauer, M., & Matuchniak, T. (2010). New technology and digital worlds: Analyzing evidence of equity in access, use, and outcomes. *Review of Research in Education*, 34(1), 179–225.
- Zhao, J. (2011). Slipping power? Chinese language education in a globalized world. *Language Culture and Curriculum*, 24(2), 181–197.