

## Learning *Bipa* through Folktales: Need Analysis of Foreign Students in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** The existence of the Indonesian language is currently improving. It can be seen from many foreigners interested in learning the Indonesian language for foreigners or *BIPA*. Besides, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture also sent the teachers of *BIPA* to go abroad, making more foreigners know the Indonesian language, especially students. This study aimed to determine foreign learners' needs in learning the Indonesian language. The present research employed a qualitative approach. The data were obtained through distributing offline questionnaire, online questionnaire, and doing interviews. The findings indicated that foreign people hoped they could use the Indonesian language dominantly in the *BIPA* learning, find variations of methods and resources, access innovative media engaging various folktales, and meet many new classmates from different countries. Some informants also assumed that the Indonesian language was unique and easy to learn by using folktales. They were interested in learning through folktales. The implication of this study was that *BIPA* teachers could use folktales as lesson materials for their students.

**Keywords:** *BIPA*, Need Analysis, Foreign Students, Folktales

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## Introduction

The Indonesian language has a vital role and function in country development, especially in unifying various ethnic groups with social, cultural, regional language, and religious diversities. With the Indonesian language, communication between individuals with different backgrounds can also be done effectively. In addition, besides the benefits for native speakers, it is now starting to be learned in the international community. According to data from the Language Center in Jakarta, the *BIPA* teaching program has been organized in 46 countries worldwide (Azizah et al., 2012, p. 1). Their interest is evident by the provision of a learning program known as the Indonesian language for foreigners (*BIPA*) both in Indonesia and abroad. They learn it for business, education, or a new insight into the Indonesian language and culture. *BIPA* program has a role in the internationalization effort of Indonesian universities, from which the growing number of enthusiasts can be benefitted (Ningrum et al., 2017). This program is starting to develop well as many governmental and private institutions begin to apply it. For example, South Korea actively conducts *BIPA* teaching, in which three universities have introduced majors related to Malay-Indonesian. Moreover, private institutions also teach the Indonesian language to Koreans, especially in Seoul, as the three universities cannot thoroughly meet people's needs in learning (Jae Hyun, 2015). Therefore, a capable and skilled instructor is undoubtedly needed for the sustainability of the *BIPA* program. A *BIPA* instructor is also expected to be competent and experienced, so it will be easier for them to teach the Indonesian language to foreigners. Besides the conceptual understanding, creativity, breadth of knowledge, and insight will be very helpful for the instructor in carrying out learning activities. However, in reality, *BIPA* learners are expected to master all Indonesian language skills. It can be achieved by doing a need analysis so that instructors can develop ideal learning based on learners' needs, such as various supporting facilities covering adequate learning media, excellent teaching materials, syllabus, and learning references or resources. Therefore, this research focused on need analysis of foreigners in studying *BIPA* and How their interest in studying through folktales. It was expected to provide more precise and comprehensive information about the needs of *BIPA* learners.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative method, a type of scientific research. In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation that systematically seeks answers to a question, uses a predefined set of procedures, collects evidence, and produces findings that are not determined in advance yet applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Mack, 2005). In this research, there were some ways which were used to get the information. Those ways were online and offline strategy. Firstly, researchers meet some foreigners who were *BIPA* students to know the needs of learning *BIPA* in Surakarta, especially at Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS). In order to get valid results, secondly, researchers carried out several interviews to gather

information on international students' (*BIPA* students) needs. Thirdly, researchers also distributed online questionnaire to some foreigners to investigate their interest in learning *BIPA* through folktales. All informants in this study were foreigners from various countries: Tajikistan, Egypt, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Singapore, the United States, India, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

## Results and Discussion

### Indonesian as a Foreign Language

According to Saddahono (2012), the international office of UNS (Universitas Sebelas Maret) in 2012 showed that 113 people from 28 countries followed student exchange programs, and 63 people from 26 countries studied at UNS. Understanding the characteristics of international students is necessary, especially in the effort to select and develop *BIPA* learning materials (Suyitno, 2007, p. 64). Saddahono (2012) states that international students studying the Indonesian language at UNS have a peculiar communication. Daily conversation is still heavily influenced by English as a mediating language for foreign students and lecturers.

Besides oral communication, international students must also be able to communicate in writing, especially in completing assignments, a thesis, and a dissertation (Anjarsari et al., 2007). The Indonesian language exists internationally as several Asian and European universities teach it as one of the compulsory courses. Many efforts have been made to introduce the Indonesian language to the international scene, one of them being the teaching of *BIPA* (Ningrum et al., 2017). The use of the Indonesian language in education in Indonesia has been stipulated in Law No. 24 of 2009, especially article 29, paragraph (1). It applies to *BIPA* teaching programs in Indonesia. Therefore, international students who study and work in this country should be able to use the Indonesian language to communicate. Hence, they can speak Indonesian daily through the *BIPA* program (Ningrum et al., 2017). Nowadays, the Indonesian language has become one of the most popular in the world. Thus, efforts to conduct a good learning process for foreign speakers are crucial (Saddhono, 2015). *BIPA* plays a prominent role in developing students' communication skills at Vietnam National University. It served as the barometer in the Indonesian Studies major that required an effective learning model (Oktriono et al., 2017).

The *BIPA* program is growing because foreigners' interest in learning Indonesian is high. They learn Indonesian for various purposes, such as business, education, and work in Indonesia. *Listening skill* is essential to learn other language skills (Loren, 2017). Verbal and non-verbal communication strategies supported *BIPA* students in understanding the ongoing event. Moreover, they could bridge the gap between the students and the teachers (Purwiyanti et al., 2017). Junaidi et al. (2017) state that the existence of *BIPA* learning is strengthening internationally. It is evidenced by the increased number of foreign learners coming to Indonesia. In addition, even in some well-known universities in Indonesia, many foreign learners continue to study the Indonesian language even for their Master's degree. It confirms their passion for mastering the Indonesian language for various interests.

### **The Needs of International Students in Learning *BIPA***

The available teaching materials poorly supported foreign learners' interest in learning the Indonesian language. Consequently, the lesson materials had to balance their passion. In this regard, the sociocultural sphere was considered essential in representing Indonesian wealth of identity, character, and culture. Nevertheless, interactive course books of *BIPA* had not been developed optimally in Indonesia. One of the obstacles was the less interactive media development technology mastered by the teachers and stakeholders (Ulumuddin & Wismanto, 2014).

Based on the information from some foreigners in Universitas Sebelas Maret, the following are the goals of foreign students in learning the Indonesian language:

#### *To study and conduct research in Indonesia*

The informant stating this purpose was an international student who got the opportunity to learn Indonesian from the Indonesian government. In their study progress, the Indonesian language was necessary for them to attend the lectures. After completing their Indonesian language studies, they lived in Indonesia to study in college.

#### *To learn different languages, including Indonesian*

Some *BIPA* learners were interested in learning Indonesian because of their hobbies or love to learn foreign languages. They generally could speak many other languages besides Indonesian.

#### *The Indonesian language is easy to understand*

Some informants thought the Indonesian language was easy to understand, making them interested in learning it. In this case, they would understand the language for a short time. They said it was easy because they had learned other languages considered more complex than Indonesian.

#### *To work in Indonesia*

Informants chose this purpose because they wanted to work and stay for a long time in Indonesia. They would start their careers by working in foreign companies or others.

#### *Interest in Indonesian culture and people*

Informants who stated this were those who wanted to have more insight into Indonesia. They also felt that Indonesian culture was fascinating, and the people were friendly that they were happy to learn the language and culture.

#### *To stay in Indonesia*

This group of people would usually start a career in Indonesia because they had been interested in living in this country for a long time.

*To teach the Indonesian language in their country*

Some of the informants had a different purpose than others. They planned to return to their own country and teach the Indonesian language there. They came to Indonesia to acquire knowledge and understanding of *BIPA* and Indonesian culture as a provision to teach in the future. Nowadays, the Indonesian language is taught in many countries, promoting its internationalization effort. Thus, it might become an international language that the global community loves.

Furthermore, their significant challenge in learning the Indonesian language was in the aspects of speaking and writing, while the most effortless language skill for them was reading. Some informants also agreed that listening was the hardest. It made them practice frequently by listening to music and chatting with friends. These circumstances made them want *BIPA* teachers to speak using the Indonesian language fully to improve their listening and communication skills.

Generally, *BIPA* learners had ideal needs for the learning process. They wanted contextual learning to engage Indonesian culture's elements, such as introducing traditional clothes, visiting tourist destinations, getting to know Indonesian food, and prioritizing the improvement of language competencies, knowledge, and culture. The following table illustrates the needs of *BIPA* learners in learning the Indonesian language based on the offline questionnaire, interview and online questionnaire.

Needs of *BIPA* Learners

Time	45 - 90 minutes
Sources	Book, newspaper, internet, music, field trip, folktales
Media	Audio, audio-visual, field trip, and traditional clothes
Classmate criteria	Different countries, different gender, and similar level
Method	Individual, peer-teaching, and group
Expectation	Using various methods, using pictures, interacting with students, creating innovative media, and using the Indonesian language entirely in teaching

Based on the table above, *BIPA* learners requested the learning process to be taken place for 45 to 90 minutes in a single meeting. They also preferred learning resources from books, the internet, music, newspaper, field trip, and folktales. Some also asked for traditional clothes as learning media to make them more excited about learning.

Furthermore, they had some expectations regarding class conditions. They favored a heterogeneous class, so they had many friends from different countries and genders. Likewise, all informants disliked having classmates from the same country and gender. For learning methods, they expected to learn in groups or pairs. The learning process was also anticipated not to be monotonous and instead have many variations of innovative methods in each meeting. Excessive use of English also made them less interested in learning. They preferred teachers who

speak Indonesian the most, interact actively, and assign tasks to students.

### Using Folktales in *BIPA* Learning

Many foreigners are interested to learn *BIPA*, not only for the benefit of a tourist but also for long time purposes such as research, study, consult, work, or a career in Asian countries (Ningsih et al., 2019). One of the biggest obstacles in *BIPA* learning was learners' motivation. Many reasons made them less motivated, including the boring class atmosphere. One way to increase their motivation is by providing something extraordinary, especially for teens and early adulthood learners. Comics can efficiently boost their learning motivation, in which the impact is the same as using a game in *BIPA* learning (Ramliyana, 2016). Furthermore, folktales could be used as learning materials to improve the Indonesian language skills of international students. The story's plot, local wisdom, and cultural values could attract learners to read. Students would undoubtedly gain insight and knowledge about the Indonesian language and culture. In this regard, some of them expressed their interest in learning Indonesian using folktales.

By reading folktales, international students might be easier to know Indonesian language and culture. They could get a variety of new vocabularies, an understanding of cultures, and insight into various regions in Indonesia. Moreover, they enjoyed reading Indonesian folktales as the stories were interesting. There were also *BIPA* learners attracted to participating in storytelling competitions. The folktale was a suitable learning material for them to improve their speaking skill. Based on the result of the online questionnaire, there were 20 responses that consisted of 15% of informants at basic level, 50% at intermediate level, and 35% at advanced level. In addition, 80% of informants liked to read books about Indonesian folktales, while 20% disliked it. 90% of informants liked to learn the Indonesian language through folktales and 10% disliked to do it. Moreover, 75% of informants liked to learn Indonesian using folktales for the reason that they wanted to quickly master the Indonesian language and wanted to get to know Indonesian cultures, the other 20% just liked to read the stories, and 5% were not interested in reading storybooks.

### Conclusion

Based on the research discussions, the Indonesian language has now been taught to international communities. This condition would undoubtedly strengthen its existence internationally as it would become more recognizable to foreigners. Hence, optimizing *BIPA* teaching became a crucial thing to do, one of which was by determining their needs in learning the Indonesian language. Anchored on the research findings, *BIPA* learners had a variety of objectives and reasons to learn Indonesian, such as for studying, working, doing research, staying in Indonesia, and for being *BIPA* teachers in their country. They also generally expected culture-based learning, innovative methods, ideal time, varied learning resources, innovative media, and educational interaction during the learning process. Also, many foreigners love learning *BIPA* through folktales because they not only want to learn Indonesian language, but also to understand Indonesian culture.

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