

Teaching Indonesian for Foreign Speakers in the European Region



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KEY WORDS	ABSTRACT
BIPA, Indonesian, Western Europe.	The objectives to be achieved in this study emphasize the mechanism of teaching Indonesian for foreign speakers in the European region. The method used in this study is qualitative with a literature study approach. Researchers seek secondary data sources adjusted to the topic of the research problem being studied. The results of this study indicate that international public diplomacy through teaching Indonesian for foreign speakers (BIPA) in Western Europe is an important strategy in introducing Indonesian culture and language to the international world. Through this program, Indonesia not only teaches English, but also promotes cultural values that can improve understanding and relations between countries. This program has been implemented in various countries, including in Europe, and has shown positive results in building Indonesia's image in the eyes of the world. Cultural diplomacy, including language teaching, is part of the soft power used by Indonesia to build better relations with other countries. Through the BIPA program, Indonesia seeks to create better understanding between the people of Indonesia and the people of other countries, which in turn can strengthen friendship and cultural relations.

1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Indonesian as a foreign language in Europe through the BIPA program constitutes an integral part of Indonesia's public diplomacy. This program functions not only as a tool for language instruction but also as a medium for introducing and promoting Indonesian culture, ultimately strengthening international relations and enhancing Indonesia's positive image on the global stage. BIPA programs in Europe serve not merely as communication tools, but also as instruments of cultural diplomacy and the reinforcement of international ties (Harahap & Fithriani, 2023). The BIPA initiative is designed to introduce

both the Indonesian language and culture to the international community. Through language instruction, Indonesia is able to build stronger communicative bridges with European countries. The program enables participants to gain a deeper understanding of Indonesian cultural values, which in turn can foster improved diplomatic relations and international cooperation. Indonesian has been recognized as one of the world's important languages. Since its declaration as the national language during the Youth Pledge in 1928, Indonesian has continued to develop and is now taught as a second foreign language in several countries. The BIPA program plays a crucial role in the internationalization of Indonesian, making it



more widely known and used in various international forums (Sambas et al., 2022). There is significant enthusiasm among the international community, especially foreign students, for learning Indonesian. The BIPA program attracts many participants from diverse countries who are eager to study both the Indonesian language and culture (Budiman, 2022). This demonstrates that Indonesian language instruction can serve as an effective means of strengthening inter-state relations. Several scholars have focused on the teaching of Indonesian to foreign speakers.

First, Julianti Novita's research centers on BIPA diplomacy in Indonesia-Thailand relations (Juliantini, 2024), emphasizing the role of soft diplomacy in ensuring that Indonesian is understood by foreign communities. Second, Tanwin's study examines BIPA as a vehicle for the internationalization of Indonesian universities (Tanwin, 2020), highlighting the increasing number of foreign BIPA learners as evidence of growing international interest in the language. Third, Sambas Carmelia's research discusses Indonesian language instruction as a strategy for internationalization (Sambas et al., 2022), noting that many European universities now offer Indonesian as a compulsory subject. These previous studies form the basis for this research's in-depth examination of BIPA in Europe and help identify the academic gap addressed in this study. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the representation of BIPA in Europe from the perspective of international relations.

Constructivist theory

This theory focuses on the role of ideas, identities, and norms in shaping state behavior. Constructivists argue that international relations are shaped by social interactions and the construction of meaning (Setiyaningsih,

2021). Diplomacy within a constructivist framework involves understanding how a country's identity and values influence its foreign policy and interactions with other states (Shu, 2020). Constructivism is a key approach in international relations studies, emphasizing the importance of ideas, identities, and norms in shaping the behavior of states and other international actors (Finnemore & Wendt, 2024). Unlike realist and liberal approaches that focus more on power and material interests, constructivism highlights how social interaction and the construction of identity influence international relations. Alexander Wendt is a leading figure in the development of constructivist theory in international relations. Wendt argues that state identities and interests are not fixed but are formed through social interaction and construction (Setiyaningsih, 2021). He posits that states act not only based on material interests but also on how they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others (Schoorl, 2022). Wendt maintains that social interaction among states is key to understanding international relations (Shu, 2020). Through these interactions, states build shared understandings and create meanings that influence their actions. According to Alexander Wendt, constructivist theory offers a distinct perspective for understanding international relations (Finnemore & Wendt, 2024). By emphasizing the importance of identity, norms, and social interaction, Wendt demonstrates that state behavior is determined not only by material factors but also by complex social constructions.

2. METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative literature review. A literature review involves the process of collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information from various relevant



sources to address the research questions. The researcher undertakes several steps, including searching for and gathering articles, books, journals, and other sources related to the research topic. Subsequently, the collected information is read and analyzed to identify themes and patterns. Finally, the researcher integrates information from multiple sources to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Indonesian Language Program for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) is an initiative designed to teach Indonesian to non-native speakers. The program aims to introduce both the Indonesian language and culture to international learners, helping them communicate more effectively in social, academic, and professional contexts. The objectives of the BIPA program include the following:

Language Proficiency:

Assisting participants in mastering Indonesian language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Language acquisition in the BIPA Program not only focuses on the technical aspects of the language but also emphasizes the development of effective communication skills (Pradiani et al., 2024). Through a comprehensive and interactive approach, participants are expected to achieve strong proficiency in Indonesian, enabling them to interact confidently in various situations.

Cultural Understanding:

Introducing participants to the culture, traditions, and values of Indonesian society. Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural diversity, encompassing numerous ethnic groups, languages, and customs (Saddhono, 2024). Participants are exposed to cultures

from various regions across the country, as well as to social norms and etiquette, such as politeness, respect for elders, and manners in interpersonal interactions.

Social Interaction:

Encouraging interaction between participants and native speakers to enhance communication skills. Social interaction is a key element in the Indonesian Language Program for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) (Rizky Lestari et al., 2024). The program is designed to promote interactions with native Indonesian speakers, which is essential for improving participants' communication abilities. Creating multiple opportunities for real-life interaction not only strengthens language mastery but also enriches participants' cultural experiences.

Academic and Professional Preparation:

Providing the necessary language skills for further studies or careers in Indonesia (Dewi, 2023). The BIPA program focuses not only on language acquisition and cultural understanding but also equips participants with skills essential for academic pursuits and professional opportunities in Indonesia. Academic and professional preparation is crucial in helping participants achieve their educational and career goals, and the program supports success by developing language competencies and offering networking opportunities.

The BIPA program offers various benefits, including the following (Saddhono, 2024):

1. Language Proficiency

Enhancing Indonesian language skills for use in various contexts. Participants will be able to communicate more effectively in different situations, both social and professional. They will gain greater confidence in using Indonesian

without relying on interpreters and will find it easier to adapt to new environments in Indonesia, whether in academic or social settings.

2. International Networking

Building connections with other participants from various countries.

The program not only focuses on language proficiency and cultural understanding but also creates opportunities for participants to establish relationships with individuals from around the world. The international networks developed through the BIPA Program are invaluable. By fostering interactions among participants from diverse backgrounds, the program enriches their learning experiences and helps them forge relationships that could benefit their personal and professional lives in the future.

3. Cultural Experience

Gaining a deeper understanding of Indonesian culture.

Participants learn to appreciate cultural diversity and differing perspectives, enriching their life experiences.

Indonesian Language Diplomacy as an International Lingua Franca

The BIPA Program is a key initiative in promoting the Indonesian language abroad. Through this program, Indonesia strives to teach its language and culture to foreign speakers (Pontoh et al., 2024), showcasing its commitment to humanitarian diplomacy related to the global use of Bahasa Indonesia. In March 2025, Indonesia reaffirmed its support for the multilateral system and adherence to international humanitarian law, which includes the use of Bahasa Indonesia in communication and documentation related to humanitarian aid (Antaranews.com, 2025). This move highlights

that Indonesian is not confined to domestic use but is also becoming prominent internationally.

The Indonesian Language Development and Fostering Agency collaborates with the Indonesian Language Teaching and Development Association for Foreign Speakers (APPBIPA) under the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Manpower to develop competency standards (Mulyaningsih & Khuzaemah, 2023). As a professional organization, the Language Agency and APPBIPA have formed strong partnerships to enhance the teaching and fostering of Indonesian as a foreign language.

Efforts by the Language Development and Fostering Agency include training prospective BIPA teachers, selecting qualified instructors, and publishing BIPA textbooks (Kemendikbud, 2020). However, the agency's primary strategy to internationalize the Indonesian language is by expanding the entries in the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI). Enriching the KBBI allows the language to become more comprehensive and better reflect the complexity of Indonesian, positioning it to compete with other major global languages such as English, Mandarin, and Spanish.

The Language Agency collaborates with international institutions such as Oxford University Press and Lexical Computing, signaling that the KBBI's development aims to meet international linguistic standards (Inoue et al., 2024). Further, these international partnerships help broaden the acceptance of Bahasa Indonesia. For example, the Faculty of Humanities at Universitas Indonesia has produced bilingual dictionaries, such as Indonesian-Italian, Indonesian-French, Indonesian-Russian, and Indonesian-Mandarin (Sujiono et al., 2021).



The Indonesian government actively uses Bahasa Indonesia in international forums such as UNESCO and ASEAN, and in educational institutions abroad (indonesiabusinessport.com, 2023). A more comprehensive KBBI will solidify the foundation for promoting Indonesian as an official language supported by substantial documentation. Expanding KBBI entries is also vital for cultural diplomacy, as it preserves the Indonesian language while emphasizing it as an essential component of national identity on the global stage (Hardini & Grangé, 2016).

Indonesia's efforts to promote Bahasa Indonesia as an international lingua franca encompass a wide array of initiatives, from cultural diplomacy to educational programs (Hutagalung, 2025). With a strong commitment and strategic planning, Bahasa Indonesia is expected to emerge as a globally recognized and widely used language.

International Public Diplomacy in Teaching Indonesian Language to Foreign Speakers in Europe

International public diplomacy plays a vital role in teaching Bahasa Indonesia to foreign speakers, particularly in Western Europe. Through various initiatives and programs, Indonesia strives to introduce its language and culture to international communities, strengthening ties with European countries.

Key aspects of public diplomacy include:

Implementation of the BIPA Program:

As a primary effort to promote Bahasa Indonesia abroad, the BIPA program is conducted in universities and educational institutions across Western Europe (Juliantini, 2024). Collaboration with local institutions

enables broader outreach and deeper learning experiences. Academic activities such as language classes, cultural workshops, and interactive sessions encourage students to practice speaking and listening in real-world settings (Septiana et al., 2022).

Cultural Diplomacy:

Strategies are employed to introduce Indonesian culture through arts, music, and cultural events (Irfan, 2025). Traditional performances like dance, gamelan music, and theater are showcased throughout Europe (Linke et al., 2021). Indonesian cultural festivals featuring cuisine, crafts, and arts are held in major European cities (Chung, 2023), providing a broader platform for promoting Indonesian culture and increasing interest in learning the language.

Cooperation with Educational Institutions:

Indonesia has established partnerships with European educational institutions to develop Indonesian language curricula (Pontoh et al., 2024). This cooperation includes sharing effective teaching methods and providing opportunities for European students to learn directly from native speakers.

Use of Digital Media:

In the digital era, social media and online platforms are crucial tools for public diplomacy. Indonesia leverages these platforms to reach wider audiences across Europe, promote Indonesian language courses, and share cultural content (Rachmawati et al., 2024). Digital campaigns target younger generations, fostering deeper engagement with Indonesian culture and language.

Enhancing Teacher Training:

Improving the quality of Indonesian language instruction through updated pedagogical



methods and the integration of technology is crucial (Septiana et al., 2022; Hardini et al., 2019). High-quality teaching ensures a more satisfying and effective learning experience.

These efforts align with communicative teaching theory, emphasizing the need for effective communication over purely academic language mastery. Students are encouraged to use the language in real-life situations, ensuring they develop the practical skills necessary for daily interaction.

Furthermore, Indonesia's diplomatic initiatives in teaching Bahasa Indonesia in Europe can be analyzed through the lens of constructivist theory, particularly Wendt's perspective, which argues that states' identities and interests are socially constructed through interaction. Public diplomacy efforts, including BIPA programs, contribute to building a positive identity for Indonesia on the global stage, highlighting its language and culture as valuable and recognized internationally.

4. CONCLUSION

International public diplomacy through the BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing) program in Europe serves as a crucial strategy for introducing Indonesian culture and language to the international community. This program not only teaches the language but also promotes cultural values that enhance mutual understanding and foster stronger relations between nations. The BIPA program is often conducted at universities and educational institutions across Europe. Collaboration with local educational institutions allows the program to reach a broader range of students and provide a more immersive learning experience. Furthermore, the program contributes significantly to strengthening ties

between Indonesia and European countries through cultural and educational exchanges. By offering both language instruction and cultural education, the program promotes values that deepen mutual understanding and support international cooperation. The BIPA program has been implemented in various countries, including those in Europe, and has shown positive outcomes in building a favorable image of Indonesia on the global stage.

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