



Development of Intercultural Learning Media to Enhance Indonesian Language Teachers' Competence in Teaching BIPA

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Abstract

Teaching Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA) requires strong pedagogical competence from instructors. However, besides this competence, teachers must also possess intercultural competence and cross-cultural communication skills. Some BIPA instructors still face challenges and limitations, such as the lack of intermediary language proficiency and the absence of contextually appropriate teaching media. This study aims to identify the needs for intercultural learning media and to develop intercultural-based teaching media that can enhance Indonesian language teachers' competence in teaching BIPA. A qualitative descriptive method was used, involving interviews and a literature review related to BIPA teaching practices. The findings show that intercultural learning media such as bilingual videos, culture cards, and interactive comics are highly effective in strengthening teachers' communicative and intercultural competence. These media are not only teaching aids but also pedagogical strategies to create more contextual, communicative, and culturally aware learning experiences. Therefore, the development of intercultural learning media has great potential as an innovative solution to improve the quality of BIPA instruction by bridging language barriers and enriching cross-cultural learning experiences.

Keywords: Learning Media, Language Teachers, BIPA

Introduction

Language serves as a medium for people to express thoughts and ideas, both orally and in writing. It is unique, universal, productive, dynamic, and diverse. Through language, individuals can interact, express their feelings and thoughts, and show their identity within a social community (Noermanzah, 2019). According to Suandi (2014), language is a verbal and arbitrary form of speech that enables mutual understanding during communication. Effective communication, therefore, becomes the key to building understanding among speakers. In today's globalized era, language plays a central role in intercultural communication.

One of the implementations of language education in Indonesia is through the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program, which has developed significantly in higher education institutions. BIPA is a program designed for international students who are interested in learning the Indonesian language, both spoken and written, such as those participating in the Darmasiswa Program (I. M. D. Sucipta et al., 2024). This program functions not only as a medium for language learning but also as a form of cultural diplomacy that introduces the Indonesian language, norms, and traditions to the international community.

BIPA instructors are therefore expected to master not only the Indonesian language and cultural content but also pedagogical, intercultural, and cross-cultural communication competencies. English is generally used as an intermediary language to help both teachers and learners understand the lesson content. However, in practice, many instructors are not fluent in English, which becomes a significant obstacle in the teaching process. As Sucipta et al. (2025) state, English plays an important role as a global language connecting people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Instructors who come from general Indonesian language education backgrounds rather than applied linguistics or BIPA specialization often face difficulties in this area. Limited English proficiency reduces the effectiveness of classroom communication, particularly for beginners who have not yet mastered basic Indonesian. Consequently, the teaching and learning process becomes less effective and loses its intercultural dimension, an essential characteristic of BIPA instruction. Considering these challenges, there is a need for innovative learning media that can bridge linguistic barriers while enhancing the intercultural competence of teachers.

In the context of BIPA learning, various intercultural media can be utilized to help teachers communicate more effectively without heavily relying on foreign languages. Examples include bilingual intercultural videos (Indonesian–English) that depict daily life activities in Indonesia, helping learners acquire vocabulary and cultural context through translated subtitles. Other media, such as interactive comics or bilingual short stories, can strengthen cultural understanding while facilitating meaningful cross-cultural communication. The intercultural approach emphasizes mutual understanding, empathy, and cross-cultural awareness between teachers and learners, which is especially helpful for teachers with limited foreign language skills. Therefore,

the development of intercultural learning media is expected to strengthen teachers' ability to deliver lessons that are contextual, communicative, and meaningful.

Previous studies on BIPA instruction mostly focused on teaching materials and the use of digital or culture-based media. For instance, Ariandi (2025) highlights that integrating digital media such as Learning Management Systems, interactive videos, and online conferences can increase students' linguistic and sociocultural competence. However, these studies also identified limitations in digital literacy, infrastructure, and the lack of cultural contextualization.

Dewi (2022) developed competency-based teaching materials using the flipped learning model and the ADDIE framework. The findings demonstrated that technology-based teaching materials improve learning outcomes and cultural understanding. Yet, the study's focus remained on material development rather than interactive media that support intercultural competence among teachers. Similarly, Yuniatin & Asteria (2022), integrated plurilingual and pluricultural values into BIPA materials based on East Javanese local wisdom, confirming the cultural validity of their approach. However, their research did not emphasize interactive digital media that could help teachers manage cultural diversity in the classroom.

Furthermore, Pangesti & Wiranto (2018) developed cross-cultural teaching materials using a contextual-communicative approach based on Malang's local culture, showing improvements in learners' intercultural interaction skills. Nonetheless, the materials remained conventional, lacking digital support. Karuniawan et al. (2024), also discussed the challenges and strategies for developing BIPA learners' communicative competence, identifying the absence of authentic communication practices and the lack of contextual media as major issues.

In summary, most previous studies emphasized linguistic, cultural, and technological aspects but have not yet explored intercultural learning media as a strategic tool to improve BIPA teachers' competence in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by developing intercultural media that not only bridge linguistic barriers but also enhance intercultural communication effectiveness in BIPA instruction.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, using literature review and interviews with BIPA instructors to explore the needs and practices of current teaching media. The study focuses on describing the forms, characteristics, and potential applications of intercultural media relevant to teachers' needs. The results are expected to contribute to improving the competence of Indonesian language instructors, particularly in intercultural communication and the use of innovative teaching media in BIPA classrooms.

Literature Review

BIPA Teaching and Teacher Competence

Teaching Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA) is not only focused on linguistic aspects but also involves cultural understanding and cross-cultural communication. Teachers are expected to possess pedagogical, communicative, and intercultural

competence to integrate cultural values into the learning process. According to Nugroho et al. (2024), BIPA instruction should not only emphasize language skills but also introduce Indonesian culture, traditions, and values within the teaching context.

However, some BIPA instructors, particularly those from general Indonesian language education backgrounds, face challenges when teaching foreign learners. One of the main issues is their limited proficiency in the intermediary language, usually English. This limitation often leads to one-way communication, making the learning process less interactive. Therefore, appropriate strategies and media are needed to bridge the communication gap between teachers and learners.

Spencer, as cited in Wibowo (2007), defines competence as the fundamental characteristics of an individual reflected in consistent patterns of thought and behavior across various situations over time. In an organizational context, both public and private, competence is crucial in responding to dynamic challenges and demands. Sutrisno (2009) further explains that competence consists of abilities based on skills and knowledge, supported by appropriate work attitudes, and applied according to established performance standards. For BIPA teachers, such competence includes not only language mastery but also the ability to interpret and teach Indonesian cultural values effectively. Teachers must demonstrate integrated pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competences to ensure the learning process is effective, communicative, and contextually relevant.

In this context, the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) developed by Byram (1997) serves as an essential theoretical foundation. Byram (1997) defines ICC as the ability of individuals to communicate with speakers from other cultures using a foreign language while considering differences in values, norms, and cultural behaviors. This concept expands Hymes (1972) notion of communicative competence, incorporating not only linguistic and pragmatic aspects but also intercultural and critical dimensions. ICC emphasizes that successful communication between speakers of different cultures depends not only on linguistic skills but also on awareness and sensitivity toward cultural dimensions in communication.

The Concept of Intercultural Learning in Language Education

Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has become a key theoretical framework in both foreign and second language education. It consists of five main components: Attitudes – openness and curiosity toward cultural differences; Knowledge – understanding one's own and other cultures; Skills of interpreting and relating – the ability to interpret and connect cultural meanings; Skills of discovery and interaction – the ability to engage with people from different cultures; and Critical cultural awareness – the capacity to evaluate cultural perspectives critically. In BIPA learning, ICC functions as a bridge between linguistic and cultural competence. Learners must not only know *what to say* in Indonesian but also *when, where, and how* to use the language appropriately according to Indonesian social and cultural norms.

The Role of Media in Intercultural Learning

Learning media play a crucial role in connecting language, culture, and learning experiences. In BIPA instruction, visual, interactive, and contextual media are highly useful for teachers who may not be fluent in foreign languages. As Ramliyana (2016)

notes, visual media such as images, animations, and infographics help reduce linguistic barriers and strengthen pragmatic understanding.

The use of intercultural learning media aligns with the principles of contextual learning, where language is learned within real-life and cultural contexts (Jayantini, 2024). Through media such as intercultural videos, culture cards, and interactive comics, learners can understand communication forms and social norms in Indonesia without relying solely on translation or verbal explanations.

Therefore, synchronizing media selection with the BIPA curriculum design is essential, ensuring that each activity incorporates both linguistic and cultural values through authentic communication practices.

The BIPA curriculum plays a central role in determining the direction and approach of language instruction. However, many existing curricula still emphasize linguistic aspects and have not fully supported the development of learners' communicative abilities. The heavy focus on grammar limits contextual communication practice (Pangesti, F., & Wiranto, 2018). An ideal curriculum should integrate pragmatic, intercultural, and sociolinguistic competences, featuring diverse communication contexts that reflect Indonesian society.

BIPA teachers act as cultural mediators who bridge learners with Indonesian social and cultural realities. In practice, however, some instructors still employ structural and translation-based approaches, making classroom interactions less dynamic and contextual (Putri, N. A., & Yuniawan, 2017). To address this, teachers must strengthen their pedagogical and intercultural competence through training programs that emphasize functional language teaching, role-playing, and communication simulations. Learning media also play a major role in BIPA teaching success. Traditional materials such as highly textual books and repetitive exercises, often fail to represent real communication situations. Conversely, using audiovisual media like short films, interviews, or local cultural vlogs helps learners understand linguistic and cultural contexts more vividly. Digital interactive media can further encourage active participation and independent learning.

Forms and Potential Development of Intercultural Media

Several previous studies have shown the effectiveness of using culture-based media in BIPA instruction. Ramliyana (2016) found that comic media help foreign learners understand everyday communication contexts more engagingly. Similarly, Pamorria (2024) developed comic strips to improve BIPA learners' speaking skills, which successfully increased students' motivation and classroom interaction.

The findings of this study also reveal that the use of comic strips provides several benefits for Thai students learning Indonesian as a foreign language. These include creating more active and enjoyable learning experiences, strengthening vocabulary retention, improving communicative speaking skills, encouraging creativity and innovation in developing learning materials, serving as an effective medium for language and vocabulary delivery, and providing entertainment that supports learning objectives.

In addition, Bunga et al. (2024) demonstrated that the integration of Indonesian local wisdom through audiovisual media, such as videos featuring traditional dance and culture, enhances learners' cultural understanding and communicative competence. Another promising form of media is culture cards, which feature images and bilingual text describing local Indonesian culture, such as culinary traditions, ceremonies, and social customs. These cards can be used for conversational practice and educational games, making learning more interactive.

This finding aligns with Isnaini & Nur (2021), who investigated how integrating cultural elements into Indonesian reading materials can be used as a medium for extensive reading in BIPA classrooms. Their study aimed to identify the benefits of incorporating cultural aspects into reading texts and to provide recommendations for developing more authentic and engaging materials for foreign learners.

From these various studies, it can be concluded that intercultural media combining linguistic and cultural elements, such as videos, culture cards, and interactive comics, have significant potential to help BIPA teachers strengthen their intercultural competence. These media are not merely teaching aids but serve as pedagogical strategies that promote communicative, contextual, and culturally aware learning experiences.

Method

Research methods are defined as scientific procedures used to obtain data with specific purposes and uses (Sugiyono, 2014). This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which involves systematically organizing and analyzing data in the form of words and sentences to draw general conclusions (Agung, 2012)a. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen to describe the development of intercultural learning media that can assist Indonesian language teachers in teaching BIPA.

This study does not focus on the development of a product to be tested but rather on needs analysis, media concept design, and the description of potential implementation. The data were collected through a literature review and interviews with several BIPA instructors who have educational backgrounds in Indonesian language teaching and experience teaching international students. According to Adlini et al. (2022), a literature review involves collecting and analyzing theories and information from various relevant sources. In this study, the literature review was used to examine theories related to BIPA instruction, intercultural approaches, and media development. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted as a process of oral question-and-answer interaction between two or more people to obtain information directly (Narbuko, Cholid, 2013). The interviews were used to explore teachers' experiences, challenges, and media needs in the teaching process. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Findings and Discussion

Results

Based on the results of interviews with BIPA instructors and a literature review related to intercultural learning media, the following findings were obtained:

Table 1. Findings on Intercultural Learning Media

No	Aspect Studied	Findings	Implications for BIPA Learning
1	Need for Intercultural Learning Media	BIPA instructors experience difficulties in explaining social and cultural meanings due to limited proficiency in foreign languages (especially English).	There is a need for media that facilitates cross-cultural communication through visuals, contextual examples, and nonverbal interaction.
2	Bilingual Intercultural Videos	Videos show the daily activities of Indonesian people with subtitles in both Indonesian and English.	Help learners understand cultural context without relying heavily on translation; effectively improve cross-cultural understanding.
3	Culture Cards	Contain bilingual text and images depicting aspects of Indonesian culture such as food, traditional ceremonies, and local customs.	Can be used as conversation prompts or classroom games to promote active communication
4	Interactive Comics	Present everyday dialogues with visual representations of cultural contexts.	Help learners grasp pragmatic meanings and expressions contextually.
5	Impact on Teachers' Competence	Intercultural media make teachers more confident in explaining culture and social meanings in Indonesian.	Teachers act not only as language instructors but also as cultural mediators.
6	Implications for Media Development	Integration between linguistic and cultural aspects is needed in a unified media package.	The development of digital and contextual media is highly recommended for BIPA learning.

Discussion

The Need for Intercultural Learning Media in BIPA Instruction

The interview findings show that many BIPA instructors, particularly those with general Indonesian language teaching backgrounds, face challenges when explaining lesson content to foreign learners. The main obstacle lies in their limited proficiency in foreign languages, especially English, which is often used as an intermediary for explanation. This limitation causes classroom interaction to become rigid and teacher-centered.

Therefore, the ability to design and use effective learning media becomes an essential solution for teachers to better explain the Indonesian language and culture. Intercultural media are seen as an effective bridge that not only overcomes language barriers but also inherently introduces Indonesian culture.

These findings reinforce previous studies, which emphasize that a teacher's success in BIPA instruction depends greatly on their ability to bring meaningful cultural context into the classroom.

Forms and Characteristics of Intercultural Learning Media

The analysis identified three main forms of intercultural media applicable to BIPA instruction: bilingual videos, culture cards, and interactive comics. All these media share common characteristics; each highlights Indonesian cultural elements in everyday communication contexts while displaying both Indonesian and English languages. This bilingual format serves as a bridge for both teachers and learners to facilitate understanding. Videos emphasize visual and contextual aspects. Culture cards and interactive comics promote classroom interaction through cultural imagery and dialogue.

These media allow teachers to explain cultural meanings effectively without relying on advanced English proficiency. However, it remains important for teachers to have at least basic English knowledge to support explanations when necessary. The use of intercultural media also strengthens teachers' communicative and intercultural competence, positioning them not only as communicators but also as interpreters of Indonesian culture and social values. This approach helps promote respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding among learners from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Implications for Media Development

This study suggests that the development of intercultural learning media should integrate linguistic and cultural aspects in a unified approach. Media should not only focus on vocabulary and grammar but also convey cultural norms, ethics, and social values embedded in the Indonesian language.

Teachers are encouraged to utilize digital-based media such as short videos, interactive platforms, culture cards, and comicsto make learning more engaging and relevant. Implementing these intercultural tools can enhance BIPA teachers' cross-cultural communication competence, making classroom learning more interactive, contextual, and meaningful for learners.

BIPA Teacher Training (Technical Guidance)

In addition to media innovation, providing technical training (BIMTEK) for BIPA teachers is an effective way to foster professionalism and teaching competence. Some BIPA institutions in Indonesia have already implemented such training programs.

As reported by Bengkulu (2024), the *Technical Guidance on Teaching Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA) Based on Local Culture in Bengkulu* serves as a facilitation program for BIPA instructors in the region. Through this program, participants receive training in teaching techniques and the development of culturally integrated learning materials. This initiative not only aims to enhance teacher competence but also serves as a means of preserving and promoting Bengkulu's local culture through BIPA instruction. Therefore, similar programs are recommended for BIPA organizers across Indonesia.

Conclusion

Indonesian language teachers in BIPA programs continue to face various challenges when teaching language and culture to foreign learners. One of the main obstacles is their limited proficiency in foreign languages, particularly English, which serves as the intermediary language in the BIPA classroom. This limitation often leads to communication barriers that hinder effective teaching and learning.

To address this issue, innovation in learning media is essential. Media should not only focus on linguistic aspects but also facilitate intercultural interaction through visual, contextual, and interactive approaches.

The development of intercultural learning media is an appropriate alternative to enhance teachers' communicative and cultural awareness. Media such as intercultural videos, culture cards, and interactive comics can broaden learners' experiences while strengthening teachers' roles as cultural mediators.

Thus, intercultural learning media function not merely as instructional tools but as strategic pedagogical approaches that promote cross-cultural understanding in BIPA classrooms.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct empirical studies focusing on the design, implementation, and effectiveness testing of intercultural media in actual classroom settings. Additionally, ongoing technical training (Bimtek) programs are essential for BIPA instructors to strengthen their professional, pedagogical, and intercultural competencies.

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