

# Teaching Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers in the State University of Surabaya: Strategies and Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to discuss the challenges and strategies of teaching Indonesian language to foreign speakers in State University of Surabaya. This study emphasizes on the strategies that can be used to improve the effectiveness of Indonesian language teaching for foreign speakers, given the various challenges that arise during the teaching-learning process. The study was conducted using qualitative method and in-depth interviews as the data collection tool. The respondents in this study were 10 Indonesian language teachers for foreign speakers from various countries in Asia and Europe. The research results show that the first problem is related to the complex grammar of the Indonesian language, which is difficult for foreign speakers to grasp, and the need to adapt teaching methods to suit the learning style and needs of foreign students. The strategies to overcome these problems include simplifying the teaching of grammar through the use of practical examples, employing active learning through games and role-playing, and having student-centered teaching methods that are tailored to the needs and preferences of foreign students.*

## KEYWORDS

*Strategies and challenges; teaching method; Bahasa Indonesia; BIPA dance*

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching Indonesian language to foreign speakers has become increasingly important in the current era of globalization (Omar, 2012), (Setyawan, 2019). As the official language of Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia is one of the important languages in Southeast Asia. It is also recognized as one of the official languages in ASEAN and has become an important language in international cooperation in the region (Arifin, 2019), (Rahayu, 2020), (Kadarisman, 2020). Therefore, more and more people from various countries choose to learn Bahasa Indonesia for academic, business, or personal purposes. The growing interest in learning Bahasa Indonesia can be attributed to the increasing global importance of Indonesia as a country with a significant economy and population. Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world and has a rapidly growing economy, making it an attractive destination for businesses and investors (Firman, 2016), (Kurniasih, 2018), (Sholihah and Arifin, 2021). Many multinational companies have operations in Indonesia, and it is also a popular tourist destination. The government of Indonesia has also actively promoted the country's culture and language through various initiatives, such as the Visit Indonesia Year program and the Indonesian Language Month (badan bahasa, 2016), (Sofwan, 2019), (kemdikbud, 2021). As a result, the demand for Bahasa Indonesia

language learning has increased, not only among foreigners who want to do business or travel to Indonesia, but also among scholars who want to study the country's culture, history, and society. Over time, many Indonesian literatures have been found that also represent cultural tourism (Rahman et al, 2022).

In addition, Bahasa Indonesia is also taught in many schools and universities around the world as part of their language programs (kemdikbud, 2017), (kemlu, 2018), (kemdikbud, 2020). State University of Surabaya, as a public university in Surabaya, also has a well-known BIPA program. Surabaya, as the second-largest city in Indonesia, is a major center for business, commerce, and education, which makes learning Bahasa Indonesia is significant. Therefore, State University of Surabaya offers BIPA program with qualified Bahasa Indonesia teachers who are proficient in the language and have the necessary pedagogical skills to teach it effectively to foreign learners.

The BIPA program in the State University of Surabaya aims to provide foreign students with a comprehensive understanding of the Indonesian language and culture. The program is designed to cater to the needs of foreign students who are interested in studying the Indonesian language and culture. Despite the growing interest in learning Bahasa Indonesia among foreign students, teaching Indonesian language to foreign speakers poses various challenges (Yulianto, 2017), (Kusumaningtyas, 2020). One of the significant challenges is the complexity of the Indonesian language grammar, which can be difficult for foreign speakers to understand. To address these challenges, language teachers need to have a deep understanding of the linguistic and cultural aspects of Bahasa Indonesia and the pedagogical strategies that can effectively support language learning (Harun and Rokhim, 2017). They also need to have access to a variety of teaching materials and resources that are appropriate for different levels of proficiency and learning styles. Additionally, teaching methods need to be adapted to suit the learning style and needs of foreign students, who may have different backgrounds and language skills (Subroto, 2018), (Yusriani, 2019). Furthermore, teachers need to involve differentiated instruction, providing personalized feedback, and creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. Given the challenges in teaching Indonesian language for foreign speakers, it is important to explore effective strategies to improve the effectiveness of the teaching process. This study aims to identify the challenges and opportunities in teaching Indonesian language for foreign speakers in the State University of Surabaya and provide strategies to improve the teaching process. Through this study, it is hoped that the BIPA program in UNESA can continue to develop and enhance its teaching methods to provide a better learning experience for foreign students.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative method with in-depth interviews as the data collection tool (Arikunto, 2010), (Cresswel, 2014), (Denzin, 2018). The place of the research is in the State University of Surabaya. The respondents in this study are 10 Indonesian language teachers for foreign speakers from various countries in Asia and Europe. The interviews will be conducted face-to-face or through online video conferencing, depending on the availability and preferences of the participants. The study uses purposive sampling to select participants for the study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). The criteria for selecting participants are based on their experience in teaching Indonesian language to foreign speakers and their availability to participate in the study. The sample size is determined based on data saturation, which means that data collection will continue until no new themes or insights emerge from the data. The data collected from the interviews then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used

qualitative research method for identifying and analyzing patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data. The process of thematic analysis involves coding, categorizing, and interpreting the data to identify recurring patterns and themes (Thomas, 2006), (Nowell et.al, 2017). The study also use triangulation to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected. Triangulation involves using multiple data sources or methods to confirm the findings of the study (Morse, 2015). In addition to in-depth interviews, the study may also collect data from document analysis and classroom observations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strategies and challenges in teaching Indonesian language to foreign speakers.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the interview and observation, the study found that there are several challenges in teaching Indonesian language for foreign speakers at State University of Surabaya. The challenges identified included complex grammar of Indonesian language, difficulty in pronunciation, and adapting teaching methods to suit the learning style and needs of foreign students. The teachers that had been interviewed claim that the differences on the grammar of Indonesian compared to English and other European languages make it difficult for foreign students to learn. An example of the complex grammar in Indonesian language is its system of affixation. Indonesian has a highly productive system of prefixes, suffixes, and infixes, which can change the meaning of a root word or indicate aspects of time, manner, or causation. For instance, the root word "kerja" means work, but when combined with the prefix "ber-" it becomes "bekerja" which means working, while the prefix "ter-" indicates an accidental or unintended action, as in "terlupa" which means forgot. The use of infixes, such as "me-" and "-kan", can also change the meaning of a word, such as "baca" which means read, and "membaca" which means to read. This complex system of affixation can be challenging for foreign students to grasp, especially those who come from languages that do not have a similar system. Indonesian language also does not use grammatical gender, which can be difficult for foreign students who are accustomed to distinguishing between masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns. In Indonesian language, unlike many other languages, there are no gendered pronouns or articles to indicate the gender of the speaker or the subject being referred to. This means that the same word can be used to refer to a person, object, or idea regardless of its gender. This can be confusing for foreign students who are used to distinguishing between masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns in their native languages. For example, in English, the word "he" is used to refer to a male person or animal, while "she" is used for females. However, in Indonesian, the word "dia" is used for both male and female subjects. This lack of grammatical gender in Indonesian bring another difficulty for foreign students to master the language's grammar rules, and can result in errors in speaking and writing.

To overcome the problems, The teachers employed several strategies during the learning process. that can be employed to simplify the teaching of Indonesian grammar for foreign students. First, the teachers simplify complex grammar rules by breaking them down into smaller, more manageable parts. For example, when teaching the plural form of nouns, the teacher explain that the suffix "-s" is added to most English nouns to make them plural, but in Indonesian, the plural form is formed differently for different types of nouns. Then teachers provide clear examples to illustrate this, for example, when teaching the use of possessive pronouns, the teacher provide examples such as "rumah saya" (my house), "mobil kamu" (your car), and "sepatu mereka" (their shoes) to demonstrate the different possessive pronouns. The next stage is using visual aids such as charts, diagrams, and pictures to help students understand grammar concepts. For example, when teaching the

Indonesian verb system, the teacher can use a chart to show the different verb forms and their tenses. And the last part is encouraging practice; teachers encourage students to practice using grammar rules in different contexts. For example, students can practice using the correct plural form of nouns in sentences, or practice using possessive pronouns in conversations. After the implementation of these strategies in the BIPA classroom, foreign students can better comprehend Indonesian grammar and apply it in simple sentences or paragraphs, making them less likely to make mistakes when speaking or writing in Indonesian.

Another challenge that was identified during the teaching process was difficulty in pronunciation. Indonesian language has many sounds that are not found in other languages, which makes it difficult for foreign speakers to pronounce words correctly. For example, the "ng" sound, the "ny" sound, and the "dh" sound. These sounds can be difficult for foreign students to master, and it may take some time and practice for them to be able to pronounce them correctly. Therefore, when the students pronounce the word "nyaman" (which means comfortable) contains the "ny" sound, which is not commonly found in English or other European languages. Foreign students may struggle to produce this sound correctly, which can affect their ability to communicate effectively in Indonesian. Another example is the word "jangan" (which means "do not"), which contains the "ng" sound at the beginning of the word or the word "cuci" (which means to wash), which contains the "c" and "c" sounds, which are pronounced differently in Indonesian compared to English. In Indonesian, the "c" sound is pronounced as "ch" and the "c" sound is pronounced as "ts". These sounds bring difficulty for BIPA students, especially when speaking with native speakers who may not be able to understand them due to their pronunciation. To address this challenge, the BIPA teachers at State University of Surabaya implemented various strategies such as providing pronunciation drills, using visual aids, and encouraging students to listen to native speakers. Additionally, teachers used a communicative approach in teaching, which focused on providing opportunities for students to practice their speaking skills in real-life situations. As a result, foreign students were able to improve their pronunciation and communicate more effectively in Indonesian language.

The last problem appeared is related to different ways of learning and education systems. Based on the observation, the study found that adapting teaching methods to suit the learning style and needs of foreign students is crucial in improving the effectiveness of Indonesian language teaching. Foreign students may come from a different educational background and may have different learning styles compared to the Indonesian learning system environment. This can affect their ability to understand the teaching methods used in the Indonesian language classroom. For example, foreign students may be used to a more individualistic learning approach, while the Indonesian learning system environment may emphasize more on group learning activities. Furthermore, the Indonesian language teaching materials used in the classroom may not always be culturally relevant to foreign students, which can make it difficult for them to engage in the learning process. For instance, examples and references used in the teaching materials may be unfamiliar to foreign students and not relevant to their cultural backgrounds. Therefore, teachers of Indonesian language for foreign speakers at State University of Surabaya need to be aware of these differences and adapt their teaching methods and materials to suit the learning style and needs of foreign students. This can include incorporating more individualistic learning activities, using culturally relevant examples and references, and providing additional support and guidance for foreign students who may be struggling with the language or cultural differences. During the teaching-learning process, teachers also propose student-centered teaching method that are tailored to the needs and preferences of

foreign students. This strategy is quite effective for addressing this challenge. By adapting teaching methods to suit the learning style and needs of foreign students, teachers can help to create a more engaging and effective learning environment, and help students to achieve their language learning goals more efficiently.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teaching Indonesian language for foreign speakers in the State University of Surabaya comes with its own set of challenges and opportunities. The study has identified the challenges of teaching Indonesian grammar, adapting teaching methods to foreign students' learning styles, and tailoring teaching methods to suit their needs and preferences. However, the study also highlights the opportunities for growth and development in the BIPA program, especially with the increasing demand for Bahasa Indonesia language learning in the era of globalization. The strategies proposed in this study, such as simplifying grammar through practical examples, using active learning methods, and adopting student-centered teaching approaches, can be used to improve the effectiveness of Indonesian language teaching for foreign speakers. Furthermore, the BIPA program in the State University of Surabaya is well-positioned to take advantage of the increasing demand for Bahasa Indonesia language learning, given its qualified teachers and strong reputation in the field. Overall, the findings of this study can inform the development of effective strategies to enhance the teaching of Indonesian language for foreign speakers in the State University of Surabaya, as well as in other institutions offering BIPA programs. The importance of Bahasa Indonesia as a language of communication and cultural exchange in Southeast Asia and beyond, makes it imperative to continuously improve the quality of Indonesian language teaching for foreign speakers, to meet the needs and demands of a globalized world.

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