



Thai Students Enthusiasm in Learning Indonesian at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

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Abstract: Indonesian was originally Malay which was agreed at the 1928 youth congress as a unified language for the Indonesian nation. The presence of foreign students, especially Thais, is an attraction for researchers to conduct research on Thai students' enthusiasm for learning Indonesian. This research aims to find out how enthusiastic Thai students are in learning Indonesian. The research method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive method with data sources obtained through observation and interviews. The results of this research are, 1) Immersion Program in BIPA Learning at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, 2) Learning BIPA by Role Playing, 3) Folklore (Floklore) in BIPA Learning at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, and 4) Student Communication Accommodation Thailand at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

Keywords: enthusiasm, learning Indonesian, BIPA, Thailand.

▪ INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a big country in terms of its territory, natural resources, population, and cultural variants. Its area includes 17,000 islands with diverse natural resources. This makes Indonesia have a strategic position in international relations (Sammeng in (Suyitno, 2010)). This strategic position makes the Indonesian language attractive to learn so that the international community is able to communicate well with officials, colleagues, employees, and the Indonesian people. Therefore, the demand for Indonesian services for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) is increasing, both domestically and abroad.

Indonesian was originally a Malay language that was agreed upon at the 1928 youth congress as the language of unity for the Indonesian nation. Collins, a professor of Ethnic Studies, stated that Malay is an international language because it is spoken by millions of people in Kalimantan, Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, Java, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Collins, 2014). Badudu and Moeliono stated that the Indonesian language comes from the Malay language by adopting various local and international languages (Moeliono, 1989; Badudu, 1988). Susanto and Rofiuddin showed evidence that Indonesian was studied at 13 universities in the USA and 30 universities in Australia. ASEAN countries such as China, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, and China also teach Indonesian in schools. Based on this reality, Susanto and Rofiuddin (2014) predict that in the near future, Indonesian will be promoted as the official language of ASEAN (Susanto, Gatut and Rofiuddin, 2015).

Now, more and more countries are teaching Indonesian in their universities. Among these countries are Australia, Thailand, and Egypt. In Thailand, Walailak University, especially the faculty of Asian Studies, teaches Indonesian in four semesters. To make students master Indonesian better, the faculty programs in country for four months (1

semester) at the State University of Malang, Indonesia. In Australia, Indonesian is taught from elementary school to university. The last is Egypt which a few years ago opened a BIPA class at Canal Suez University, since last year, Al-Azhar University has also opened an Indonesian language department. In addition, there are several campuses in Indonesia that are adequate for foreign students to study BIPA, one of which is at IAIN Surakarta (now called UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta). BIPA at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta was established on the basis of the Decree of the Rector of Raden Mas Said Surakarta Number 95 of 2017 concerning the Establishment of the BIPA Program at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta (Hasanah, 2022). This study aims to find out how enthusiastic Thai students are to learn Indonesian.

▪ **METHOD**

Participants

This study focused on Thai students enrolled in the Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. These students predominantly came from the southern provinces of Thailand, including Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun regions notable for their large Muslim communities. The participants varied in their experience, as they had joined the program at different times since its establishment in 2014. A group of Thai students enrolled at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung participated in the study. Thai students have participated in various capacities, making the program a key initiative for fostering Indonesian language skills among foreign learners. The study focused on students actively involved in the BIPA program during the research period.

Research Design and Procedures

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the enthusiasm of Thai students in learning Indonesian. Data collection methods included classroom observations, extracurricular activity monitoring, and semi-structured interviews with both students and their instructors. Observations focused on student engagement, role-playing activities, and immersion experiences. Interviews, conducted in a conversational style, encouraged participants to freely discuss their motivations, challenges, and cultural adjustments. Ethical protocols, such as securing informed consent and ensuring participant confidentiality, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

Instruments

The primary tools used in this study included observation sheets, interview guides, and audio recording devices. Observation sheets were used to document the frequency and quality of student participation in both classroom activities and extracurricular events. The interview guide comprised open-ended questions designed to explore students' attitudes toward the BIPA program, their cultural adjustment processes, and their overall enthusiasm for learning Indonesian. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and to support a thorough thematic analysis. Additionally, field notes were taken during observations and interviews to capture non-verbal cues and contextual nuances.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which involves three key steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Initially,

the data collected from observations, interviews, and field notes were reviewed and organized to identify recurring themes and patterns. This process involved coding the data into categories such as student engagement levels, cultural adaptation strategies, and language learning challenges. The coded data were then presented in matrices and thematic maps to visualize trends and relationships. Finally, the findings were interpreted in light of existing literature on language acquisition and cross-cultural adaptation. To enhance the reliability and validity of the results, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing data from multiple sources, including students, teachers, and field observations.

▪ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Administratively, the kingdom of Thailand is divided into 76 *Changwat* (provinces). The 76 provinces are grouped into 5 regions, namely Northern Thailand, Eastern Thailand, Southern Thailand, Northeast Thailand, and Central Thailand. Thai students studying at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung come from Southern Thailand. The province of Southern Thailand has 14 cities, namely Chumphon, Krabi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Narathiwat, Patani, Phang Nga, Phattalung, Phuket, Ranong, Satun, Songkhla, Surat Thani, Trang, Yala. Of the 14 cities in Southern Thailand, there are 4 cities that have a majority Muslim population, namely Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun. The number of Muslims in Thailand is around 3 million people and 710,906 people are Malay Muslims. Patani is the name of the capital city of the province which is directly adjacent to Malaysia. Some sources say that the name Patani comes from the Malay language which means "panta" (Anonim, 2017).

Since 2013 until now, there are at least 180 students from Thailand who have studied at IAIN Tulungagung which is now UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. The students are spread across various departments according to the interests of each student. In fact, not a few students from Thailand continue their studies to the Strata two (S2) level at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung (Source, IAIN Tulungagung). In general, Thai students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung have enthusiasm in learning Indonesian, even some students choose the Indonesian Tadris major. How and what are the BIPA learning programs at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, explained below.

Immersion Program in BIPA Learning at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

Immersion merupakan metode belajar Bahasa kedua (L2) yang menggunakan Bahasa target as a medium in the learning process. Because this program is widely used in language learning, it is called language immersion. Language immersion programs were first conducted in Canada in the 1960s. In the 80s, this program was widely carried out in America. Now, immersion programs are widely practiced by language teachers around the world.

So far, UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung has conducted an immersion program in BIPA learning for Thai students. Since 2014, BIPA learning at IAIN Tulungagung has been carried out with an immersion program by learning in the classroom using an introduction to Indonesian, outside the classroom with BIPA volunteer students, and after two months, they are gathered by Indonesian students to attend lectures in class.

Based on the age of the students, immersion at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung can be categorized as adult immersion. The average age of students is 19 years old. Judging from the aspect of using the language of instruction, language immersion at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung is included in complete immersion or full immersion. In full immersion, lecturers teach Indonesian with an introduction to Indonesian because none of the lecturers are able to communicate in Siamese. In a situation like this, students try to understand the explanation delivered by the lecturer. This is in line with the basic concept that in the immersion program, students are fully included in the community of the language users who are learning.

Learning BIPA by Role Playing

Language is closely related to culture. The two are one unit. Therefore, it is impossible for a lecturer to teach a language without including his culture. The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted (Leveridge, 2008). Language is rooted in culture and culture is a reflection of the life of its people that has been passed down from generation to generation. In short, teaching a Language is also teaching culture.

One of the learning materials is socio-drama acting. Socio-drama is a fictional essay about social life as a reflection of the culture of its society. Role playing is done so that students dare to speak in Indonesian and be able to understand Indonesian culture. Many folklore can be taught through role-playing so that students learn Indonesian by directly practicing playing the role of one of the characters in the story. Folklore such as Malin Kundang, Sangkuriang, Joko Budheg, can be used to teach speaking skills through role-playing.

Because UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung is an Islamic campus and Thai students who study here are also Muslims, the role-playing method is usually directed to stories in Islamic history, such as Bilal bin Rabbah, Islam Umar bin Khattab, Ibrahim and Ismail's struggle, and so on. Thus, BIPA learning at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung is more based on Islamic studies.

Folklore in BIPA Learning at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

One of the factors for the success of learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) is the selection of learning materials. Folklore is often an option in learning speaking and writing skills. According to Prasetyo, the selection of BIPA teaching materials can motivate students to learn (Prasetyo, 2015). BIPA learning needs to choose teaching materials with varied topics so that it can increase the interest of BIPA students and not feel bored. Teaching materials must adjust to the level of BIPA students. Because the teaching materials are needed by BIPA students, depending on the learning needs of foreign students (Kusmiatun, 2018). Providing teaching materials that are in accordance with needs will facilitate the teaching of BIPA (Bahtiar and Ediyono, 2017). Therefore, BIPA learning must be student-centered, so the selection of material must be in accordance with the needs of students.

The use of folklore as a BIPA learning material not only increases BIPA students' understanding of the values contained in the story, but also is able to improve Indonesian understanding. The use of folklore in learning received a good, fun, and quick response to enrich students' vocabulary. BIPA learning is required to consider aspects of cultural understanding. Suyitno (2003) encouraged BIPA teachers not to forget the cultural aspect of language. According to him, learning Indonesian is also learning Indonesian culture.

According to him, language and culture are an inseparable unit, so that the success of learning a foreign language will also be influenced by how far cultural elements from the target language can be integrated in learning (Suyitno, 2003). Research on the use of folklore in BIPA learning was also carried out with the title "Acquisition of Indonesian Language and Culture of Foreign Speakers through Folklore". The research aims to explain the effectiveness of using teaching materials in the form of folklore for foreign Indonesian speakers. This seeks to gain knowledge about language and culture (Noviana, 2018).

A similar study was also studied with the title "Fairy Tales as Indonesian Teaching Materials for Foreign Speakers (BIPA)". The research aims to facilitate learning, the fairy tales are modified according to the needs and levels of students. The use of fairy tales is to get to know each other's various cultures. In addition, the use of folklore also gives an impression in BIPA learning. Fairy tales as Indonesian Teaching Materials for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) are able to improve language skills, get to know each other's various cultures, fluent in Indonesian, and get to know Indonesian culture up close (Bahtiar and Ediyono, 2017).

Folklore develops in life in society. Folklore is also inseparable from society. Folklore is an oral literature that can be seen as art and cultural products. Therefore, the selection of teaching materials that are integrated with cultural values is very necessary. This will help foreign students to understand Indonesian culture and language. Nurgiyantoro (2005: 172) provides several characteristics of folklore, namely 1) myth is an old story that is often associated with gods or supernatural powers, 2) legend is a magical story that is often associated with real characters, events, and places, 3) fables are a form of story that features animals as the characters of the story, and 4) fairy tales are folktales related to fantasy or imagination. Therefore, folklore can be used as a comprehensive, innovative, and integrative BIPA teaching material (Nurgiyantoro, 2005). Folklore is a story that originates from the social life of the local community. The use of folklore in BIPA learning is taught how to tell in written form. Folklore can be transformed into any form, for example in picture stories, or storytelling as an appreciative learning model (Setiartin R., 2016).

Accommodation for Thai Student Communication at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

Cultural differences between Indonesian students and Thai students make Thai students experience cultural shock. To overcome the culture shock, Thai students carry out communication accommodation with Indonesian students so that they feel comfortable and can be accepted by Indonesian students. So far, I have seen Thai students do communication accommodations with events, namely convergence and divergence. Convergence is carried out at three levels, namely pre-convergence, convergence process, and post-convergence. Meanwhile, divergence is carried out by two events, namely verbal and non-verbal (Jazeri and Nurhayati, 2019).

The more advanced a society is, the wider their mobility and association. At times like this, there is social contact, cultural contact, and language contact. When people from different societies, cultures, and languages meet in an event, what is known as cross-cultural communication occurs (Mughtar, Koswara and Setiaman, 2019). In communication accommodation, the smaller the cultural difference, the easier it is for accommodation to occur. On the other hand, the further cultural differences go, the more difficult the communication accommodation process. In order for intercultural

communication to run smoothly and there are no misunderstandings, accommodation needs to be carried out. In this case, two people who come from different cultures, must be willing to accept each other's differences by adapting to each other so that there is no misunderstanding. The main purpose of communication accommodation is the establishment of peaceful and stable communication (Sentosa, 2015).

Communication accommodation first appeared in the 70s when people of different cultures had social contact. In order for each community to communicate effectively, they adapt to each other. At that time, the theory of communication accommodation was used to explain sociolinguistic phenomena. Thus, the two different social groups can accept each other (Coupland and Giles, 1988; White et al., 1993; Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 2010). Communication accommodation was once carried out by the guardians who preached Islam in the archipelago which at that time was still strongly influenced by Hindu and Buddhist culture. The guardians carry out communication accommodations with the people of the archipelago by making several cultural adaptations. In this way, Islamic da'wah in the archipelago can be well received without conflict. Islamization of the archipelago runs peacefully without rejection (Syam, 2019)

Konvergensi

Convergence is a person's cultural adaptation to the new culture of a new society (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 2010). Convergence is distinguished into three stages, namely pre-convergence, convergence process, and post-convergence. In the first stage, Thai students adapt to the new culture at IAIN Tulungagung. At this stage they try to learn and use short sentences in the introduction, for example, “*Apa kabar?*” [How are you?], “*Siapa namamu*” [What is your name?], or “*Dari mana asalmu*” [Where do you come from?].

[1] “...I am happy here because I can learn Indonesian and Javanese. I used to count one to ten in Javanese. *Siji, loro, telu, e papat, e lima, nenem, pitu, wolu, sanga, terus e sepuluh* (Interview with Hadi Nuyeim and Surayut).

In addition to Bahasa, Thai students also adapt to several typical Tulungagung foods, such as pecel, tofu, tempeh, soto, meatballs, chicken noodles, and others. Thai students usually have breakfast with grouper rice, but in Tulungagung they adapt to breakfast with pecel rice.

[3] I was invited to the campus canteen by an Indonesian friend, I was confused about what to eat, because I didn't like the food here. I can't (like) eat tempeh and tofu. But for a long time I liked to eat tempeh. (Interview with Najwa). At the accommodation process stage, Thai students take part in BIPA learning organized by the campus for 2-3 months.

[4] To be able to speak Indonesian quickly, we took Indonesian lessons under the care of Mr. Jazeri. We are invited to get to know Indonesia by going to Prigi beach. (Interview with Layin).

In the post-convergence period, Thai students began to dare to unite with Indonesian students to attend lectures in their chosen majors. They also actively participate in extra-campus activities such as futsal, volleyball, football, and nature lovers.

[6] I've been here for two years. In the early days, I did have difficulty communicating with Indonesian friends. Now I have a lot of Indonesian friends. Pattani students are often invited to play football, climb mountains, and take tourist roads to

Gemah beach. Every year Pattani students increase to now around a hundred. I feel like I am in my own village. (Interview with Laila Salaeh).

Divergensi

Divergence is a way for a person to communicate by adapting, but still holding fast to their cultural identity (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 2010). Divergences carried out by Thai students at IAIN Tulungagung can be categorized into verbal divergence and non-verbal divergence). Verbal divergence is usually done when they communicate with fellow Thai students. They rented 17 houses, each of which was inhabited by 8-17 students. They sometimes speak Malay and Siamese. Here are some examples of the Malay language used among them.

<i>Gi ma na?</i>	<i>Pergi ke mana?</i>	Where are you going?
<i>Pehe tak?</i>	<i>Paham gak?</i>	Do you understand?
<i>Make ike</i>	<i>Makan ikan</i>	Eating fish

Non-Verbal Divergence

Non-verbal divergences carried out by Thai students at IAIN Tulungagung include food, clothing, and socializing. They keep their typical food because it can make them feel like they are in *kampung sendiri*.

[7] Friends can't eat Indonesian food, we cook ourselves in rented houses in turn. We cooked tomyam, som tam, kensum that we usually eat in Pattani. We felt at home. In addition, we are more economical. (Interview with Wan Ahmad). In addition to food, they also maintain their Muslim identity with clothes that are more sharia than Indonesian students.

[8] We feel the need to maintain our clothing culture. We have a rule on Monday to wear organizational uniforms (*baju kurung* made of typical Tulungagung batik). In addition, we women wear *baju kurung* with a top below the knee and a wider hijab. Indonesian friends say hijab is shari'i. For women, it is not allowed to wear pants, except when exercising wearing sports pants. (Interview with Siti Kholiyoh Buerahang).

▪ CONCLUSION

Thai students who study at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung come from the Southern Thailand region, namely Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkla. There were several students from Setun, Krabi, and Pattalung. Since 2013, there have been at least 180 Thai students studying at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. Since 2014, BIPA learning at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung has been carried out with an immersion program by learning in the classroom using an introduction to Indonesian, outside the classroom with BIPA volunteer students, and after two months, they are gathered by Indonesian students to attend lectures in class. In addition, on semester holidays, a language traveling program is usually held). In addition to immersion and language tourism, BIPA learning at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung also uses folklore to increase BIPA students' understanding of the values of local wisdom contained in stories. Through people's stories, students are also able to improve their understanding of Indonesian and their writing and speaking skills. The use of folklore in BIPA learning received a good and pleasant response. Communication accommodation for Thai students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung is carried out in two ways, namely convergence and divergence. Convergence is carried out in three stages, namely pre-convergence, convergence process, and post-convergence. Meanwhile, divergence is

carried out by events, namely language divergence and divergence of food, clothing, and association.

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