

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN CHILDREN'S BIPA LEARNING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN JAKARTA INDONESIA KOREAN SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the challenges and strategies for learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) in Jakarta Indonesia Korean School (JKS), an international school based on the Korean curriculum whose participants are linguistically and culturally homogeneous. The main challenges in learning BIPA in JKS include minimal interaction in Indonesian outside the classroom, the dominance of Korean language use in students' daily lives, and low learning motivation due to the position of BIPA subjects which are not included in the Korean core curriculum. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach through literature studies, analysis of learning contexts, and reflection on teaching practices. The results show that the thematic-contextual approach is an effective and relevant strategy to overcome these challenges. This strategy includes the application of themes that are close to children's lives, simple project activities, contextual dialogues, role plays, Indonesian language habits in classroom routines, and the use of concrete media such as pictures and real objects. This approach allows students to understand the language in a real context, while building their confidence in using Indonesian. These findings are expected to be a reference for BIPA teachers in designing learning that is appropriate to the conditions of students in homogeneous international schools.

Keywords: *BIPA Children, International School, Korean Curriculum, Thematic-Contextual Learning, Homogeneous Environment, Adaptive Strategy*

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, language proficiency is something that cannot be avoided. Because in modern society, language proficiency is important. In its development, Indonesian plays a significant role. This can be seen from the increasing interest of other nations in learning Indonesian. The BIPA learning program in Indonesia has experienced very rapid development. According to the head of the language development and fostering agency, Ministry of Education and Culture, Mahsun, he said that currently there are at least 45 countries participating in BIPA, with 174 BIPA implementation locations spread across various countries and the most in Australia. Globalization has encouraged increased interaction across countries, cultures, and languages, making BIPA a strategic instrument in international diplomacy and education. A study by Setyaningsih and Mulyati (2024) shows that BIPA programs, such as the Learning Journey in Singapore, are able to improve the speaking skills and cultural understanding of participants from various countries. In addition, data from Ciputra University (2023) recorded around 23,754 BIPA learners from 90 countries, which was triggered by the support of digital technology and increased global interest in Indonesian. The government's systematic efforts to internationalize BIPA have also succeeded through cultural collaboration, strengthening teaching materials, and teacher training, as described by Astuti Simanullang et al. (2024). The implication is that many foreign educational institutions and universities have begun to develop BIPA programs, as part of global orientation and cultural diplomacy. This situation shows that the role of Bahasa Indonesia in international education is increasingly evident, especially in the context of cultural diplomacy and the need for cross-country communication. Jakarta Indonesia Korean School (JKS) is an official overseas school established by the Korean community in Indonesia and recognized by the South Korean Ministry of Education. As an international school, JKS implements the Korean national curriculum from elementary to secondary education, with adjustments to the local Indonesian context. The main languages of instruction used in the learning process are Korean and English, in accordance with Korean national education standards that emphasize

strengthening literacy and numeracy in the mother tongue and international languages. As the only Korean school that has an operational permit from the Indonesian government, JIKS has a very strategic dual function: first, as an institution that preserves and develops Korean national identity through formal education; second, as a cultural bridge between Korea and Indonesia. This is in line with the role of international schools based on the Korean national curriculum abroad which not only deliver academic materials, but also Korean cultural values, as reflected in the teaching of Hongik Ingan at JIKS. However, this role poses its own challenges, especially because Indonesian as an environmental language is not included in the core subjects of the Korean national curriculum. Therefore, BIPA learning is often positioned as an additional subject, resulting in low motivation and students' understanding of its use.

Furthermore, the homogeneity of students who are all ethnic and speak Korean reinforces the dominance of the mother tongue, even outside of class hours. Comparative studies of the South Korean and Indonesian curricula (Yuliwinarti et al., 2023; Sukma et al., 2024) highlight that the Korean curriculum, which is strong in mother tongue literacy and an official foreign language (English), has not explicitly accommodated local languages when implemented in Indonesia. As a result, the natural space for spontaneous Indonesian language training is minimal, making BIPA learning at JIKS tend to be academic and limited in its socio-cultural context. Therefore, JIKS provides a real picture of the importance of developing BIPA teaching strategies that are in accordance with foreign curricula but remain relevant to the needs of the local environment. It needs to be specifically designed by taking into account the formal structure of the Korean curriculum, student needs, and socio-cultural dynamics in a homogeneous international school environment like this. The existence of Indonesian language subjects in Cooperative Education Unit (SPK) schools has been officially regulated through Permendikbud Number 31 of 2014 article 11, which requires the SPK curriculum to include Indonesian language subjects for both Indonesian and foreign students. In practice, Indonesian language teaching in SPK is carried out within the framework of BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) learning, due to the background of students who are foreign citizens with the dominant use of their mother tongue and limited communication using Indonesian. This is in line with the findings of Andriyanto et al. (2021) that the BIPA program in SPK faces the challenge of diverse language abilities and low student motivation, so the material needs to be adjusted creatively and contextually. Kii et al. (2025) also emphasized the importance of implementing joyful learning and project-based learning as strategies to overcome linguistic barriers and increase active student participation.

The implementation of these provisions at the Jakarta Indonesia Korean School (JIKS) shows its own complexity. Although administratively JIKS fulfills the obligation to organize Indonesian language subjects, the position of Indonesian in the Korean national curriculum structure which is the main reference at the school tends to be complementary and not oriented towards Korean national academic assessments. This condition has an impact on the low urgency felt by students and parents towards learning Indonesian, especially because the language does not have an evaluative function in the Korean education system. In the context of JIKS whose students are linguistically homogeneous, the dominance of Korean throughout the school environment causes BIPA learning to take place in isolation and is limited to the classroom. A study by Nurhuda et al. (2022) emphasized that to increase the effectiveness of BIPA learning in a homogeneous environment, the approach used must be contextual, interactive, and integrated with students' daily lives as well as cross-cultural activities involving the local community. Thus, the implementation of BIPA in SPK is not only aimed at fulfilling national regulations, but also demands an inclusive pedagogical approach that is relevant to the needs of students in international schools such as JIKS. Teaching strategies that are oriented towards experience, projects, and cross-cultural interactions are solutions that need to be continuously developed so that learning Indonesian is not only an administrative symbol, but also a means of meaningful cross-cultural integration and understanding.

Student homogeneity in BIPA learning in the Cooperation Education Unit (SPK) refers to the extent to which the characteristics are similar in terms of language, culture, and learning experiences that students have. This level of homogeneity greatly influences the effectiveness of learning strategies. If students have uniform language skills and cultural backgrounds, teachers can use a general approach without much individual adaptation. In contrast, diverse classes require a more personalized approach, such as differentiated or small group-based learning to meet the unique needs of each individual. Research by Andriyanto et al. (2021) found that in SPK with homogeneous students, motivation to learn Indonesian tends to be even, but spontaneous interaction in Indonesian is minimal due to the strong dominance of the mother tongue. Meanwhile, Sari's study (2023) showed that the application of the translanguaging method in BIPA classes where the majority of students speak Korean is effective in increasing students' speaking courage, but this strategy is less effective if the teacher does not adapt the cultural content and local context. In addition, a systematic review by eJournal Pendidikan (2024) concluded that a combination of a

communicative approach, technology media, and direct interaction with native speakers was most successful in improving Indonesian language skills, especially in homogeneous classes. Thus, understanding the characteristics of student homogeneity becomes a determinant in designing BIPA learning strategies. In schools such as JIKS whose students are linguistically homogeneous, an effective approach seems to be through translanguaging, cultural integration, and the use of contextual teaching materials that are relevant to students' lives to create opportunities to practice Indonesian naturally and meaningfully. In line with Smaldino et al. (2011), in learning often two types of strategies are needed: teacher-centered and learner-centered. Teacher-centered strategies emphasize more on delivering material directly and in a structured manner, while learner-centered strategies provide space for exploration, active participation, and adjustment to individual needs. This article focuses on the challenges and strategies of BIPA learning for child learners in SPK, which requires a balance between the two approaches.

Research by Hartini et al. (2021) in the context of elementary school learning shows that the individual learning-centered approach improves students' understanding because it adapts to each individual's learning style and uniqueness. On the other hand, Sari & Yuliana (2024) emphasize that project-based and active learning strategies that are learner-centered are very effective in BIPA education because they are able to foster children's involvement and motivation as a whole. Kii et al. (2025) also reinforce this, stating that the combination of structured presentation of material (teacher-centered) and interactive activities, such as language games and creative projects, results in significant improvements in BIPA students' language skills and self-confidence. Thus, in the SPK environment with children as learners, especially in schools such as JIKS, the ideal BIPA learning approach combines direct teaching strategies (teacher-centered) to build basic language foundations such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and simple sentence structures, with participatory learning (learner-centered) that encourages students to use Indonesian actively in meaningful contexts. This participatory approach includes activities such as thematic dialogues, role-playing, simple projects, and real-life situation-based interactions that are relevant to children's daily lives. This combination of strategies not only allows for gradual and structured language acquisition, but also provides space for creativity, speaking courage, and students' emotional involvement in the learning process. This model is in line with the pedagogical framework proposed by Smaldino et al. (2011), which emphasizes the need for a balance between teacher instructional control and active student participation. In the context of BIPA learning in a homogeneous international school such as JIKS, this combination has also proven successful in a number of teaching practices that are adaptive to student characteristics and foreign curriculum structures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. BIPA Learning Concept for Children

Learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) for children has different characteristics from learning for teenagers or adults. Children are at the stage of concrete cognitive development, so the materials used need to be arranged thematically, contextually, and packaged with a fun approach. According to Maharani and Sudarsono (2022), BIPA learning for children that is linked to everyday experiences is easier to understand and more effective in building vocabulary and basic sentence structures. In addition, visual and kinesthetic approaches are very helpful because children tend to learn through observation and direct activities. Therefore, teachers need to design learning that not only emphasizes memorization, but also the active involvement of students emotionally and socially.

2. Challenges of BIPA Learning in SPK

Cooperative Education Unit (SPK) schools face their own challenges in BIPA learning, especially because of the background of students who come from foreign countries and social environments that do not support the use of Indonesian naturally. Andriyanto et al. (2021) stated that the main challenges include low student motivation, limited teaching time, and the assumption that Indonesian is not an important subject. In schools like JIKS, all students are native Korean speakers, which strengthens the use of the mother tongue both inside and outside the classroom. This homogeneity results in low communicative exposure to Indonesian, so learning strategies need to be adjusted so that they can still present the language in a real and interesting context for children.

3. Korean National Curriculum and Foreign Language Position

The Korean national curriculum at the elementary school level focuses on mastery of the mother tongue (Korean) and international languages such as English. The local language of the country where students live, such as Indonesian in JIKS, is not included in the core curriculum structure. This has an impact on the position of Indonesian which tends to be an additional subject, without strong evaluative pressure. Yuliwinarti et al. (2023) in their study stated that the absence of local language integration in the Korean curriculum affects students' interests

and motivation, and weakens the role of Indonesian as a means of cross-cultural communication in the school environment.

4. Contextual Learning and Projects in Language Teaching

To address these challenges, various learning approaches have been developed, one of which is thematic-contextual and project-based learning. Context-based learning encourages students to understand language through experience and direct involvement with their environment. According to Pratiwi and Sueca (2023), this learning model makes it easier for children to understand the contents of the material and increases their confidence in speaking. Activities such as making mini books, drawing while describing, or simple role-play can be effective means of applying language in real life. This approach also allows teachers to link local Indonesian cultural values into learning activities, so that language learning is inseparable from its social and cultural meaning.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to describe in detail the challenges and strategies of learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) children at the Jakarta International Korean School (JKS). The selection of this approach is based on the purpose of the study which focuses on an in-depth understanding of field conditions, not on statistical calculations or hypothesis testing. The data in this study were obtained through literature review, direct observation during the learning process, and reflection of the author's teaching experience as a BIPA teacher in an international school environment. Observations were carried out in a participatory manner, namely by recording the dynamics of learning in the classroom, student responses, and teaching strategies used in various learning themes. In addition, the author also conducted document analysis, such as lesson syllabus, student worksheets, and learning outcome records, to see the suitability between the learning design and its implementation in the field. Several scientific journal references and regulations such as Permendikbud No. 31 of 2014 were also used as references in strengthening the basis of the analysis. The results of the analysis are then presented in the form of a narrative description, by combining field data and theoretical references to formulate realistic and contextual learning strategies according to the needs of BIPA students at SPK, especially in linguistically homogeneous environments such as JKS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Challenges of Learning BIPA for Children in Jakarta Indonesia Korean School

1. Dominance of Korean in Daily Life

The school and home environment of JKS students is dominated by Korean, so the spontaneity of using Indonesian is very low. This is in line with the findings of Andriyanto et al. (2021) that in BIPA classes at SPK, the dominance of the mother tongue hinders interaction in Indonesian. In fact, according to Canale & Swain (1980), effective language proficiency should be reflected in students' ability to use it in everyday situations.

2. BIPA as an additional subject without formal assessment

Since there is no influence on academic grades in the Korean curriculum structure, students and parents view BIPA as a complementary commodity without high urgency. Kii et al. (2025) noted that strategies to build this motivation must start from convincing stakeholders that BIPA has long-term relevance. This supports the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) which states that intrinsic motivation grows if students see direct usefulness and relevance to personal values and goals.

3. Limitations of Non-Contextual and Less Interactive Material

BIPA materials are often rearranged from regular textbooks without cultural components and interactive activities. In fact, Sari & Yuliana (2023) and Istiana & Nurlina (2024) show that integrating local culture through constructivist methods and utilizing traditional media improves the quality of learning.

4. Characteristics of Elementary School Age Children Who Require Active Stimulation

Based on Piaget (1971) and the cognitive development of elementary school children, BIPA materials must be in the form of concrete, multisensory, and thematic activities. Andriyanto et al. (2021) emphasized that children need fun learning challenges, such as joy-full learning and project-based learning. Without it, students' attention and motivation quickly decline.

B. BIPA Learning Strategy for Children in Jakarta Indonesia Korean School

In the context of homogeneous students and minimal use of Indonesian outside the classroom, the BIPA learning strategy at JIKS must be realistic, flexible, and in accordance with the world of children. The thematic-contextual approach is the main key, because it links learning materials with students' real experiences and environments. This strategy allows children to learn language not abstractly, but through concrete situations that are close to their daily lives.

1. Thematic-Contextual Approach Based on Children's Lives

Thematic-contextual approaches involve themes that are relevant to students' lives, such as "in class", "family", "food", "animals", and "hobbies". Each theme is developed through various integrated language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For example, in the theme "in class", students learn vocabulary for classroom objects (blackboard, books, pencils) through activities such as pointing directly to objects around them, attaching labels for the names of objects, and then practicing simple sentences such as "This is my book." According to Maharani and Sudarsono (2022), the contextual thematic approach to children's language learning provides meaningful experiences because students can connect the language they learn with the concrete reality around them. This is in line with Ausubel's principle of meaningful learning, which emphasizes the importance of linking new information to experiences or knowledge structures that students already have.

2. Simple Project Based Activities (Mini Project)

Small projects can encourage students to use Indonesian actively. For example, after studying the theme "food", students are asked to draw their favorite food and write two short sentences: "I like fried rice. Fried rice is delicious." Another project could be to create a "mini picture book" about their family with simple sentences. This model supports Dewey's learning by doing theory, where children learn language by using it in meaningful activities. Research by Pratiwi & Sueca (2023) also confirmed that simple descriptive text-based projects are effective in improving writing and speaking skills in elementary school children.

3. Simple Dialogue Exercises and Role-play

In a contextual approach, dialogue needs to be directly related to students' lives. For example, role-playing as "students and teachers", "sellers and buyers", or "friends playing". Dialogues like this make it easier for students to practice simple expressions such as "What is this?", "How much is it?", or "I want to play ball." Role-play creates a safe space for communication practice, which is much needed in a homogeneous environment like JIKS. Nurhuda et al. (2022) noted that communication and social interaction-based activities are very effective in building the courage to speak Indonesian in early age foreign learners.

4. Habituation of Indonesian Language in Routine Class Activities

Teachers can consistently insert the use of Indonesian into routine class activities such as greeting in the morning ("Good morning!"), counting attendance ("How many students are there today?"), to giving simple instructions ("Take your pencil.", "Sit neatly."). Although students initially respond in Korean, this habit can gradually trigger understanding and pronunciation. This refers to the behaviorist theory of language, which states that repetition in real contexts will strengthen mastery of the target language.

5. Visual Media and Real Objects (Realia)

Rather than relying on sophisticated technology, teachers can utilize simple yet effective media, such as flashcards, sticky pictures, flannel boards, or real objects in the classroom. For example, when studying the theme of "animals", the teacher brings a stuffed animal, shows it, then asks "What is this?", the student answers "This is an elephant." This visualization is very helpful for children who are still at the stage of concrete thinking. According to the results of a study by Erowati et al. (2023), concrete media such as pictures and realia have been proven to support vocabulary understanding and enrich sentence structures in BIPA learning for children.

CONCLUSION

Learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) for children at the Jakarta Indonesia Korean School (JIKS) faces unique challenges, especially because the learning environment is ethnically and linguistically homogeneous. The dominance of Korean in and outside the classroom, as well as the position of the BIPA subject which is not

included in the Korean national core curriculum, makes students' motivation to learn Indonesian relatively low. In addition, the cognitive characteristics of elementary school-aged children who are still developing require learning strategies that are concrete, fun, and close to their lives. To answer these challenges, the thematic-contextual approach becomes the main strategy that is realistic and applicable. This strategy is realized through learning activities based on children's life themes (such as class, food, family), contextual dialogue exercises, role-play, simple projects such as mini books, familiarization with Indonesian in class routines, and the use of concrete media such as pictures and real objects (realia). This approach not only helps students understand vocabulary and language structure, but also builds a connection between the language being studied and the Indonesian socio-cultural context.

Through the integration of pedagogical theories (constructivism, contextual learning, behaviorism) and empirical practices from various studies in the last five years, this article emphasizes that children's BIPA learning in international schools such as JIKS must be oriented towards meaningful, gradual, and adaptive learning experiences to students' characters. With this strategy, Indonesian can be more easily applied in students' daily lives in international schools, not just as a complement to the curriculum.

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