



How is BIPA Students' Perception Towards Learning in the Digital Era? Insights in Preparing Online Learning

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Abstract. Developments in information and communication technology as well as the Covid-19 pandemic have pushed second language learning in a more modern direction than in recent years. This article aims to discuss foreign students' perceptions of online learning of Indonesian for Foreign Speakers or *Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing* (BIPA) at the Faculty of Letters, State University of Malang, Indonesia. The key method is a survey with the instrument in the form of a questionnaire. There are four perception variables surveyed to students. The findings show, *first*, that BIPA students' motivation is still dominated by face-to-face learning. *Second*, BIPA students prefer printed material on the grounds that important notes can be given even though electronic material is still acceptable. *Third*, the platform in the form of Zoom is the favorite choice for the implementation of synchronous learning, besides that there is information related to other types of platforms whose use is limited in certain countries. *Fourth*, language skills in the form of listening and speaking are preferred to be learned independently rather than reading and writing. Learning language skills independently by using authentic materials leads to better learning motivation. Although online learning can be implemented, face-to-face learning still seems to be preferred to be implemented. In certain situations, for example during the pandemic, the online BIPA program can still be implemented as a second option and collaboration between various parties is needed such as the governments of the two countries, sending and administering institutions, sponsors, and learning technology teams. This collaboration is an effort to ensure quality BIPA learning in the future so that students are able to achieve communicative competencies such as face-to-face learning.

Keywords: BIPA · digital era · second language

1 Introduction

Advances in information and communication technology encourage second language learning models that are increasingly developing in a more modern direction, from face-to-face classroom learning to online learning environments. This alteration is evident from the reports of several studies of second language learning, such as learning English

[1, 2], Indonesian language such as. In addition, there is increasing evidence and reports of the effectiveness of blended learning for second language learning. In recent years, online second language learning has also increased as a result of the Corona Virus-19 outbreak. Not only second language learning but also all levels of education and disciplines [3]. Of course, such a situation also creates new challenges and problems for institutions that organize learning programs. This situation requires the organizers of the second language learning program to prepare various aspects such as theory, practice, tools, appropriate strategies used in online learning, and various studies to evaluate the process of implementing the learning.

Language learning online and carried out remotely needs special attention. In learning a second language online, it seems that students do not get input, adequate feedback from teachers, support from various parties such as a real environment that is the same as a traditional learning context, as well as opportunities to practice language with native speakers [2]. In addition, internal factors such as persistence and motivation are needed in online language learning [1]. Based on this, it seems that various research contexts on second language learning need to be explored more comprehensively, such as exploring students' perceptions of the online learning process, students' perceptions have a positive impact on the future learning implementation process. Therefore, the study of students' perceptions can be one of the considerations in making several policies so that later they have an impact on the final learning outcomes.

Furthermore, students' perceptions of online learning, one of which can be obtained from students of Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA), is a second language learning program that continues to be in demand and followed by foreign speakers. Students' perceptions of the implementation of learning will describe what they feel and experience. It can be used to ensure effectiveness or measure and evaluate the implementation of BIPA learning. However, unfortunately, there is no research that discusses the perceptions of BIPA students regarding online learning so that there is no information available about this. As far as researchers observe, until now, BIPA experts and practitioners have not focused on students' perceptions of online learning. They only recently focused on areas such as the used platform, learning materials.

Actually, this type of research is not new. Research on second language students' perceptions of online learning has been carried out by several researchers, both nationally and internationally. As an example of research abroad in the last two years, questionnaire research on online English learning at Hradec Kralove University, Czech Republic by surveying students from the faculty of informatics and management at the third year level [3], Azarbayjan University students Shahid Madani majoring in English by conducting a survey of students who are satisfied and dissatisfied with online learning [4], students majoring in English at one public university in Turkey from different faculties using qualitative methods [2]. Although both researching the perceptions of foreign language learners, it is hoped that this research will enrich the treasures of research on online second language learning because of the different learning contexts. Considering that online BIPA learning is a new paradigm in recent years.

Meanwhile, several examples of domestic research, such as perceptions of English language students in senior high schools were conducted by [24], English students were conducted by [1]. In the context of research on perceptions of BIPA students published

only in functional linguistic contexts, such as perceptions about the use of speech acts by, students' perceptions of learning materials, and BIPA teachers' perceptions of learning platform used. Therefore, this research is important because this research will try to fill the gap and one of the efforts to improve the quality and final result of BIPA learning.

Finally, based on the previous description, this study will discuss the perceptions of BIPA students about the online learning process carried out at the State University of Malang. The specific purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of BIPA students about motivation, learning materials, digital platforms, and language skills. It is hoped that these four questions can provide information for the progress of online second language learning, especially BIPA learning. It should also be remembered that in recent years foreign speakers are increasingly interested and enthusiastic about learning Indonesian, they study for various purposes such as education, business, research, etc.

2 Literature Review

This section will provide insights related to the BIPA program and insights related to learning foreign languages by utilizing information and communication technology.

2.1 BIPA and Its Learning

Bahasa Indonesia (BI) is a popular language for foreign language speakers to learn. BI is a favorite language among foreigners for various reasons and purposes [22], such as business, tourism, research, and education. The growing interest of foreign speakers to study BI as an L2 cannot be separated from the efforts of the Indonesian government in making the BIPA program. In 2020, the number of foreign speakers studying BI through the BIPA program is more than 55,203 people [23].

BIPA is a learning program created by the Indonesian government under the auspices of the Development Strategy and Language Diplomacy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, a second language learning program, in this case Indonesian is the second or target language to be studied. In addition to learning the language, the BIPA program also has the task of knowing Indonesian culture and characteristics, indirectly this is a form of government soft diplomacy [23, 25]. In short, the BIPA program aims to teach Indonesian linguistic and cultural aspects to non-Indonesian speakers [22]. Through this program, it is hoped that BIPA students will be able to use Indonesian properly and correctly, in other words according to the context of its use in the community. In the BIPA program, there are many learning focuses, according to the objectives of foreign speakers learning Indonesian. Several BIPA programs that foreign speakers can participate in include BIPA for academic purposes, tourism, business, research, etc.

The BIPA program is attended by foreign students with a duration of three months (a short program which is usually only for daily communication purposes) and a one-year program (usually for academic purposes). There are several learning programs that have been established with several countries, such as (1) the Darmasiswa RI Program, (2) the Study Abroad Program, (3) the Developing Country Partnership Program (KNB), (4) the Indonesian Flagship Language Initiative (IFLI), (5) American-Indonesian Exchange

Foundation (AMINEF) Program, and (6) the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program. The program is carried out in accordance with the competencies or levels possessed by students, the level of BIPA students usually refers to the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language), CEFR (*Common European Framework of Reference*), as well as Graduate Competency Standards issued by the Indonesian government. Classroom learning is carried out three times a week and there is one day a week for BIPA students to recognize Indonesian culture in the form of certain arts and traditions, at one level of no more than 35 h of learning. Of course, this seeks to produce BIPA students who have communicative competence.

The material presented in BIPA learning is the same as the nature of learning other foreign languages, cultural themes, language materials, and grammar. Learning experts and practitioners may develop materials according to the needs and characteristics of BIPA students but in developing they must consider the three reference levels used in BIPA learning so that BIPA students can still achieve communicative competence. The selected BIPA learning materials must help foreign students to communicate in both formal and non-formal contexts: daily activities, social life, and academics. To fulfill this, BIPA learning usually refers to available authentic source materials such as news and cultural phenomena in daily conversation that are presented on various platforms.

2.2 Technology in Online Language Learning

Advances from technology have made many changes in the world of education, of course it has a positive impact because foreign language learners can be easily implemented. Currently, there are various digital platforms that can be accessed both online and offline that provide a variety of offers for learning foreign languages. It seems that language learning is now very rich and creative because it offers multimodal, multilingual, multicultural, and multipurpose spaces that they can serve. Online language learning or using technology makes teachers and students familiar with online digital applications, tools, or devices into learning activities, such situations create more creative and interesting language learning compared to traditional classes [24].

Based on this, the definition of online language learning is learning that is carried out using the help of technology, such as laptops and platforms, and internet access during the interaction process between teachers and foreign students when discussing learning materials, has become an integral part of language teaching and its use widely [12]. Of course, it became the basis for the birth of language learning which created the study of Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL). The internet and its quality are key to online learning because it is useful for students and teachers in various activities such as accessing materials and interacting with each other. In addition, online language learning can be carried out anywhere, anytime, and without meeting face to face as long as an agreement between teacher and student is established [1, 2].

To facilitate online language learning, program organizers usually use various digital platforms. In the context of language learning, Susandi et al. [26] said that a digital platform is a system or software program that has certain features, leading to applications, which include means of integrating social networks, integrative tasks, learning materials, electronic portfolios, etc. Digital platforms are very useful for helping language learning so that they can improve four language skills, especially in online learning,

finally achieving communicative competence. In short, a means of interaction that can later fulfill an understanding of the target language and culture. Some experts also claim that digital platforms are very relevant to be used in the current era for several reasons, including organized management, security, time effectiveness, motivating students with a touch of current trends. In the context of online BIPA learning that has been carried out in recent years, digital platforms have been used, such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Google class rooms, and Google Meet.

Communication that is carried out during online language learning is categorized into two: synchronous, where teachers and students learn at the same time using a certain platform, and asynchronous, where learning takes place at different times. In the synchronous implementation of second language learning, the communication between the teacher and the second language learner takes place in a fixed time and this makes direct feedback possible for the learner, which does not occur in the context of asynchronous learning [2]. In line with that, Holmberg [5] says that online or distance learning is divided into two categories: one-way and two-way communication. He further explained that learning with one-way communication has been designed by the teacher and sent to students with a very flexible time and place to be carried out, meanwhile regarding two-way communication in certain learning times that have been agreed to be carried out together so that interaction occurs. Between teachers and students and students with students at the agreed time.

3 Method

This study is a qualitative research with a questionnaire survey type, research to collect data and information through several questions related to what is being studied [6]. In the context of this research, BIPA students are taking part in a learning program at an advanced level and will continue their studies at various levels in Indonesia. The information submitted by BIPA students is expected to provide insight into their perceptions of learning Indonesian as a second language online that they have participated in. One of the questionnaires can be aimed at describing the perception of the subject being studied on a phenomenon [4].

The questionnaire given to BIPA students consists of eight questions, three questions regarding self-identity (age and majors to be taken) and four variables related to language skills (two questions), types of learning materials, motivation in learning languages, as well as the relationship with digital platforms used during the learning process, more complete information can be seen in Table 1. The questionnaires were given to students to be responded to by utilizing technology, namely using Google Forms, during the 2021/2022 learning program. Internet-based surveys have become more popular than traditional surveys due to lower costs and faster processing modes [7]. In addition to these reasons, in this context, a survey using Google Forms is used with the reason that many students are still in their country. Before BIPA students gave responses to the questions posed, they had been given first insight regarding the purpose of the research that the researcher was doing, they were not required to participate so they had discretion if they did not want to participate.

Table 1. Questionnaire

No.	Variable	Question
1	Student motivation in learning languages online	Do you feel motivated to learn languages online? Explain why!
2	Learning materials	What kind of learning materials would you prefer, print, electronic, or other types? Explain why!
3	Related to technology	What platform would be the most convenient and effective to use during the learning process? Explain why!
4	Language skills	What kind of language skills do you think can be easily learned and improved during online learning? Explain why!
		What kinds of authentic materials do teachers often provide and do you prefer to study independently?

4 Findings and Discussion

The results show that online BIPA learning can still be implemented and effective but not all respondents agree that online learning can achieve learning outcomes that are in accordance with learning objectives, for this reason this needs to be highlighted by various parties such as second language learning experts and program organizers. Furthermore, to describe the findings comprehensively, the findings and discussions are divided into four categories according to the variables questioned to the participants (1) language skills, (2) preferred material, (3) motivation in learning languages, and (4) utilization of digital platforms in learning. There were 36 BIPA students who participated in this research.

4.1 Motivation of BIPA Students in Learning Indonesian Online

Based on the figure, 56% of BIPA students feel they lack motivation to study online, although 44% of them still feel motivated to learn online, in short, based on the findings of BIPA students, slightly more agree to study face-to-face rather than online because it increases learning motivation. This is in line with several previous research results related to online second language learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as reports from [2, 3] who stated that second language learners expressed their low motivation, anxiety, and lack of focus in online learning (Fig. 1).

BIPA students said that their motivation was not as high as online learning for several reasons, such as a lack of emotional closeness with both teachers and peers in language learning so that it caused boredom in learning due to distance, plus there are technical problems. Of course, this is a category related to the substance of learning. Based on the findings, this needs to be followed up because it is known that motivation plays a very

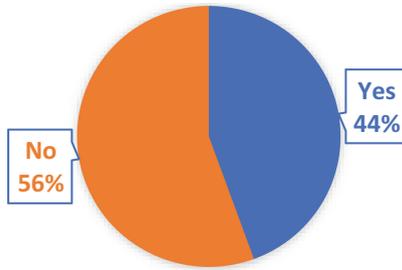


Fig. 1. Motivation of BIPA Students

important role in the success of learning a foreign language, motivation itself is a strong motivator in determining learning outcomes [8], keep in mind that in addition to ability, intelligence, and attitude towards achieving communicative competence also influenced by motivation [9]. Based on the responses from BIPA students, it is possible that those who claim to have less motivation in learning Indonesian online because they do not feel close to real situations of Indonesian society such as face-to-face learning. Second language students will feel more motivated to learn if they are in real situations or the environment of native speakers, EFL students [10].

4.2 Learning Materials

Based on Fig. 2, 76% of BIPA students prefer printed learning materials, such as textbooks or certain supplements that support the learning process. Despite technological advances and information that have been integrated into the world of second language learning and created electronic learning materials can be easily found, downloaded, and most of them are freely available for independent study [11, 12]. While the remaining 19% of BIPA students like electronic materials and 5% of them like other types of material. In short, based on the findings, the difference between students who like printed learning materials is very far from those that are not printed and choose other types. It should also be remembered that although printed material is preferred by BIPA students to electronic materials and other types for use by them, it may not necessarily affect the final learning outcomes, of course this needs to be investigated further in the future.

Based on the findings, this study strengthens the research conducted by Susandi et al. [26], in the context of BIPA learning, the results of his research indicate that electronic learning materials are less comfortable to use. Of course, these findings should be of particular concern for online language learning so as not to interfere with the ultimate goal of the program being implemented. Based on the responses given by BIPA students who prefer printed materials in learning, they said that their printed materials could be written with key notes to make it easier to understand the learning materials in depth. while the large majority of BIPA students prefer electronic materials because of their accessibility, practicality, and authenticity, this finding is in line with that presented by Meisani [11] in the context of learning English for young children. Meanwhile, data relating to providing responses to other types of material, there is no clear explanation.

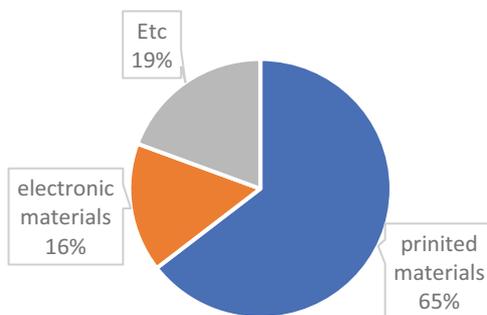


Fig. 2. Type of material

4.3 Utilization of Platforms

Based on Fig. 3, BIPA students consider the digital platform in the form of Zoom to be the most effective to use, followed by Google Meet, other types of platforms, and Whatsapp. The four types of platforms have been widely suggested for use in BIPA learning, (see [26]). The results of this study, 54% of BIPA students said that Zoom was effective to use, followed by Google meet as much as 17%, other types as much as 17%, and Whatsapp 12%. In short, it shows that a large majority, more than half of the respondents, said that Zoom is comfortable to use during the online learning process because the menus provided can better support interactions in learning such as screen sharing menus that can be used by teachers and students to deliver material and assignments.

Furthermore, Google meet is also favored by BIPA students in the learning process but is considered to have shortcomings in the screen sharing system which is less effective than Zoom. Meanwhile, usually WhatsApp is favored by students because it can be used to communicate outside class hours, asynchronous learning, asking material that is not clear to understand. Of course, based on the responses given indirectly providing WhatsApp information was liked by students because they felt emotionally close to the teacher. The existence of emotional closeness also has an impact on learning outcomes, in line with the findings of Nugraha et al., [13] who say that building closeness outside the classroom and increasing collaboration in solving second language learning difficulties such as BIPA are success factors for e-learning-based learning.

Finally, the important thing that needs to be highlighted from the responses that have been given is the use of the type of platform used in synchronous learning, namely other types of platforms that are suggested or preferred by students. Students in the category gave feedback about the scale of the implementation level of the platform (not only geographical but also time) in their area and also that they were not familiar with the applications used in their area. BIPA practitioners and second language learning program organizers must pay attention to this case, because knowledge of the use of platforms (technical knowledge from students) can affect their learning outcomes, such as reports from Kristina et al., [14]. It should also be noted that it is possible to provide feedback on other types of platforms for BIPA students from certain countries, as explained by Russell & Kathryn [15] saying that in China the use of Google is generally prohibited from being used in the region, although it can be hacked. via virtual private networks,

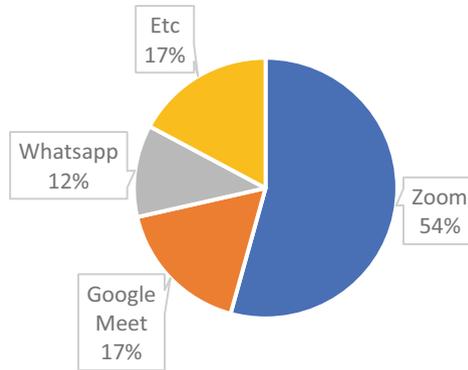


Fig. 3. An effective platform used in BIPA learning

of course this will require effort, elsewhere, in Crimea, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria, Google is limiting some of its offerings, and an important step should be to ensure that the platforms can be used on different types of mobile devices: iOS, Android, Huawei's Hongmeng OS and, of course, all the new ones that will even appear on the market from now on. Based on this, of course, before deciding on the right online learning platform to use in a synchronous context, practitioners and BIPA organizing programs must seek as much detailed information as possible so that later learning can run smoothly.

4.4 Language Skills

Figure 4 provides information on language skills that are considered to be able to be improved and trained independently during online BIPA learning. This questionnaire emphasizes independent learning. Bećirović et al. [12] define independent learning in which students have an intention and diagnose their learning needs, determine materials, formulate goals, choose strategies, and evaluate their skills independently. Based on this, the distributed questionnaire aims to explore how BIPA students direct their thoughts and feelings in achieving language skills. Briefly, it aims to explore how BIPA students learn outside of institutional settings. It all considers several research reports in online second language learning which conclude that internal factors and willingness to learn independently are the determinants of successful learning [27]. Based on the responses, BIPA students responded that listening is the language skill they practice most often and its effectiveness is 33%, followed by speaking 27%, reading as much as 24%, and writing 22%.

Furthermore, based on general responses, they convey that listening is often trained because it is important to understand the information conveyed by the interlocutor. Then they said that speaking was often trained independently so that it was easy to communicate, it was carried out with various types of platforms available digitally today. Furthermore, reading and writing are the laziest activities to do for several reasons, one of which is lack of understanding, causing boredom. The results of this study are in line with the opinion of Astika & Kurniawan [16] which concludes that listening and

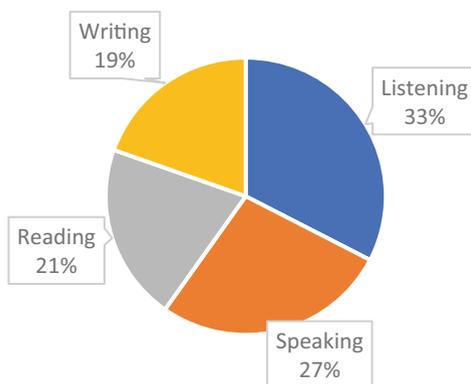


Fig. 4. Language Skills

speaking are units that are usually the most stimulating in learning to do even though there are many challenges, it is contrary to the opinion of Nushi & Orouji [17] who say that listening is an activity that is less liked by students and tend to be boring for them. This finding is also in line with Rahmaningtyas & Mardhiyyah [18] in their study which explains that the listening ability possessed by foreign students determines other abilities such as speaking. Based on this, it is not surprising that foreign students such as BIPA have an interest in listening and speaking skills. As input and further consideration in addressing these findings, we suggest teachers to find an effective platform that can be used to train these two aspects of skills, as suggested by Muzdalifah & Herningtias [19] regarding the use of the Edpuzzle platform in BIPA learning.

Language skills that are less desirable for BIPA students to learn independently are reading (24%) and writing (22%), this is not surprising because the two sub-skills have long been known to be interrelated [20]. Furthermore, he explained that when foreign language learners have a lot of knowledge (of course this leads to listening skills) it will affect reading and writing fluency. Based on this, a solution is needed to overcome the spread of balanced interest in learning in honing language skills, as the solution offered is online language learning that integrates language skills (see [21]). In addition, it seems that in online language teaching and learning reading and writing are very necessary, one of the reasons is that students need these skills to operate the platform and write some information related to themselves in operating the platform. Based on this, it can be assumed that at least if BIPA students master writing and reading skills adequately, they will not be too difficult in the technical aspects of online learning.

Furthermore, on the aspect of language skills the researchers also provided questionnaires related to authentic materials that are often suggested by teachers and used in independent learning by BIPA students during online learning, the results can be seen in Fig. 5. Based on feedbacks in general, BIPA students revealed that authentic material is currently very abundant, as it can be accessed on the YouTube platform and the viewing is directly spoken by native speakers. Of course, this step is an action that is considered strategic because of several reports and opinions from second language learning experts,

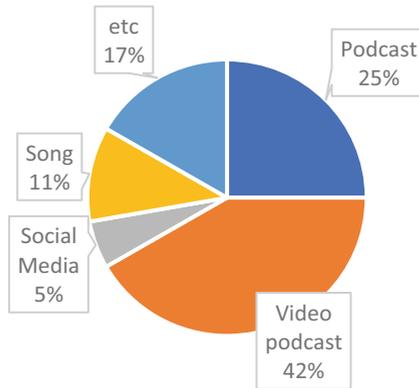


Fig. 5. Authentic digital materials preferred by BIPA students

such as Rahmaningtyas & Mardhiyyah, [18] which states that authentic sources encourage students to get used to the situation of the target language and culture so that it will have an impact on the process of achieving communicative competence.

Based on the findings, video podcasts are the most preferred by students as much as 47%, podcasts 28%, songs 13%, and social media and other types as much as 6%. This finding is expected to be used as a further study by BIPA practitioners or institutions, based on the observations of researchers not many have focused on discussing this topic. Several previous studies have also reported on the use of authentic sources for example Astika & Kurniawan [16] in learning English, although video podcasts have their own challenges to understand, at least they can familiarize students with understanding language and culture in communicating. In addition, there are several things that must be considered by BIPA teachers about authentic materials that can be used by students, such as language skills and material selection that would increase exposure to the Indonesian language lexicon. For example, research results from Lestari & Hardiyati [28] discuss songs as authentic sources in second language learning. He said that in choosing songs, the students preferred songs that had a relaxed tempo because they could know the context, representation of feelings, sense of atmosphere, and emotions. Of course, it can be used as a reference in providing authentic assignment material to BIPA students to be studied independently during the online learning process.

5 Conclusion

Changes in the context of traditional second language learning to online are unavoidable and accepted by BIPA students, even in the future after the pandemic period is completely over, although there are still groups who think offline learning is more effective. To be able to realize quality online BIPA learning and achieve learning that can achieve the communicative competence of its students, there are various actions that need to be taken such as the development of learning technology, learning curriculum planning that considers the principles of technology-based language learning, access, and professional practitioners in online teaching. This study has limitations on the small number

of participants and is carried out only in one place. Based on this, further research may be carried out more broadly, such as involving various institutions that organize BIPA learning programs so that the research results are richer. However, at least the findings from this study can provide insight in the form of things that must be considered when institutions and practitioners of second language learning, especially BIPA, in organizing online learning programs.

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