



# Enhancing Cross-Cultural Understanding Through Literature

## A Learning Model for Intermediate-Level BIPA Students

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### ABSTRACT

The development of Indonesian language learning for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) requires creativity and innovation in all facets of instruction. One of these components is the learning model employed in the delivery of reading materials. The adoption of a cross-cultural understanding learning model is believed to be advantageous as it imparts comprehension and guidance for communication among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this study aims to explore the practice of implementing the cross-cultural understanding model in Japanese BIPA classes. Additionally, it seeks to delineate the teaching materials that can support the learning process. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. The data were presented and elucidated in a comprehensive manner. The study was conducted at Nanzan University in June 2023, involving a total of 7 BIPA students. Subsequently, the data were analyzed by referring to theories on BIPA which included techniques like data reduction, data presentation, data verification, and data conclusion. Drawing on the findings, it can be concluded that, firstly, the cross-cultural understanding model can be implemented for intermediate-level BIPA learners. The implementation steps encompass text selection, core activity design, and the evaluation process. Secondly, the selected texts stem from the two cultures which were the Indonesian folk tale "Timun Mas" and the Japanese tale "Momotaro". This study can also serve as a reference for the implementation of BIPA learning processes in various institutions, particularly for intermediate-level Japanese learners.

**Keywords:** BIPA, cross cultural understanding, learning model.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak other than the mother tongue or a foreign language is increasingly needed. Various institutions, both public and private, are competing to organize various models of foreign language education, including Indonesian as a second language for foreigners (or known as BIPA) in Indonesia, as well as overseas students who study Indonesian. Foreigners who study Indonesian generally have two goals, namely academic goals and practical goals. Academic goals relate to their need to be able to communicate orally and in writing in lectures, research activities, and others. Meanwhile, practical goals relate to their need to be able to communicate orally and in writing in everyday life, both inside and outside the work environment (Noviana, 2018).

On the other hand, related to the BIPA learning process, the Language Development and Guidance Agency realizes that teaching Indonesian for foreign speakers or teaching BIPA has a very important and strategic role in introducing Indonesia to the international community. This is because BIPA is a medium for disseminating the Indonesian language apart from teaching. It is also a medium for conveying various information about Indonesia, including introducing Indonesian society and culture. Therefore, foreigners who learn Indonesian will understand Indonesian society and culture more comprehensively. This understanding in turn can increase mutual understanding and mutual respect to further enhance friendship and cooperation between nations.

In line with the increasing friendship and cooperation between nations, BIPA teaching can also play a role as a support for the success of Indonesian cultural diplomacy internationally. Therefore, teaching BIPA deserves to be seen as part of a cultural diplomacy strategy. The strategy of cultural diplomacy through teaching languages to foreign speakers has also been implemented by several other countries, such as France, Britain, Germany and Japan. In this context, the BIPA Teaching program deserves to be placed as part of a system for dealing with language problems at a macro level, both in domestic and foreign dimensions.

Of the various problems regarding the BIPA program, instructional (learning) matters are issues that need special attention and handling. The importance of this learning issue is not only because it is quite dominantly discussed at various BIPA meeting forums but learning issues do have a quite essential and strategic role in the BIPA program. The role of learning is mainly related to efforts to create and condition BIPA learning. In the BIPA program, learning conditioning is directly related to the teaching and learning process, the mechanism, and results of which can be observed. It is empirically stated that the problems that often arise in the implementation of the BIPA program stem from many learning issues such as the methods, models, learning strategies, teaching materials, etc. used (Zulfahmi, 2017).

Backgrounds such as country of origin, education, age, and diverse knowledge of BIPA students make it a challenge for BIPA teachers to always increase their capacity to equip themselves. BIPA teachers must master and understand the points of BIPA administration. All aspects of learning such as teaching models and learning materials must also be mastered so that they can apply various approaches in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. An appropriate learning model can increase student interest in learning and make it easier for students to process information.

In the learning process, teachers need to understand student learning styles so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally with various learning models. In practice, teachers must remember that there is no learning model that is most appropriate for all situations and conditions. Therefore, in choosing the right learning model, teachers must pay attention to the conditions of the students, the nature of the teaching materials, the available media facilities, and the condition of the teachers themselves. In the following, several learning models are presented, to be selected and used as alternatives so that they are suitable for the situations and conditions at hand (Fathurrohman, 2015).

In addition to the learning model, the content of teaching materials is also important. One of the choices of learning content is folklore text. Folklore texts have been contained in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 27 of 2017 on BIPA 3 Graduate Competency Standards. Folklore texts can be used as materials in developing learning materials for BIPA students, both in the form of learning materials (Textbooks, modules, etc.) as well as enrichment materials (Amandangi et al., 2020; Yulianeta et al., 2020; Yulianeta et al., 2022). Through folklore, BIPA students can also gain authentic knowledge about Indonesian language and culture, in the form of four language skills at once (Noviana, 2018). Socio-cultural aspects have a very important role in teaching Indonesian to foreign speakers. This role includes preventing language learners from the possibility of cultural clashes or culture shock (Widyastuti, 2017). Folklore has the potential to become BIPA teaching materials. Folklore contains images of the past about the local community so that BIPA students can see the face of Indonesia through folklore. The higher the level of BIPA students, the more complex the types of folklore that can be learned. There are four genres of folklore that can be selected as BIPA teaching materials, namely myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales (Kusmiatun, 2018).

Folklore usually gives a representation of the people who gave birth to the story. In the context of BIPA, it is inseparable from the differences in background knowledge about the culture of the student's country and Indonesia's cultural background. This difference can be used as a comparison to make it easier for students to understand Indonesian through Indonesian culture. This can be realized by comparing folklore originating from two countries, such as Japan and Indonesia. The number of BIPA students from Japan occupies the top six positions (Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, 2017). This large number of students opens opportunities to provide teaching materials related to their culture. Several Indonesian and Japanese folk tales, especially fairy tales, have similarities in the types of stories and story motifs (Danandjaja, 1997).

The cross-cultural understanding model has been previously utilized by other researchers in the field of sociology (Minandar, 2020) and is still infrequently employed in language education, particularly for Indonesian as a Foreign Language. Based on this observation, a cultural strategy is imperative to bolster the effectiveness of the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers program (BIPA). One of these endeavors involves fostering cross-cultural understanding in BIPA instruction through comparative literature (Yulianeta, 2023). Literature, including folklore, is a strong bridge in supporting cross-cultural understanding (Danandjaja, 1997).

Based on the description of the problem and the research potential found, the researchers aim to explore the practice of the cross-cultural understanding learning model in BIPA classes. It specifically examines the way the cross-cultural

understanding model is implemented in Japanese BIPA classes and which teaching materials are suitable for teaching those classes.

## 2. METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. Data for this study were collected through direct observation of the BIPA learning process at Nanzan University in Japan. Observation is a technique for gathering qualitative data by directly observing the field or research environment. The participants in this study were 7 BIPA students, all of whom were from Japan. The research was conducted over a period of 1 week in June 2023. The instrument utilized in this study were diaries and documentation.

In this study, data analysis employed relevant theories of BIPA and techniques such as data reduction, data presentation, data verification, and drawing conclusions (Brown & Jones, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Smith, 2015). Data reduction entailed the meticulous notation of acquired data, followed by summarization based on key points. Subsequently, data presentation involves presenting the reduced data in the form of tables or graphs to facilitate understanding. Finally, data verification involved verifying data, based on research results which were then used to draw conclusions.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Implementation of the Cross-Cultural Understanding Model in Japanese BIPA Classes

#### 3.1.1. Preparation Stage

The initial stage of the learning process is preparation. First, the preparation of students. The students are BIPA students of the intermediate level who already have basic knowledge of Indonesian. BIPA students who will take part in the cross-cultural understanding learning model simulation already have sufficient knowledge about folklore text material. This is the main requirement for students, because an understanding of two countries can be given if students already have basic knowledge.

Second, the preparation of BIPA teachers or instructors. In this case, the researcher as an Indonesian language lecturer has prepared learning materials, in the form of Indonesian Japanese folklore textbooks. This textbook is the result of a comparative literary study, which compares Indonesian and Japanese story texts. In addition to teaching materials, teachers also equip themselves with student data to better know the background of the BIPA students.

#### 3.1.2. Implementation Stage

Adapted from Minandar (2020), one of the BIPA learning methods that uses the cross-cultural understanding method is: (1) BIPA students are given an enrichment book on folklore texts and instructed to examine the contents of the book, (2) Students are directed to choose one pair of Indonesian Japanese folklore texts in the enrichment book, (3) Give the students time to examine the cultural elements of the texts and find activities/life of the tribe that have values in social life. Students can discuss with one another, (4) During the discussion process, the teacher continues to accompany and provide direction and help, (5) After the discussion is finished, the teacher invites the students to present the results of the discussion, (6) After the presentation takes place, other students are allowed to ask questions about the culture or values presented by the presenters, and (7) Teacher can provide feedback and direct the learning on the expected goals and learning materials.



**Figure 1** Providing folklore text material using a cross-cultural understanding model.

The learning process used the cross-cultural understanding model emphasizing on the cultural understanding of BIPA students as can be seen in Figure 1. All students are encouraged to be able to compare Indonesian culture with their own culture (Japan). This is so that they can understand Indonesian culture from their own cultural point of view. The culture in question is all the contents in the folklore text, both from the characters, characterizations, story motifs, plots, and other elements in the text.



**Figure 2** Discussion of cross-cultural understanding in the folklore text of Momotaro and Timun Mas.

As presented in Figure 2, the teacher continues to accompany and provide direction and guidance so that the discussion process run smoothly. After the discussion is finished, the teacher invites the students to present the results of the discussion. This is to allow students to explore the culture or values from the presentation. Finally, the teacher provides feedback and direct the learning on the expected goals and learning materials.

### 3.1.3. Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage or the final stage in the implementation of learning using the cross-cultural understanding model is an evaluation activity. This activity is intended to determine the level of understanding of BIPA students towards the material that has been presented. The evaluation stage utilizes Google Form to acquire BIPA students' answers. Some of the questions in the form of a questionnaire are as follows. 1) Give a brief elaboration on the content similarities between "Timun Mas" from Indonesia and "Momotaro" from Japan! 2) Give a brief elaboration on the content differences between "Timun Mas" from Indonesia and "Momotaro" from Japan! 3) In your opinion, the Indonesian culture that you can get from the contents of the folklore text is...

### 3.1.4. The way Cross-Cultural Understanding Helps the Learning

Cultural differences are something that cannot be avoided in social life. Especially in the life of people with very diverse social backgrounds. These differences lead to potential conflicts and divisions between social groups that can occur because of differences, interests, and customs. Apart from that, the current rapid flow of globalization also threatens a shift in several cultures that exist in several regions or countries in the world. Therefore, there is a need for revitalization efforts to make culture always able to coexist and continue to be preserved in people's daily lives. One way is to integrate the local culture or wisdom through education. This good practice is called the cross-cultural understanding approach. Cross-cultural understanding is also commonly known as cross-cultural competence. Bolten (in Saleh et al., 2019), defines that cross-cultural competence includes three basic things, namely hearing, structure, and process models. These three things are reflected in the use of language in everyday life as one of the cultural elements that is first understood by anyone who wants to get to know a new culture. This is also in line with the opinion expressed by Ekawati (2022) who emphasized that cross-cultural understanding is a manifestation of intellectual property that can facilitate communication and understanding of new cultures. This is in line with the fact that this cross-cultural understanding study is generally defined as 'all human beings experience the same feeling, they travel or live in a different country or culture' (Oberg, 1998). Instinctively, humans will tend to adapt and compromise more easily with the same culture or agree with what they believe in compared to having to confront cultural differences (Rachmawati, 2018).

The long history of study in the practice of cross-cultural understanding has finally come to the stage of implementing methods in the learning process. This cross-cultural understanding learning method can be useful in being able to provide understanding or procedures for communicating between individuals who have different cultural backgrounds (Minandar, 2020; Oxford, 1996). So that in the context of BIPA learning, this cross-cultural understanding is understood as an effort so that students can understand other cultures as a second language in the communication process. As a result, there arises a tolerant attitude from students, and it can make students as people who will be ready to face the differences that exist in society. The phenomenon of culture shock can be seen as something positive, not as

a negative phenomenon. Going through cultural differences can also pave the way to a deeper cultural awareness (Irving, 1984). This culture shock can also be minimized by students by means of cultural adaptation, both psychologically and physiologically so that they better understand and can accept cultural differences in the destination country (Kim, 2017).

Meanwhile, Setyawan and Fathoni (2017) describe in detail the benefits of having cross cultural understanding. They explained that there are 4 benefits; cross-cultural knowledge, which means that this approach is useful for providing an understanding of the values, beliefs, and behaviour of a culture; cross-cultural awareness, which means that this approach is useful for internally understanding and appreciating a culture accompanied by changes in behaviour such as flexibility and openness; cross-cultural sensitivity, which means that this approach is useful for providing an understanding of cross-cultural sensitivity that can interpret situations or behaviour (e.g. good/bad, right/wrong); as well as cross cultural competence, which means that this approach is useful for providing an understanding of the ability to deal with other people who are multicultural. This aspect of competence is the final stage of cross-cultural understanding, and it shows the ability to work cross-culturally effectively.

The cross-cultural understanding learning method is very suitable for BIPA subjects. This is because cross-cultural understanding discusses the lives of cultures other than our own (Mulyono et al., 2017). Other cultures here are not only cultures from other countries, but also the cultures of other tribes in our own country.

### 3.2. Materials That Were Used in Cross-Cultural Understanding Model in Japanese BIPA Classes

The learning materials used in this model should employ the same approach, namely cross-cultural understanding. This approach will undoubtedly provide a clear depiction of the local culture and the culture of the target country. In this BIPA instruction, the teaching materials provide folk stories from Indonesia and folk stories originating from Japan, both of which share similar story motifs. These folk stories are "Timun Mas" and "Momotaro" as can be seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3 Enrichment book of Indonesian-Japanese folk stories.

Furthermore, the teaching materials provided should include workspace that learners can utilize to respond to questions critically and creatively. This workspace should be provided in an adequate 'container' along with questions that can stimulate learners' memory about the cultures involved. This is done so they can compare Indonesian culture with their own. In addition to books and worksheets, the teaching materials can also take the form of handouts that provide a clearer depiction of the content of the folk story texts as can be seen in Figure 4. The contents of the handouts as can be seen in Figure 4 include images that can stimulate the creativity and critical thinking abilities of BIPA learners.



Figure 4 Cross-Cultural understanding handout.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As a follow-up, further research is still needed on the effectiveness of the cross-cultural understanding model. This research can be developed with different research subjects and backgrounds from different countries. This is expected to form a reinforcement and strengthen the competence of BIPA teachers in the teaching and learning process and also the development of learning model studies for Indonesian as a foreign language.

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