



## A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE IN THE BIPA PROGRAM

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### ABSTRACT

The globalization of the Indonesian language through the Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) programme has evolved from a simple linguistic exercise into a sophisticated instrument of cultural diplomacy and international education. As Indonesia's economic and cultural influence grows, more and more international students, researchers, and professionals want to learn the language. The pedagogical challenge in BIPA has transitioned from the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary to the cultivation of sociopragmatic competence. Research highlights a critical realization: the primary obstacle for international students is not necessarily cognitive or linguistic capacity but a lack of understanding regarding the cultural discourse that governs thinking and speaking within the Indonesian context. This suggests that language and culture are inextricably linked, forming a singular nexus where communication only becomes meaningful through the lens of cultural orientation

### Introduction

The globalization of the Indonesian language through the Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) program has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades. What was once positioned primarily as an introductory foreign language course has evolved into a strategic instrument of cultural diplomacy, academic mobility, and international engagement. As Indonesia strengthens its position within regional and global networks, particularly in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and broader international partnerships, the Indonesian language increasingly functions not only as a communicative medium but also as a symbolic representation of national identity and cultural authority. Consequently, the BIPA program has become an essential platform for projecting Indonesia's linguistic and cultural presence on the global stage.

The growing number of international students pursuing higher education, research collaboration, and professional engagement in Indonesia has intensified the demand for advanced Indonesian language proficiency. This demand extends beyond transactional communication in daily life to encompass academic discourse, institutional interaction, and culturally appropriate participation in social contexts (Isnaini et al., 2021; Tiawati et al., 2025). In this new landscape, the goals of BIPA instruction can no longer be confined to structural mastery—such as grammar, syntax, and lexical acquisition. Instead, successful communication requires learners to internalize the pragmatic and sociocultural dimensions of language use. As emphasized by Tiawati et al. (2022), the critical challenge has shifted toward developing sociopragmatic competence: the ability to interpret and produce utterances that are contextually appropriate within Indonesian cultural norms.

Sociopragmatic competence involves understanding how meaning is shaped not only by linguistic form but also by social hierarchy, cultural expectations, relational positioning, and emotional nuance. In Indonesian society, language is deeply intertwined with ethics and morality. Verbal interaction reflects not merely information exchange but the speaker's character, intentions, and respect toward others. The Indonesian communicative ethos places strong emphasis on harmony (*kerukunan*), respect (*hormat*), and indirectness (*ketidaklangsungan*). These values manifest in specific speech strategies, including softened directives, honorific address forms, and mitigation devices. Thus, acquiring Indonesian as a foreign language entails navigating a complex moral-linguistic system in which utterances are evaluated not only for grammatical correctness but for social propriety.

Cultural discourse in BIPA education refers to the intricate web of verbal and non-verbal conventions through which Indonesian communities construct meaning, negotiate power, and maintain interpersonal equilibrium. Within this discourse, invisible rules, commonly described as *tata krama*, govern turn-taking, tone selection, pronoun usage, and degrees of directness (Tiawati et al., 2022). These norms are rarely codified explicitly in textbooks, yet they are central to communicative success. International learners entering Indonesian sociocultural environments must therefore acquire not only linguistic forms but also pragmatic intuition: the capacity to sense when to speak, how to soften a request, and how to align one's speech with social expectations.

Scholarly consensus suggests that communication breakdowns among international BIPA learners frequently stem not from grammatical deficiency but from inadequate understanding of cultural discourse (Tiawati et al., 2022). Learners may produce syntactically accurate sentences that nonetheless violate implicit norms of politeness or relational hierarchy. For example, a direct imperative such as "*Buka pintunya*" ("Open the door") may be grammatically correct yet socially inappropriate in a context where indirect requests, such as "*Bisa tolong dibukakan pintunya?*", are expected. Such mismatches can create what Zulfadhli et al. (2022) describe as "pragmatically disastrous" utterances: speech acts that inadvertently signal arrogance, impatience, or insensitivity. The notion of pragmatic disaster underscores the centrality of sociopragmatic awareness in BIPA pedagogy. In Indonesian cultural settings, language is a moral index; it signals refinement, humility, and social intelligence. Polite and contextually appropriate speech reflects a virtuous individual, whereas bluntness or disregard for relational norms may be interpreted as ethical deficiency (Tiawati et al., 2022). For international students, the stakes are therefore high: pragmatic missteps can hinder academic collaboration, professional networking, and social integration.

Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat (UPGRISBA) represents a significant locus for examining these dynamics. As a prominent center for BIPA instruction, particularly for students from East Asia and Southeast Asia, UPGRISBA offers a unique sociocultural environment shaped by Minangkabau traditions. Minangkabau society is renowned for its matrilineal kinship system, strong communal ethos, and sophisticated rhetorical culture. Communication within this cultural framework is characterized by strategic indirectness, metaphorical expression, and careful maintenance of hierarchical respect. For BIPA learners immersed in Minangkabau contexts, linguistic adaptation entails more than lexical acquisition. It requires engagement with a communicative culture that privileges subtlety and social calibration. Research indicates that while international students often acquire factual knowledge about Minangkabau culture, such as traditional cuisine, architecture (*rumah gadang*), and ceremonial practices, their ability to operationalize this knowledge in spontaneous interaction remains limited (Tiawati et al., 2024). In other words, declarative cultural knowledge does not automatically translate into procedural pragmatic competence.

This gap between knowledge and performance highlights a critical pedagogical issue. Cultural instruction in BIPA programs often focuses on visible artifacts, dance, dress, food, while neglecting the micro-level dynamics of interactional pragmatics. Students may be able to describe Minangkabau *adat* (customary law) yet struggle to enact appropriate politeness strategies when addressing elders or lecturers. This discrepancy suggests that effective BIPA pedagogy must integrate experiential, practice-based approaches that simulate authentic communicative scenarios. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to investigate four interconnected dimensions of sociopragmatic development among BIPA learners at UPGRISBA. First, it examines the specific realizations of directive speech acts under cultural guidance. Directives, requests, commands, suggestions, are particularly sensitive to sociocultural norms because they involve influencing

another person's actions. In Indonesian contexts, directives are commonly mitigated through modal verbs, honorific forms, and indirect phrasing. Analyzing how learners formulate directives reveals the extent to which they internalize local norms of politeness and hierarchy.

Second, the study explores the psychological states reflected in learners' expressive speech acts. Expressive acts, such as apologies, gratitude, and expressions of frustration, offer insight into learners' emotional alignment with the host culture. The manner in which students express gratitude or admit mistakes may indicate levels of comfort, empathy, and cultural sensitivity. Psychopragmatic analysis allows researchers to trace how emotional regulation and identity negotiation are embedded within linguistic choices.

Third, the study investigates the comparative roles of language and culture in successful adaptation. While linguistic competence provides foundational communicative tools, cultural understanding shapes interpretive frameworks. By examining adaptation trajectories among international students, the study seeks to determine whether sociocultural competence predicts integration more strongly than structural proficiency alone. Fourth, the study identifies barriers to cross-cultural understanding and proposes innovative pedagogical solutions. Common barriers include transfer from learners' native pragmatic norms, limited exposure to authentic interaction, and insufficient feedback on sociopragmatic errors. Addressing these challenges requires pedagogical innovation, such as role-play simulations, reflective discourse analysis, and integration of local community engagement into language instruction.

The theoretical underpinning of this research draws upon speech act theory and intercultural pragmatics. Speech act theory conceptualizes language as action, emphasizing the illocutionary force of utterances. Intercultural pragmatics extends this perspective by examining how communicative norms vary across cultural contexts and how learners negotiate meaning across boundaries. Within the BIPA framework, these theories converge to illuminate how learners adapt, or struggle to adapt, to Indonesian sociocultural expectations. Moreover, the Minangkabau communicative style offers a fertile ground for exploring indirectness and relational alignment. Indirectness in Minangkabau discourse is not merely stylistic but ethical; it serves to protect face, preserve harmony, and prevent confrontation. For learners accustomed to more direct communication styles, this norm may initially appear ambiguous or inefficient. Yet mastering such indirectness is essential for building trust and demonstrating respect.

The findings anticipated from this investigation have broader implications for BIPA policy and curriculum design. If sociopragmatic competence proves central to successful adaptation, BIPA curricula must allocate greater emphasis to pragmatic training. This may involve explicit instruction on honorific systems, contextualized role-playing, and analysis of authentic interactional data. Teachers must also cultivate awareness that pragmatic errors can carry heavier social consequences than grammatical mistakes. So, this study contributes to understanding language as a vehicle of cultural diplomacy. When international students achieve sociopragmatic fluency, they not only communicate effectively but also embody cultural respect. Such individuals become informal ambassadors of Indonesian culture in their home countries. Conversely, persistent pragmatic misunderstandings may hinder Indonesia's soft power objectives.

In conclusion, the evolution of BIPA from a language course into a platform of cultural diplomacy necessitates a redefinition of pedagogical priorities. Sociopragmatic competence emerges as a central pillar of effective instruction. Within the rich communicative ecology of Minangkabau society, international learners confront both challenges and opportunities. By examining directive and expressive speech acts, psychological adaptation, and cross-cultural barriers, this study seeks to illuminate pathways toward more culturally attuned and pragmatically grounded BIPA education. Ultimately, fostering sociopragmatic competence ensures that Indonesian language globalization proceeds not only through structural mastery but through ethical, relational, and culturally resonant communication.

## Materials and Methods

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a naturalistic design, aiming to capture the authentic communicative behaviors of BIPA students in their real-world social environments (Tiawati et al., 2022).

## Setting and Participants

The primary focus of this study is the BIPA program at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat. A focal participant, often cited in these investigations, is a Taiwanese student named Wei Chen (also referred to as Xing-Qian), who participated in the BIPA program in West Sumatra (Tiawati et al., 2022). Additional data includes interactions from other international students, such as those from Korea and Japan, participating in local and regional BIPA initiatives (Asih et al., 2024; Tiawati et al., 2022).

## Data Collection

Data were collected through:

- Naturalistic Observation: Researchers observed students in academic settings (classrooms, language centers) and social settings (boarding houses, city streets).
- Video Recording: Direct recordings were made of real-world interactions to capture the nuances of intonation, body language, and context (Tiawati et al., 2022).
- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with both students and instructors provided insights into the "lived experiences" of cultural adaptation and the challenges of teaching BIPA (Tiawati et al., 2024).
- Document Analysis: Review of teaching materials, students' written work, and cultural track records (Asteria et al., 2024).

## Data Analysis

The analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Huberman, 2015; as cited in Asteria et al., 2024). The recorded video data was transcribed using the "see-note" technique to convert oral expressions into written form (Tiawati et al., 2022). The utterances were then categorized based on their pragmatic function (directives) and psychological intent (expressives).

## Results and Discussion

### Results

The findings at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat (UPGRISBA) demonstrate that sociopragmatic competence among BIPA learners is not an abstract theoretical construct but a measurable and developable communicative skill. Through systematic cultural and pragmatic guidance, international students were able to internalize and operationalize directive and expressive speech acts in ways that aligned with Indonesian sociocultural norms. These findings confirm that pragmatic competence can be cultivated through explicit pedagogical intervention rather than being left to incidental acquisition. The mastery of directive speech acts represents one of the most visible indicators of sociopragmatic adaptation. Directives, by nature, involve influencing the actions of others, and therefore carry a high potential for face-threatening implications. In Indonesian communicative culture, especially within the Minangkabau sociocultural environment, directives are rarely delivered in blunt or imperatival form. Instead, they are mitigated through lexical softeners, modal constructions, intonational patterns, and relational markers that preserve interpersonal harmony. The ability of BIPA learners to adopt such strategies illustrates not merely linguistic proficiency but ethical and relational sensitivity.

One of the clearest examples of successful adaptation was observed in the realization of pleading or requesting acts. Students were guided to employ politeness markers such as *tolong* ("please") combined with softened intonation contours. When a student requested to borrow a book, the utterance was framed not as an entitlement but as a respectful appeal. The inclusion of *tolong* transformed the speech act from a potential imposition into a cooperative interaction. As noted by Tiawati et al. (2022), this form of mitigation reframes the request as an expression of humility, positioning the speaker as morally considerate and socially aware. Such transformation illustrates how a seemingly minor lexical choice carries substantial sociocultural weight. Importantly, the success of this strategy was not limited to isolated classroom exercises. Students demonstrated the ability to generalize this pragmatic awareness across various contexts. For instance, when requesting assistance to be accompanied to the library or guided around the city, learners consistently integrated politeness markers and modal structures. Rather than issuing direct imperatives such as "*Antar saya ke perpustakaan*" ("Take me to the library"), they opted for constructions like "*Bisa tolong antar saya ke perpustakaan?*" This shift reflects an internalization of Indonesian norms of indirectness and relational

deference. The interaction was thereby perceived as a request for voluntary assistance rather than a command that imposes obligation.

The inclusion of *tolong* and interrogative forms functions not merely as grammatical softening but as a sociopragmatic strategy that redistributes power within the interaction. By framing directives as questions, speakers symbolically grant the interlocutor agency. This aligns with Indonesian communicative ethics, where overt assertion of authority may be interpreted as arrogance or insensitivity. Through structured guidance, students learned to recognize that pragmatic success in Indonesia is inseparable from moral positioning. Welcoming and offering gestures provided further evidence of pragmatic integration. Hospitality occupies a central place in Indonesian and particularly Minangkabau social life. The act of inviting someone into one's space or offering refreshments is not a superficial courtesy but a reaffirmation of social bonds. In one observed case, a student invited a guest into their boarding house using culturally appropriate welcoming discourse. The learner avoided abrupt phrasing and instead employed formulaic expressions that conveyed warmth and respect. Such usage indicates not rote memorization but contextual awareness of how hospitality functions as relational maintenance.

Similarly, at the university's language center, a student offered juice to a peer on a hot day. While this may appear trivial, the act reflects a nuanced understanding of Indonesian norms of attentiveness. Offering refreshments in response to environmental discomfort signals empathy and solidarity. From a pragmatic perspective, this offering act constitutes a positive politeness strategy aimed at reinforcing interpersonal closeness. The student's ability to spontaneously enact such behavior demonstrates that sociopragmatic competence extends beyond speech forms into culturally embedded behavioral patterns. Advising acts presented a more complex pragmatic challenge. Advice inherently risks threatening the addressee's autonomy or competence. In Indonesian culture, especially within hierarchical contexts, advice must be delivered carefully to avoid embarrassment or face loss. Students were trained to use question-based softening strategies when advising peers. For example, rather than stating "Your clothes are not appropriate," a learner framed the advice as a reflective inquiry: "Apakah menurutmu pakaian ini sudah cukup sopan untuk konferensi internasional?" ("Do you think this outfit is polite enough for an international conference?"). This approach diffuses direct criticism and invites self-assessment.

Such strategies align with face-saving principles commonly observed in Indonesian discourse. By transforming advice into collaborative reflection, students learned to align with local norms of modesty and mutual respect. This indicates a shift from direct evaluative speech patterns—often transferred from learners' first languages—toward culturally calibrated interactional styles. Inviting acts further illustrated the relational dimension of directive speech. Students engaged in communal planning, such as suggesting lunch together. These invitations were framed inclusively, often using collective pronouns and softened suggestion forms. Invitations functioned not merely as logistical arrangements but as opportunities to strengthen peer relationships. The pragmatic realization of invitations demonstrated awareness that social cohesion in Indonesian contexts is cultivated through shared activities and collaborative gestures.

Beyond directive acts, the study identified expressive speech acts as key indicators of psychological adaptation. Expressive acts—such as gratitude, praise, apology, and emotional disclosure—reveal the internal alignment between learners and their sociocultural environment. Students at UPGRISBA demonstrated sincerity in offering praise and gratitude, which contributed significantly to the supportive classroom atmosphere. In one instance, a student blended English and Indonesian to congratulate a peer. This code-blended expression conveyed authenticity and emotional warmth. Rather than being perceived as linguistic deficiency, the mixture reflected pragmatic creativity and emotional engagement. The congratulatory act strengthened peer confidence and reinforced social solidarity. Such findings align with Rahmat et al. (2024b), who argue that expressive speech acts are deeply intertwined with psychological bonding in educational contexts.

Expressions of gratitude in academic settings were particularly telling. Students frequently acknowledged lecturers' assistance using elaborated gratitude formulas rather than minimal expressions. These utterances reflected an awareness that gratitude in Indonesian culture functions as relational reinforcement rather than mere politeness ritual. The learners' expressions were shaped by emerging friendships and shared academic challenges, demonstrating how language and psychological characteristics are integrated during adaptation.

Furthermore, expressive acts enabled students to articulate both positive and negative experiences. Learners openly shared feelings of amazement at Minangkabau hospitality, joy in cultural discovery, and frustration in navigating unfamiliar norms. The ability to verbalize such emotions in Indonesian marked a significant milestone in sociopragmatic development. Emotional articulation signifies deeper cultural integration because it requires both lexical competence and affective alignment.

Psychologically, the successful performance of expressive acts suggests that learners were transitioning from peripheral participants to engaged community members. Their utterances were not mechanical reproductions but meaningful contributions to shared discourse. This supports the notion that sociopragmatic competence encompasses emotional regulation, empathy, and identity negotiation.

The findings also reveal that systematic pedagogical intervention played a decisive role in this development. Students were not left to infer sociocultural norms implicitly. Instead, instructors provided explicit guidance on directive mitigation, intonational softness, and culturally appropriate phrasing. Role-play simulations, reflective discussions, and feedback sessions enabled learners to experiment with and refine their pragmatic choices.

Such structured guidance mitigates the risk of pragmatic fossilization, where learners repeatedly produce socially inappropriate forms without corrective awareness. By highlighting the sociocultural consequences of directive bluntness or inadequate gratitude, instructors fostered metapragmatic awareness. Students began to evaluate their own utterances not only for grammatical correctness but for relational appropriateness. The interplay between directive and expressive competence reveals a broader pattern of sociopragmatic maturation. Directives demonstrate learners' ability to navigate power and obligation, while expressive acts reflect emotional integration and relational sensitivity. Together, these dimensions form a comprehensive profile of adaptation.

The Minangkabau context adds further depth to this analysis. Indirectness, respect for elders, and communal harmony are deeply embedded in local discourse traditions. Students who successfully adopted softened directives and empathetic expressions demonstrated alignment with these values. Their linguistic behavior signaled not mere compliance but emerging identification with local communicative ethics. Importantly, the study suggests that sociopragmatic adaptation is gradual and dynamic. Early-stage learners often rely on direct forms transferred from their first languages. Through guided exposure and feedback, they progressively recalibrate their interactional style. This trajectory underscores the necessity of sustained pragmatic training rather than one-time cultural orientation sessions. The integration of expressive speech acts also underscores the psychological dimension of language learning. Emotional expression in a second language requires vulnerability and trust. When learners feel safe to articulate gratitude, joy, or difficulty, it indicates a supportive environment conducive to intercultural growth. Moreover, expressive competence fosters classroom cohesion. Praise and gratitude generate positive reinforcement cycles, encouraging collaborative learning. In this sense, expressive acts contribute not only to individual adaptation but to collective academic resilience. The findings therefore affirm that BIPA instruction must prioritize sociopragmatic competence as a core learning outcome. Grammar and vocabulary remain foundational, but without pragmatic calibration, communication risks relational breakdown. Directive mitigation, hospitality practices, advisory softening, and expressive sincerity should be integrated systematically into curriculum design.

## Discussion

The results of this study confirm that the integration of language and culture is not a supplementary dimension of BIPA instruction but a foundational prerequisite for communicative success. At Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat (UPGRISBA), the interaction between linguistic structures and local cultural norms enabled students to move beyond literal translation practices toward contextually appropriate communication. While most international learners demonstrate relative ease in mastering standard Indonesian grammar and vocabulary, real-life interaction in West Sumatra exposes them to informal registers, regional nuances, and colloquial expressions that are rarely captured in textbooks. Without explicit sociocultural orientation, these forms, often labeled as “slang” or everyday informal discourse, remain opaque and potentially misleading (Febria et al., 2023).

This gap illustrates a central paradox in second language acquisition: structural competence does not automatically guarantee pragmatic appropriateness. In classroom settings, students may produce grammatically accurate sentences, yet struggle to interpret or respond to casual community expressions. For example, the use of shortened words, playful address terms, or indirect refusals in daily interaction may cause confusion when learners rely solely on dictionary meanings. Thus, cultural knowledge functions as a linguistic provision for everyday survival. It equips learners with interpretive tools that allow them to decode implied meanings, recognize humor, and respond sensitively to social cues.

The study further highlights that cultural literacy in BIPA extends beyond linguistic variation to encompass broader social values. Understanding Indonesian family structures, communal living patterns, and religious diversity significantly shapes communicative behavior. Indonesia's pluralistic religious landscape requires learners to navigate conversations with awareness of different belief systems, ritual practices, and social sensitivities. Misunderstandings in this domain can lead not only to pragmatic missteps but also to relational friction. Therefore, familiarity with religious tolerance and social respect becomes integral to sociopragmatic competence. In this sense, cultural discourse is not decorative knowledge; it is the ethical infrastructure that sustains harmonious interaction.

Despite the documented successes in directive and expressive speech act adaptation, the study identifies persistent barriers that lead to pragmatic failure. One common source of pragmalinguistic failure involves inappropriate forms of address. For instance, addressing lecturers with the pronoun *kamu*, which is grammatically correct but socially informal, can be interpreted as disrespectful within Indonesian academic hierarchies (Pawoko & Asteria, 2024). Such errors do not stem from malicious intent but from incomplete awareness of status-sensitive pronoun systems. This illustrates the delicate interplay between linguistic form and social meaning. A single lexical choice may alter perceived character, politeness, and relational positioning.

Sociopragmatic failures also emerge from deeper cultural divergences. Learners from cultures that emphasize personal privacy may feel discomfort when asked about age, marital status, or family background, questions that are considered routine and relationship-building in Indonesian contexts (Zulfadhli et al., 2022). Conversely, students may inadvertently violate local norms by engaging in culturally inappropriate behaviors, such as using the left hand for giving or receiving items. These acts, though trivial from a purely linguistic perspective, carry symbolic implications in Indonesian social etiquette. Such misunderstandings reveal that pragmatic adaptation involves embodied cultural awareness as much as verbal skill.

These challenges underscore the limitations of grammar-centered pedagogy. A curriculum focused narrowly on structural accuracy cannot adequately prepare learners for the relational and ethical dimensions of communication. As the findings suggest, innovative pedagogical approaches are required to bridge the gap between classroom theory and lived social experience. Project-based online intercultural collaborative learning has shown promise in this regard, particularly for students with limited exposure to native speakers (Rahmat et al., 2024a). Through collaborative digital projects, learners engage in authentic exchanges that simulate real-life communicative challenges. This method allows them to practice negotiation of meaning, adjust speech styles, and reflect on cultural differences in a structured yet dynamic environment. Furthermore, the revitalization of local wisdom within the BIPA curriculum enhances contextual learning. Integrating Minangkabau philosophical values, such as *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*, provides students with insight into the moral foundations of local discourse. Cultural elements like regional culinary traditions, communal ceremonies, and multicultural literature function as entry points for comparative reflection. When learners analyze Indonesian cultural practices alongside their own, they develop critical cultural awareness, which strengthens both empathy and adaptability (Srikandi, 2020; Rahmat et al., 2024c).

For example, discussions about communal dining customs or festive rituals encourage students to reflect on how food practices encode values of sharing, respect, and hierarchy. Literature-based activities that explore themes of tolerance and coexistence foster interpretive sensitivity. Such activities do more than transmit information; they cultivate intercultural competence. Students begin to recognize that communication involves interpreting symbolic systems embedded within social contexts.

The findings also demonstrate that direct interaction with the local community significantly accelerates adaptation. Classroom simulations cannot fully replicate the unpredictability and nuance of real social engagement. When students participate in community events, volunteer activities, or informal gatherings, they confront authentic communicative demands. These experiences foster transactional cultural competencies, the ability to adjust language, behavior, and emotional expression according to situational cues. Through repeated interaction, learners internalize patterns of politeness, indirectness, and relational alignment.

Community immersion further strengthens psychological confidence. As learners successfully navigate real-world interactions, they develop a sense of belonging and agency. This experiential learning transforms cultural knowledge from abstract awareness into embodied practice. Students no longer merely understand Indonesian norms; they enact them spontaneously. Such transformation indicates that sociopragmatic competence is both cognitive and affective, requiring exposure, reflection, and practice.

Ultimately, the study concludes that successful BIPA education must integrate linguistic proficiency with cultural immersion. Language learning that remains detached from cultural context risks producing competent but socially disconnected speakers. Conversely, culturally grounded pedagogy equips learners with the tools necessary to function as socially competent members of Indonesian society. In a broader sense, this integrative approach prepares students not only for interaction within Indonesia but also for participation in global intercultural environments. By mastering sociopragmatic adaptability, learners acquire transferable skills: sensitivity to hierarchy, awareness of face-saving strategies, and the ability to interpret implicit meanings. These competencies are essential in a globalized world where cross-cultural communication is increasingly routine. Therefore, the findings affirm that BIPA programs must reconceptualize success as more than grammatical mastery. Sociopragmatic competence, rooted in cultural literacy, ethical awareness, and experiential learning, emerges as the central determinant of meaningful adaptation. Through curriculum innovation, community engagement, and reflective practice, BIPA education can produce learners who are not only fluent speakers but also culturally attuned communicators capable of navigating complex social landscapes with respect and confidence.

## Conclusions

The comprehensive analysis of BIPA learners at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat confirms that cultural discourse is not an accessory to language instruction but the very foundation of effective communication. Language competence, in this context, is inseparable from cultural competence. International students who demonstrated success in mastering directive speech acts, such as requesting, inviting, advising, and offering, did so not merely because they memorized lexical markers like *tolong* or polite intonation patterns, but because they understood the underlying cultural values of respect, hierarchy, and communal harmony that shape Indonesian interaction. Similarly, their ability to express psychological states, gratitude, admiration, hesitation, or discomfort, depended on an awareness of how emotion is socially framed within Indonesian communicative norms.

The findings highlight that systematic pedagogical guidance plays a decisive role in this process. When cultural manners (*tata krama*) are explicitly integrated into linguistic practice, students are better equipped to avoid pragmatic failure. Structured exposure to culturally sensitive scenarios, such as addressing lecturers, interacting with elders, or participating in communal gatherings, enables learners to internalize appropriate forms of indirectness, respectful address, and relational alignment. Without such guidance, learners may rely on literal translation from their first language, producing grammatically correct but socially inappropriate utterances. Thus, pedagogical intervention functions as a bridge between formal language knowledge and socially meaningful communication.

Although linguistic barriers remain a persistent challenge, particularly in informal registers, regional variations, and implicit meanings, the study demonstrates that context-based teaching methods significantly mitigate these difficulties. Innovative strategies such as project-based intercultural collaboration, community immersion activities, and reflective discussions on local customs create opportunities for experiential learning. These methods shift the focus from mechanical repetition toward situational awareness and adaptive competence. Students learn not only what to say, but when, how, and to whom it

should be said. In this way, pragmatic awareness gradually replaces rigid rule-following as the central learning outcome.

The inclusion of local wisdom within the BIPA curriculum further strengthens this integrative approach. Introducing learners to Minangkabau philosophical principles, communal traditions, and multicultural realities provides them with a deeper interpretive framework for understanding Indonesian discourse. Cultural elements such as hospitality norms, collective decision-making, and respect for elders are no longer abstract concepts but become embedded in daily communicative practice. By situating language within lived cultural contexts, educators reduce the risk of culture shock and facilitate smoother sociocultural adaptation. Ultimately, fostering cross-cultural understanding within the BIPA program is essential not only for academic success but also for social integration. International students who acquire sociopragmatic competence are more likely to build meaningful relationships, navigate institutional hierarchies, and participate confidently in community life. Such competence promotes mutual respect between local and international communities, contributing to a harmonious intercultural environment. In a broader sense, this approach positions BIPA education as more than language instruction; it becomes a platform for intercultural dialogue and global citizenship. By combining linguistic mastery with cultural sensitivity, the program ensures that learners can navigate Indonesia's rich and diverse social landscape with both communicative accuracy and social confidence.

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