

Learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers Through Digital Platforms

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) plays a strategic role in the era of globalization; however, limitations related to distance and time necessitate continuous pedagogical innovation. This study aims to identify the use of digital platforms YouTube, TikTok, and Duolingo as supporting media for BIPA learning, analyze their effectiveness in enhancing language skills, and map the challenges and solutions in their implementation. A literature review method was employed by analyzing 15 reputable scientific articles published between 2019 and 2024 using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the integration of digital platforms constitutes a crucial strategy in transforming BIPA learning, as it effectively increases learner engagement, flexibility, and motivation through interactive and adaptive instructional materials. Despite challenges related to technical infrastructure, digital literacy, and limited direct interaction, the effectiveness of digital-based BIPA learning can be optimized through strong pedagogical competencies and culturally relevant instructional design. These results affirm that language acquisition for foreign learners is not solely dependent on linear knowledge transfer but is also influenced by audiovisual stimulation and the ability of digital technology to reduce psychological barriers. Practically, this study highlights the importance of integrating digital literacy training into BIPA teacher development programs within higher education institutions.

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1. Introduction

In today's era of globalization, the position of the Indonesian language has become increasingly strategic on the international stage. The growth of cross-border cooperation in the economic, tourism, and education sectors has sparked global interest in mastering Indonesian. This phenomenon is reflected in the rising number of Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) programs established both domestically and abroad. However, the primary challenges in teaching languages to international learners include constraints of distance, time, and diverse learning styles, all of which demand innovation in instructional delivery methods. Along with the rapid advancement of information technology, conventional teaching patterns have begun to shift toward digitalization to create a more adaptive learning ecosystem.

Indonesian language learning for foreign speakers has undergone a significant transformation due to the integration of digital platforms. This transformation enhances the accessibility and effectiveness of the learning process. Since BIPA is a second language for its learners, the acquisition process occurs after they have mastered their primary language (Maharani & Astuti, 2018). With the increasing number of foreign speakers interested in learning Indonesian, the need for effective and engaging teaching methods has become more urgent. Digital platforms – such as learning applications, interactive videos, and collaborative tools – offer various ways to enrich the classroom experience, making the learning process more dynamic and interactive.

In the era of globalization and growing interest in Indonesian language learning among foreigners, higher education institutions are faced with the challenge of not only providing quality Indonesian Language and Language Learning (BIPA) programs but also managing them professionally and sustainably. Managing the BIPA business in higher education institutions is a complex challenge, but it offers significant potential for attracting international students and strengthening intercultural relations (Dewi, 2024).

As a response to these management challenges, the integration of digital technology has become a key strategy for enhancing the quality and reach of BIPA programs. This implementation has been proven to have a significant impact on learners' academic performance. The effectiveness of digital media shows positive results, with an average increase in language proficiency reaching 75% and a user satisfaction rate of 82%. However, this study also identified several technical challenges, such as limited access (35%) and the need for further feature development (25%) (Maulidia et al., 2025). Based on these data, it is evident that digital platforms are highly effective in Indonesian language learning.

The problems faced by foreign speakers in learning the Indonesian language are highly varied. This study analyzes several major obstacles experienced by foreign speakers when utilizing digital platforms for Indonesian language learning. There are three core problems identified among foreign students in BIPA learning: which digital features best support online BIPA instruction, how effective the use of digital platforms is in teaching Indonesian to foreign speakers (BIPA), and what challenges instructors and students face during the BIPA learning process through digital platforms. By increasing digital competency training and access to

technology, alongside the strategic use of digital media in BIPA instruction, there is a significant opportunity to create sustainable solutions that support the advancement of Indonesian as a global language (Pramudianto & Iskandar, 2024).

Based on the background presented, this study aims to: (1) identify and describe various digital features and platforms (such as YouTube, TikTok, and Duolingo) that can be utilized as supporting media in the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) learning process; (2) analyze the effectiveness of using digital platforms in enhancing interaction, flexibility, and the language skills of BIPA learners compared to regular learning methods; and (3) map the challenges and obstacles faced by both instructors and learners in the implementation of digital-based BIPA learning, as well as formulate alternative solutions to overcome them.

2. Method

This study employs a literature review method. The literature method is a process of searching and investigating conducted through the examination of various references, such as books, journal articles, and other publications related to the research theme. The objective of this method is to produce a scholarly work that discusses a specific topic or issue in depth (Solik, 2024). Technically, this review was conducted on 15 scientific articles relevant to the topic of digital-based BIPA learning. These articles were selected within a publication range from 2019 to 2024. The selection of this timeframe aims to ensure that the data and phenomena studied are up-to-date, considering that the development of digital technology in language education has advanced rapidly over the last five years.

The literature selection process was conducted by applying specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included: (1) national or international journal articles discussing digital features in BIPA instruction; (2) articles containing empirical or conceptual data regarding the effectiveness of digital platforms (such as YouTube, TikTok, and Duolingo); and (3) articles published in either Indonesian or English. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria consisted of articles that lacked direct relevance to language teaching for foreign speakers or popular articles without clear scientific references.

The literature search was conducted through several reputable databases, including Google Scholar, Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital), and Scopus. The keywords used in the search included "Digital BIPA Learning," "BIPA Digital Features," "Social Media in BIPA," and "Effectiveness of BIPA Digital Platforms." The analytical procedure in this study employed thematic analysis. The analysis began with a familiarization stage, during which the researcher repeatedly read all the collected articles. Subsequently, a coding process was performed to identify key units of information. The data were then categorized into major themes, namely: (1) the types of digital features utilized, (2) the effectiveness of platform usage, and (3) the challenges in their implementation. The results of this thematic analysis were then synthesized to construct a robust argument and provide a comprehensive conclusion regarding the future of BIPA learning in the digital era.

3. Results and Discussion

Digital Features to Support BIPA Learning

Digital features are functional components or elements within an application, software, or digital platform designed to support user activities in achieving specific goals efficiently and interactively. In the context of learning, digital features refer to tools or services available in digital technology (such as YouTube, TikTok, and Duolingo). These features function to facilitate the learning process, such as learning videos, interactive exercises, discussion forums, speech recognition, automatic subtitles, and so on. These features provide easy access, flexibility, and a more engaging and adaptive learning experience for users, including in learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA).

In the digital era, information technology has become an integral part of the BIPA learning process. The use of digital media not only facilitates access to teaching materials but also opens up opportunities to create more interactive and engaging learning experiences. With the growing need for flexible, technology-based learning media, various digital platforms are beginning to be utilized in BIPA learning. Several social media and specialized applications exist to assist foreign speakers in learning Indonesian, including YouTube, TikTok, and Duolingo.

In the context of learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA), YouTube has become a very impressive medium because it provides a wealth of engaging audio-visual learning materials that are easy for users to download, watch, and access. YouTube is a social media platform that BIPA students can utilize to learn to speak (Dadela et al., 2021). The use of the YouTube digital platform in education can enhance language skills (Nabila & Agus, 2025). YouTube has the potential to improve oral language proficiency, enrich vocabulary, and provide an enjoyable learning experience (Femilasari et al., 2025). This makes the learning process more vibrant and engaging, allowing it to be accessed at any time without the constraints of space and time.

One application that has advanced BIPA learning is TikTok. TikTok displays various short videos that are currently popular among people of various ages and backgrounds, including school and university students. This application is not only used for entertainment but is also starting to be utilized in educational contexts, including in BIPA learning. With its short, engaging, and easily accessible video format, TikTok provides an opportunity for BIPA teachers and students to share and access learning content creatively and interactively. The TikTok application can be used as an interesting and effective learning medium (Dewanta, 2020). In the context of BIPA learning, TikTok can be used to introduce new vocabulary, demonstrate everyday conversations, and introduce Indonesian culture through authentic and communicative content. In addition, TikTok also encourages active participation from learners by inviting them to create Indonesian language content, so that their speaking skills and confidence can develop significantly. TikTok is also entertaining and useful. There are a number of basic competencies in Indonesian language learning that students have seen on TikTok, such as narratives, procedures, expositions, explanations, and anecdotes, although not all students have observed these texts on TikTok (Mana, 2021).

Duolingo is a language learning app designed to be interactive and adaptive, making it ideal for non-native speakers who want to learn Indonesian. Learning apps like Duolingo have the ability to motivate and engage users in learning (Hidayatullah et al., 2024). Duolingo presents learning materials in the form of short, engaging exercises, covering vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening. In the context of BIPA learning, Duolingo can help learners build a foundation in Indonesian gradually and systematically. The app also features a scoring and repetition system that allows users to measure their progress and strengthen their understanding. Its easy access and user-friendly design make Duolingo an effective self-learning tool for non-native speakers who want to learn Indonesian anytime and anywhere. Duolingo offers materials that can be tailored to individual needs, provides immediate feedback, and employs a gamification approach that enhances learning motivation (Fikri, 2025). Various learning applications and tools, such as Google, Radio Garden, Wordsearch, Crosswordlab.com, podcasts, videographics, infographics, and teleprompters, can be utilized as supplementary resources to improve language skills (Ruhaliah et al., 2022).

Comprehensively, the integration of digital features through YouTube, TikTok, and Duolingo creates a multi-perspective BIPA learning ecosystem. The diversity of these features does not merely target the mastery of linguistic aspects but also reduces the psychological barriers of foreign learners, such as language anxiety, by presenting content that is recreational yet educational. With the presence of voice recognition features on Duolingo, cultural visualization on TikTok, and the wealth of audio-visual references on YouTube, BIPA learners receive broader sensory stimulation. Ultimately, this enables a more natural internalization of the language, where learners no longer feel pressured by rigid grammatical rules; instead, they are motivated by the ease of accessibility and the relevance of the materials to real-life experiences in the digital age.

How Effective is the Use of Digital Platforms in Learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers

Indonesian language learning for foreign speakers is highly diverse, and interaction between teachers and learners is key to building effective and meaningful language understanding. Digital media can support more interactive and creative BIPA learning (Solikhah & Nurlina, 2024). This interaction is not limited to verbal communication but also includes the use of media, cultural context, and teaching methods tailored to the learners' needs and backgrounds. In the learning process, teachers are required to present material that is engaging, communicative, and easy to understand, while learners are expected to actively respond, ask questions, and practice using the language directly. With an interactive and adaptive approach, the BIPA learning process becomes more dynamic and encourages the development of comprehensive language skills. Digital platforms also offer more engaging and interactive patterns than traditional methods, which tend to be more monotonous. This is because digital platforms offer greater time flexibility compared to traditional, location-bound learning. Furthermore, digital platforms focus on language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Social media has been used as an interactive learning tool. This digital platform can be utilized to increase student engagement and collaboration in learning Indonesian (Solik, 2024).

Digital platforms open up opportunities for students worldwide to engage in the teaching and learning process and collaborate with instructors and fellow students, without the constraints of geography or time. This is crucial for BIPA learning, given the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants. Overall, digital platforms offer significant potential for enhancing the effectiveness of BIPA learning. Knowledge of digital platforms can be gained through workshops. Workshops have a positive impact on teachers. Research shows that participants' understanding of digital literacy materials improved after attending the workshops. 86% of participants gained a good understanding of the material related to digital platforms, and 82% of participants were able to use learning applications (Wardhana et al., 2021).

These findings indicate that workshops play a strategic role in improving teachers' digital competencies, particularly in understanding digital literacy and applying technology in the learning process. With this increased understanding, it is hoped that teachers can be more effective in utilizing digital platforms to support innovative and interactive teaching and learning activities. However, achieving optimal results requires careful planning, sound instructional design, adequate technological infrastructure, and an active teacher role. Further research is needed to explore various aspects of the effectiveness of digital platforms in the context of BIPA, including their impact on student motivation, achievement, and satisfaction. Digital media is effective in enhancing linguistic and sociocultural competencies for foreign students (Ariandi, 2025). The use of digital media has also proven effective in Arabic language learning (Hasanuddin, 2024). Digital platforms, such as Duolingo, Google Classroom, and Kahoot!, effectively increase students' motivation and language skills (Ainunnajih et al., 2025). Furthermore, interactive digital platforms effectively improve students' academic outcomes (Rahayu, 2025).

The synergy between teachers' digital competence and the utilization of interactive platforms ultimately creates a learning model that is not only technically effective but also sustainable. This effectiveness is evidenced by the ability of digital platforms to provide personalized learning, where each BIPA student can regulate their learning pace according to their individual level of understanding without feeling left behind by the group. Furthermore, the global connectivity offered by digital media enables the creation of virtual learning communities that transcend the boundaries of traditional classrooms. Consequently, digital platforms are not merely supplementary tools but transformative instruments capable of converting geographical barriers into opportunities for authentic cultural collaboration, allowing the mastery of the Indonesian language by foreign speakers to be achieved more naturally and comprehensively.

Challenges in Learning BIPA Through Digital Platforms

Learning Indonesian for BIPA through digital platforms offers many advantages, but it also presents several challenges that teachers and students must overcome. One of the most common challenges is limited access to technology. Not everyone has adequate digital devices or a fast and stable internet connection. This can disrupt the learning process, especially when using media such as videos or interactive applications that require a good internet connection. The quality of learning is greatly influenced by stable internet access (Kurniawati & Nurlina, 2024).

Another obstacle is the ability to operate technology. Students who are not used to using applications such as YouTube and TikTok may feel confused or have difficulty at first. The same can happen to teachers who are not used to managing digital classes or creating technology-based teaching materials. As a result, the teaching and learning process can be less than optimal.

Another challenge is the lack of direct interaction between teachers and students. In language learning, direct speaking and listening practice is crucial. Through digital platforms, students sometimes feel less confident speaking and cannot receive immediate feedback or correction from teachers as they would during face-to-face learning. This impacts educational performance, especially when virtual interactions require different communication methods than in-person learning (Pramudianto & Iskandar, 2024). Furthermore, time differences and cultural backgrounds also pose challenges. Because BIPA participants come from various countries, learning times can vary, and teachers need to adapt the content to make it easily understood by students with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Another equally important challenge is maintaining enthusiasm for learning. Independent learning through digital platforms requires high levels of discipline. If students become bored or don't understand the material, they can lose motivation and quit. However, these challenges can be overcome. Solutions include providing technology training for teachers, creating engaging and easy-to-understand learning materials, and providing adequate technical support. With these efforts, digital BIPA learning can continue to run smoothly and be enjoyable.

Overall, the success of mitigating challenges in digital BIPA learning depends heavily on the readiness of a holistic educational ecosystem. Emerging technical and pedagogical challenges demand continuous adaptation, where instructors serve not only as content providers but also as technology facilitators capable of creating a warm and inclusive virtual classroom atmosphere. A blended learning approach, or the combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods, can be an effective strategy to bridge the constraints of time zone differences and limited direct interaction. By strengthening digital literacy among educators and providing content with strong cultural relevance, these barriers can be transformed into opportunities for innovation. Ultimately, the key to the sustainability of BIPA programs in the digital era lies in the active collaboration between institutions, instructors, and learners in building a learning community that is resilient and adaptive to technological changes.

4. Conclusions

This study concludes that the integration of digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Duolingo constitutes a crucial strategy in the transformation of BIPA learning within the global era. The utilization of digital features has proven effective in increasing learner engagement, flexibility, and motivation through the presentation of interactive and adaptive materials. Despite significant challenges regarding technical infrastructure, digital literacy, and limited direct interaction, the effectiveness of digital platforms can be optimized through the synergy between proficient teaching competencies and culturally relevant instructional designs.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the digital pedagogy paradigm in second language acquisition. The findings affirm that language acquisition for foreign speakers does not rely solely on the linear transfer of knowledge but is also

influenced by audio-visual stimulation and the reduction of psychological barriers (language anxiety) enabled by digital technology. Furthermore, this research provides a conceptual foundation for a multi-perspective BIPA learning ecosystem, in which entertainment platforms (YouTube and TikTok) can be converted into effective formal educational media.

Practically, this study implies the importance of higher education institutions integrating digital literacy training into BIPA teacher development programs. The use of the blended learning method is recommended as a practical solution to overcome the constraints of time zone differences and geographical limitations. Furthermore, the BIPA curriculum needs to be revised by incorporating authentic digital content, ensuring that learners not only master grammar but also understand the actual and popular Indonesian cultural contexts.

Given that this study employs a literature review method, there are several areas that should be explored by future researchers: (1) conducting quantitative studies or field experiments to specifically measure the effectiveness of a particular platform on the improvement of specific language skills (for instance, the impact of TikTok on speaking skills); (2) examining the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) in creating more realistic conversation simulations for BIPA learners; and (3) investigating the long-term impact of using gamification applications (such as Duolingo) on the vocabulary retention rates of foreign speakers after the learning program has concluded.

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