

# Indonesia–Thailand Culture Similarities and Their Contributions in BIPA Learning

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**Abstract**—One manifestation of learning Indonesian is Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA). BIPA learning is an embodiment of efforts to improve the function of Indonesian into an international language. This paper examines the importance of the existence of Indonesian-Thai cultural parity and its contribution in BIPA learning both in Indonesia and in Thailand. This type of research is qualitative with ethnographic strategies. The data analysis technique used was qualitative and quantitative. The results of the study showed that there are many similarities/parities in Indonesian and Thai culture that are apparently close to daily life, such as culture of greeting, dressing, food, traditional arts, and others. The large number of parities makes it easy for BIPA students to understand and imagine the concrete forms of Indonesian language and culture and their application in daily life. The conclusions of the results of this study are the closeness of cultural groups between Indonesia and Thailand to be an alternative door for learning and the spread of Indonesian in Thailand more broadly.

**Keywords:** *cultural parity, Indonesia–Thailand, Indonesian as second language*

## I. INTRODUCTION

BIPA is learning Indonesian language for foreign speakers or non-Indonesian language speakers. Essentially, BIPA is the process of learning Indonesian language which is consciously planned, directed, and organized for the learning importance of foreign learners [6]. BIPA program is developing in line with the development of the existing needs. The development of BIPA nowadays is increasing, either inside the country or abroad. Nowadays, there are 45 countries, including Thailand, that are teaching Bahasa Indonesia (Kompas, October 29, 2013). Meanwhile, there are 44 universities in Indonesia, and around 10 language institutions conducting BIPA program. It shows that BIPA is rapidly developing along with the increase of Indonesian language and culture learners.

Foreign learners really need mastering Indonesian language skills and understanding Indonesian academic culture appropriately in order to be able to attend classes, studies, or research in Indonesia properly and on time. Language and culture are closely related and inseparable. Culture can be interpreted as meaning similarity toward aspects of

human life and it is expressed with language. Guirdham (2005:46) states:

*“Culture is about ‘shared meanings’. Meanings are produced and exchanged through language, which is the medium through which we “make sense” of things. Meaning can only be shared through language. Thus, “to say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other.”*

Other things related to culture as stated by Ellis (1995:198) that is second language learners have different attitude towards: second language (learned language), second language speakers, second language culture, social value in learning second language, usage of second language, and his/herself as the member of the culture itself. The similarity between their own culture and the target culture becomes the proper medium in language learning and establishing cooperation. It can be found easily between Indonesian culture and Thailand culture. BIPA is one of the ways to start the cooperation by sending or receiving foreign learners. It is also one of international manifests built under the program of The Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education and U to U program between colleges.

Based on the description above, this study discusses a study of analyzing the similarity between the Indonesian and Thailand culture. With the apparent culture similarities, it will certainly ease the foreign learners in learning Indonesian language. The similarities can be used in developing the teaching materials of Indonesian language for foreign learners from Thailand, indeed with the culture similarities between both countries. The discussion is described in sub-discussions: they are the forms of culture similarities between Indonesia and Thailand, the role of culture similarities within BIPA learning based on BIPA teachers’ view, and the role of culture similarities within BIPA learning based on the learners’ view.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching materials are a set of learning tools consisted of learning materials, methods, boundaries, and evaluation which are designed systematically and interesting in order to achieve the expected goals, achieving the competence or sub-competence with all its complexities. Meanwhile, the essence of teaching materials as "Instructional material contain the content either written, mediated, or facilitated by an instructor that a student as use to achieve the objective also include information that the learners will use to guide the progress." [1]

The forms of teaching materials or learning materials are printed materials (handouts, books, modules, student workbooks, brochures, and leaflets), audio materials (radio, cassette, audio CD), visual materials (photographs or pictures), audio visual (video/movie or VCD) and multi-media (interactive CD, computer based materials, and internet) [2]. Therefore, it can be concluded that BIPA teaching materials is a set of learning materials consisted of Indonesian language learning materials for foreign speakers and the methods with the evaluation instruments in achieving the competences.

BIPA learning lead the foreign speaker able to master Bahasa Indonesia and use Indonesian language in all occassions. BIPA learning has different characteristic with common Indonesian language learning. One of them is having adult learners. Language learning for adults has different specific characteristics [3] [4]. Second language learners have different attitude towards the second language (target language), second language speakers, second language culture, social value in learning the second language, usage of second language, and his or herself as its member of the his or her culture itself [3].

BIPA learning refers to the aspects of language functions. Foreign learners learn Indonesian language with all the necessities and purposes. Generally, BIPA learning is oriented by communication needs. The learning is purposed to equip the learners in order to be able to communicate using Bahasa Indonesia properly [5]. However, one of the forms of other BIPA learning is BIPA learning for academic needs.

BIPA does not only focus on language learning, but also relates to the culture aspects within it [5]. The culture itself cannot be separated from human life. It was born from the interaction between human being and its environment. It tends to complete the community needs itself (self-sufficient). Contrary to this view, it can be stated that language owned and used by the society is the culture product from the community itself. The language born and developed, appropriate with the society dynamics within its interation with its environment. It happend because the presence of the language tends to fullfil the community needs within the interaction with its environment [7]

BIPA learning becomes the significant and potential medium in introducing Indonesian society and their culture. Therefore, in promoting the Indonesian image positively and completing the market needs for foreign people, BIPA learning needs to be conducted systematically and handed seriously by the institution. Pedagogy norms of BIPA learning need to include the culture aspects and deliver it to the foreign learners. The pedagogy norms involve the study of culture norms and the usage of language actually and the implementation of pedagogy purpose [7].

## III. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative research by using ethnograph strategy to understand the characteristics of culture similarities between Thailand and Indonesia. Ethnograph approach is used as one of the strategies claimed having the potency to explore, explain, and understand the phenomenon of culture similarity between Thailand and Indonesia within BIPA learning context. The findings with putting forward the ethnograph strategy will be used as the materials in order to prepare the teaching materials of BIPA learning based on culture similarities in the following years. The research subject are BIPA learners and teachers in Yala Rajabhat University (YRU) and Yogyakarta State University (UNY). The research objectives are all the culture phenomenon of Indonesia and Thailand that share similarities. The culture phenomenon is obtained by interviewing, observasing, questionnaire, and documentation study.

This study was conducted in Yala Rajabath University and Yogyakarta State University. It was conducted from March to September, 2019. The research data can be divided into two criteria; they are primary data and secondary data. Primary data of the study are all the culture phenomena of Indonesia and Thailand which are considered sharing similarities. In obtaining the primary data, the researcher used interview, observation, and questionnaire techniques, while for the secondary data, the researcher used document content analysis to analyze the culture content in teaching materlals of BIPA for BIPA learner from Thailand.

The analysis technique used in the study is descriptive qualitative and quantitative techniques. Descriptive qualitative technique is used to analyze the data related to the phenomenon of culture similarity between Indonesia and Thailand, either from learner view or teacher view. Meanwhile, the quantitative analysis technique is used for discovering the material quantity of culture similarities between Thailand and Indonesia in BIPA teaching materials for Thailand learners. Based on the ethnograph approach used, the researcher conducted some stages:

- (1) Collecting the data of culture similarities phenomena between Thailand and Indonesia

- from BIPA learner and teacher for Thailand BIPA learners;
- (2) Classifying the culture similarities between Thailand and Indonesia;
  - (3) Classifying the culture similarities between Thailand and Indonesia contained in BIPA teaching materials;
  - (4) Elaborating the culture similarities phenomena with their meaning that need to be included in teaching materials;
  - (5) Concluding the findings.

The data validity used in the research is data triangulation. The triangulation used is source, theory, and method of triangulation. The collected data in the research will be checked and searched the valid data. Moreover, the data validity uses interrater and intrarater.

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the analysis conducted, some important things were found as follow.

*A. Culture Similarity Form*

The following findings of research are presented in table.

TABLE I. ASPECTS OF INDONESIAN – THAI CULTURAL PARITY

Aspect of Parity	Forms in Indonesian & Thai
Name similarity	Islamic name and local/national name
Environment (geography, urban planning)	Plateau, coast, lands Buildings, schools, apartments, office/goverments buildings Settlements, river banks
Greetings/introduction	Friendly
Politeness	Formal language for older people Handshake and hug with friends looked down if it passes in front of an older person
Daily Fashion	Informal: t-shirt, jeans, sandals Formal: shirt, fabric pants, shoes
Shopping Center	Traditional market, mall, streetfood, street vendors, weekend market
Bargaining	Bargaining in traditional market and tourism places
Rule of law	Traffic rules, wedding rules, society rules
Transportation	Variety of public/private transportation: air, sea, land

	Same transportation modes: car, train, bike, motorbike, bus, plane, ship. On-line & offline transportation as well.
Cullinary	Rice, vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices
Traditional Ceremonies	Harvest, wedding, funeral, pray for rain, etc.
Traditional Arts	Dances, gamelan, puppets
Oral story, myth, fairy tale	Same story (curse, rebellious child, sweetie child), magic story
Place of Prayer	Mosque, church, temple
Historical heritage sites	Temple, buildings, mosque

The table contains culture similarity forms either in Indonesia or Thailand. Based on the indicators collected, the similarity proofs between both countries can be found. It becomes the new hope for Indonesia, particularly within BIPA learning. The findings can be a recommendation in developing BIPA teaching materials for foreign learners from Thailand in order to get particular guidebook for learning Indonesia language. Based on the table findings, it can be identified that 80% general indicators recommended have similarities with the culture aspect in Thailand.

As it is already known, that Indonesians have politeness culture in their language. Communication language in Indonesian language has two categories; they are formal and informal. Even in local language, such as Javanese, has more categories to show the politeness level in language. It turns out to also exist in the culture and language of Thai people. They have some levels of language showing the gentleness and politeness level of language, even it can identify the closeness and kinship level. The culture similarities of language politeness certainly ease the first learners who want to try the various languages in Indonesia. They will easily receive variation of Bahasa Indonesia and its usage because from the origin culture, it already own and get used to use it.

Second similarity which tightly relates to the habit of Indonesian people is driving a bargain aspect.

Driving a bargain can happen everywhere and in every commerce. It happens both in Indonesia and Thailand. The activity of bargaining becomes the economic rotation keys in both countries. The society highly sticks on the activity and keeps it until now. The habit of bargaining also causes prestige for its community.

In Indonesia, most people will be satisfied and proud if they have won a bargain for the goods/services they want. That also applies in Thailand. This cultural similarity inherits BIPA students from Thailand in respecting the attitudes and patterns of thinking in representing something. That of course makes it easy for students to accept and the Indonesian they receive.

Besides the abstract similarities, the indicator also includes cultural similarities which can be seen in physical forms, namely the environment, transportation, historical sites, places of worship and clothing. This tangible similarity can be a reference for BIPA students to understand and know the meaning in Indonesian. However, it also needs to be understood depending on the teacher. Thus, BIPA teachers must have the ability to criticize something so that it can be processed into materials or materials that can be strengthened in BIPA learning.

TABLE II. TABLE II. CULTURAL PARITY INDONESIAN – THAI IN BIPA MODULE

Aspects	Cultural Similarity	Focus language Skills in Moduls and Level
Introductions	Greetings Talking with friends Talking with elder people Talking with younger people	Listening and speaking – basic level
Appearance (Fashion)	Traditional clothes in ritual or traditional ceremony	Structure – basic and intermediate levels
Foods	Types of food Taste of foods Processing food method	Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Structure – basic level
Religion	Type of religion, place of prayer	Reading, Structure – basic and intermediate levels
Traffic Rules	Roads signs; traffic jam; crossing bridge; fine	Reading, Structure – basic and intermediate levels
Bargaining	Place of bargain like traditional market, how to bargain, vocabs of bargaining	Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Structure – basic level
Traditional Arts	Dances, puppets, songs	Reading and Writing – Intermediate level
Education	Level of education; materials, source of learning	Speaking, Reading and Writing – Intermediate and Advance levels

Based on Table 2, it can be identified regarding the cultural similarities in BIPA teaching materials at some books, namely the indicators of politeness in language, appearance, eating/drinking, worship places, traffic, bargaining, arts, and education. In this section, what is more highlighted is the similarities regarding traffic culture and the arts. Discipline traffic culture has become a must for Thai people. They really take advantage of the sidewalks and crossing bridges for pedestrians. In Indonesia, it's the same, only the level of discipline and self-awareness has not been formed perfectly. In addition, Thailand also has the same driving rules, namely driving on the right side and similar direction signs. Of course this indicates that the rules and laws of traffic management in Thailand and Indonesia are similar.

This similarity is very helpful for Thai students who are exploring Indonesia for the first time. Given all the similar traffic rules, it will not be difficult to survive and understand the culture and habits of the Indonesian people. This also applies in learning Indonesian language. When getting the learning materials for this theme, students will find it easier to get the equivalent words and meanings and understand comprehensively. The next topic is similarity in terms of art. Both traditional and modern art, Indonesia and Thailand have many similarities, one of which is puppet shows. Not only in terms of the physical puppets and plays, even the story also has similarities with the traditional puppet stories in Indonesia called *wayang*. This is in view of the beginnings of civilization in Indonesia which embraced Buddhism, and Thailand is one of the largest Buddhist countries in the world. So, do not be surprised if Indonesia and Thailand have a lot in common in terms of tales and beliefs.

#### *B. The Role of Similarities in BIPA Learning from BIPA Teaching Perspectives*

BIPA learning will be a memorable and useful learning if the students can accept and apply language materials in their daily lives in accordance with the purpose of learning Indonesian language. This will be realized, of course, with the support of professional teachers and an effective classroom atmosphere. In terms of teaching staff, to achieve successful learning certainly requires teachers who have broad insight and good pedagogical skills. One of the things that supports the learning ability is the similarity of principles and views between the teacher and the learner. In this case, the role of cultural similarity is obligatory to be raised.

Understanding cultural similarity will facilitate students in learning Indonesian language content/material. In addition, cultural similarity is very useful for the preparation of teaching materials, methods, and BIPA learning strategies. From the teacher's perspective, the existence of cultural similarity for teachers will make it easier to find

equivalent content/material in Indonesian. Teachers can take advantage of cultural similarities to provoke or stimulate the learning process. The function of cultural similarity here can also be applied to stimulate material with their culture so that it enters Indonesian culture and the language learned is more accessible and effective.

Cultural similarity help teachers in bringing learners to situations they recognize so that language becomes more meaningful. Teachers are also assisted in the development of the material because it is not bothered by searching for material that the instructor lacks in mastery. In the pragmatic field, cultural similarity is useful as the highest mastery of language because it is related to meaning. If the learner knows the culture, then the language will be more in accordance with its meaning.

### *C. The Role of Cultural Similarities in BIPA Learning from BIPA Learning Perspectives*

BIPA learners are foreign learners who are active in learning Indonesian with specific goals. In general, the final estuary of BIPA learning is aimed at work, research, and other academic fields. To achieve this success, of course it takes a strong commitment from the learner. Cultural similarities help students in imagining language in a more concrete and meaningful form. Cultural similarities make students have schemata that makes them more responsive and understandable. Many cultural similarities that are owned by Indonesia and Thailand will facilitate foreign students, especially Thai in devouring the material and variations of Indonesian language.

Foreign students can take advantage of shadows that are formed from various cultural similarities that exist in the form of writing that characterizes and bills every Indonesian language learning. In addition, in terms of daily communication, learners will also be facilitated by the many similarities that exist. They can project and describe something with the same substance as things in Indonesia. Thus, the limitations of communication language both oral and written can be reduced or even avoided by the presence of such similarity.

## V. CONCLUSION

Indonesian-Thai cultural similarities include both shaped and shapeless aspects. The shaped aspects are in the form of clothing, foods, drinks, transportation, buildings, arts, environment, and places of worship. Shapeless cultural similarities are in the form of politeness in language, greetings, and bargaining habits. Cultural similarities in its contribution to BIPA learning from the teachers' perspective include: usefulness for the preparation of teaching materials, methods, and BIPA learning strategies. While from

the perspective of BIPA learners includes assisting learners in imagining language in a more concrete and meaningful form. Cultural similarities make students have scheme that makes them more responsive and understandable.

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