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Policy Study on Basic Indonesian Language Education for Foreign Speakers in Indonesian Universities from the Perspective of Language Education Planning: A Case Study of Chinese Students at Yogyakarta State University

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Abstract

This article discusses the implementation of the Basic Indonesian Language for Foreigners (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing, or BIPA) policy in Indonesian higher education institutions from the perspective of language education planning and its significance. In recent years, the Indonesian government has gradually implemented BIPA programs to enhance the international influence of the Indonesian language. On the other hand, as academic and cultural exchanges between China and Indonesia continue to grow, an increasing number of Chinese students are pursuing their studies in Indonesia, making language adaptation challenges increasingly prominent. In this context, research on how BIPA policies help Chinese students overcome linguistic barriers and adapt to the learning environment in Indonesian universities holds considerable importance. The study focuses on the basic Indonesian language courses offered by Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) for Chinese students. Methodologically, this article employs a combination of literature analysis, policy text interpretation, and questionnaire-based surveys: on one hand, it examines relevant academic research and policy documents to establish a theoretical foundation; on the other, it analyzes BIPA policy texts at both the national government and UNY levels, while also collecting feedback from Chinese students through questionnaires and interpreting the survey data through the lens of Language Policy and Planning (LPP) theory. The article concludes that higher education institutions should formulate curriculum policies, teaching methodologies, and instructional content in alignment with the requirements stipulated in

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national policy, while also integrating these elements with the university's broader human resource development objectives. Furthermore, universities should encourage both instructors and students to actively participate in the development and refinement of language education policies. Specifically, curriculum policy should emphasize systematic course design and provide diverse course options tailored to students with varying levels of Indonesian proficiency; teaching methodology policy should guide instructors toward approaches that foster independent learning and holistic student development; and instructional content policy should offer clear guidance for selecting materials that are authentic, comprehensive, professionally relevant, and aligned with students' academic competencies and career aspirations.

Keywords: LPP, BIPA, UNY.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the largest country in Southeast Asia, is actively promoting strategies to internationalize the Indonesian language. In 2009, Indonesia enacted Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the National Flag, Language, State Emblem, and National Anthem, followed in 2014 by Government Regulation No. 57 of 2014 on the Development, Cultivation, and Preservation of Language and Literature, as well as the Enhancement of the Function of the Indonesian Language. These legal instruments formally establish the policy direction aimed at elevating the international status of Indonesian. Such policies have spurred initiatives to promote the internationalization of Indonesian through its teaching as a foreign language (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing, or BIPA).

Research on language planning and policy (LPP) has been a prominent topic in linguistics since the 1950s. Language planning is generally understood as deliberate efforts by governments or other authorities to regulate the use, status, and structure of a language through the formulation of linguistic policies. Among various types of language planning, educational language planning is widely regarded as the most effective and influential means of realizing linguistic change. Other forms of language planning such as status planning and corpus planning ultimately rely on educational language planning for their implementation; even prestige or image planning is significantly shaped by the success of educational planning. In other words, educational language planning is often viewed as the primary, if not the sole, pathway to achieving linguistic transformation within society.

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In line with the dynamics of globalization and the Indonesian government's growing attention to the international standing of the Indonesian language, the importance of Indonesian as both a regional and global language has become increasingly evident. The Indonesian government has recently set a target for Indonesian to become one of the official languages of ASEAN and, through the establishment of BIPA programs in numerous countries, is actively promoting its global dissemination. To date, BIPA programs have been implemented in 428 institutions worldwide, and the number of foreign speakers of Indonesian continues to grow. Among this population, Chinese students constitute one of the largest groups enrolled in Indonesian higher education institutions. At Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY), for instance, Chinese students account for more than half of the total international student population. Moreover, many Chinese universities have established partnerships with Indonesian institutions to send Indonesian language majors as exchange students. Within this context, the policy governing the teaching of basic Indonesian language for foreign students in Indonesian higher education institutions warrants in-depth scholarly examination.

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This study adopts a Language Policy and Planning (LPP) perspective to examine the policy on basic Indonesian language education for foreign learners implemented in Indonesian higher education institutions particularly at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) with Chinese students as the focal case. The inquiry holds practical relevance: Indonesian is increasingly recognized as one of the key working languages along the "Belt and Road" corridor, and improving the quality of language instruction for international students not only supports their academic and cross-cultural adaptation but also strengthens Indonesia's broader efforts to internationalize its national language.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Language Education Planning Theory

The foundation of language education planning is often traced to Cooper's (1989) seminal work Language Planning and Social Change, which argues that language planning as the orchestration of relationships among language, people, and society must account for human language learning and educational practices (p. 35). Language education is thus an indispensable focus of language planning. Also referred to as acquisition planning, it encompasses the learning objectives learners are expected to achieve through formal education systems. As part of the linguistic ecosystem, language education planning supports individual and community language development, enhances functional uses of language, and addresses social, institutional, or personal needs (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2003). It bridges second and foreign language teaching with broader language policy, integrating pedagogical practice into structural and holistic policy frameworks while drawing attention to classroom-level implementation within the discipline of LPP.

In terms of process, language education planning typically follows a sequence: pre-survey planning, survey implementation, survey reporting, policy decision-making, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (R. B. Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 124). Language policy in education aims to standardize key elements such as the target language, learning objectives, instructional duration, teaching methodologies, materials, and assessment criteria.

To address the theoretical fragmentation in language education policy research (Nagel, 1990), Kaplan and Baldauf (2013) proposed an analytical framework comprising seven interrelated policy domains: (1) Access Policy who learns which language, when, and how it is integrated into curricula; (2) Personnel Policy covering teacher selection, training, and roles of supervisors and administrators; (3) Curriculum Policy defining content organization and assessment design; (4)

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Materials and Method Policy determining teaching resources and pedagogical approaches; (5) Resourcing Policy allocating financial and logistical support critical to program success; (6) Evaluation Policy establishing metrics to measure policy impact; and (7) Community Policy ensuring local stakeholder engagement in language education initiatives (pp. 217–220). This framework offers a comprehensive model for analyzing the development and structure of language education planning.

The ultimate goal of such planning is to tailor language programs to diverse learner needs whether for language reacquisition, maintenance, foreign language learning, or language shift. Once national-level goals are set, more specific educational objectives must be defined to guide school-based programming, including decisions on curriculum time allocation, pedagogical theories, syllabus design, teaching materials, and teacher certification or professional development (Kennedy, 2001).

BIPA Education Policy

"BIPA" (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing) refers to programs designed to promote Indonesian as a foreign language. Originating from the Darmasiswa Scholarship Program launched by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture in 1974 initially for ASEAN students it expanded globally by the early 1990s to include all countries with diplomatic ties to Indonesia. Since then, the Agency for Language Development and Cultivation (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, or BPPB) has positioned BIPA as a tool of "language diplomacy," supporting Indonesian language curricula abroad to advance cultural and linguistic outreach. By 2021, BPPB had established 87 teaching centers in 38 countries, deployed 279 Indonesian language instructors, and reached over 10,000 foreign learners.

The government further strengthens BIPA through digital and certification initiatives. In 2018, BPPB launched the BIPA Online Learning Platform (BIPA Daring), featuring modules for learning ("Belajar"), institutional support ("Jaga"), teacher community ("Bakti"), online instruction ("Tebar"), and proficiency testing ("Tera"). These provide global learners and educators with curriculum designs, teaching materials, and standardized assessments. Complementing state efforts, non-governmental bodies like the Association of Foreign Language Teachers and Indonesian Language Promotion (APPBIPA) contribute by setting teacher qualification standards, organizing academic seminars, and offering intellectual support for international promotion. Together, these actors have built a relatively comprehensive BIPA ecosystem combining governmental coordination, civil society engagement, online platforms, and face-to-face

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instruction.

Application of LPP in Higher Education and Foreign Language Teaching Research

Language Policy and Planning (LPP) theory has been widely applied in higher education and foreign language teaching research. Recent studies have employed LPP frameworks to analyze language curricula and policy design in multilingual university settings. For instance, Yessenbekova (2023) examined English-medium instruction policies in Kazakhstani higher education, while Tajik et al. (2023) investigated faculty and student responses to such policies, alongside research on STEM educators' adaptation to bilingual teaching mandates. These works demonstrate LPP's effectiveness in unpacking curriculum design and policy implementation in higher education. Similarly, LPP can elucidate the rationale, execution, and outcomes of foreign language education policies such as Indonesian language programs for international students in China, analogous to Mandarin-as-a-foreign-language initiatives. Building on this body of work, the present study adopts LPP as its theoretical lens to critically examine BIPA education policies for foreign learners in Indonesian universities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative strategies to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the research problem.

First, a literature analysis was conducted to collect and critically review scholarly publications and official documents related to Indonesian language policy, BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing) instruction, and international student education. This included examining Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the National Flag, Language, State Emblem, and National Anthem, along with its implementing regulations, to understand the legal framework governing the promotion of the Indonesian language; reviewing policy documents and reports issued by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology regarding BIPA initiatives; and analyzing recent academic studies on BIPA curriculum design and the effectiveness of Indonesian language teaching for international learners. This stage established the theoretical foundation and contextual background for the study.

Second, a policy text interpretation was carried out through in-depth content analysis of national-level Indonesian language policy documents and institutional policies from UNY. Guided by LPP frameworks, this analysis focused on three dimensions: status planning (e.g., the designation of Indonesian as an official or strategic international communication language),

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acquisition planning (e.g., measures to promote Indonesian language learning in educational settings), and corpus planning (e.g., the development of standardized curricula and teaching materials).

Third, a survey accompanied by interviews was designed and administered to Chinese international students enrolled in the Basic Indonesian Language course at UNY to gather their feedback on various aspects of the program. The survey instrument assessed student satisfaction, perceived linguistic and cultural adaptation challenges, perceived benefits of the course, and suggestions for improvement, thereby providing empirical insights into the policy's implementation from the learners' perspective.

DISCUSSION

BIPA Programs in Indonesia

Through long-term implementation, BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing) programs in Indonesia have developed a relatively comprehensive framework encompassing curriculum design, proficiency standards, teaching materials, and instructor qualifications to accommodate learners at different levels and ensure consistent teaching quality.

The BIPA curriculum is structured hierarchically into beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, each aligned with specific communicative functions and language competencies as defined by the Language Development Agency (Badan Bahasa) under Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture. At the beginner level, instruction focuses on everyday communication and basic grammar such as self-introduction, greetings, and shopping expressions. The intermediate level expands vocabulary and introduces more complex sentence structures to enable discussion of general social and cultural topics. At the advanced level, learners are expected to engage in abstract discourse, write formal texts, and discuss academic or news-related content. Crucially, the curriculum integrates language and culture, incorporating Indonesian customs, festivals, performing arts (e.g., dance and wayang), cuisine, and history into teaching materials to foster cross-cultural understanding and enhance learner motivation. Pedagogically, the curriculum emphasizes communicative approaches through situational dialogues, role-plays, and interactive activities that simulate real-life language use. In higher education settings like Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY), this is reinforced through experiential learning such as campus engagement and local cultural excursions that provide students with authentic opportunities to interact with native speakers and apply classroom knowledge. Curriculum resources are continuously updated through collaboration between Badan Bahasa and educational institutions, resulting in tiered

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textbooks, workbooks, and multimedia materials. Notably, localized BIPA textbooks featuring regional cultural elements have been developed to increase relevance and learner engagement.

Indonesia has also established a standardized proficiency assessment system for Indonesian as a second language. The primary instrument is the Uji Kemahiran Bahasa Indonesia (UKBI), a comprehensive test covering listening, reading, grammar, writing, and speaking skills. Based on test scores, UKBI classifies proficiency into six levels: Limited, Basic, Intermediate, Moderate, Advanced, and Superior. These benchmarks are used both for admission screening and post-course evaluation of international students. In addition to UKBI, many BIPA programs implement their own placement or exit exams aligned with national standards, issuing certificates or performance reports upon completion. This dual-layered approach contributes to a nationally consistent BIPA proficiency framework.

Teaching materials are designed with a learner background in mind. For instance, Practical Indonesian targets English-speaking learners, while the Basic Indonesian Guide (Bilingual Indonesian–Mandarin Edition) caters specifically to Mandarin speakers, addressing potential first-language interference through tailored vocabulary selection, grammatical explanations, cultural notes, illustrations, and audio support. Many universities also develop internal textbooks, guided by Badan Bahasa's textbook evaluation criteria that ensure linguistic accuracy, appropriate difficulty levels, and culturally appropriate content. Equally critical is teacher quality. Recognizing instructors as central to BIPA success, the government has established clear competency standards: qualified BIPA teachers must demonstrate expertise in foreign-language teaching methodology, possess strong command of standard Indonesian pronunciation and grammar, understand Indonesian history and culture, exhibit cross-cultural communication skills, and uphold professional ethics, patience, and interpersonal effectiveness. To meet these standards, Badan Bahasa collaborates with universities to deliver continuous professional development including regular workshops on updated BIPA pedagogy, localized material design (e.g., integrating regional cultural content), and digital teaching tools as well as graduate-level Master's programs in BIPA education to cultivate a pipeline of highly qualified instructors. These efforts have significantly enhanced the professionalism and scalability of the BIPA teaching workforce.

Overall, Indonesia has established a relatively scientific and coherent BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing) curriculum and assessment system. From curriculum design and proficiency benchmarking to the provision of standardized teaching materials and qualified instructors, each component is mutually reinforcing to ensure that foreign learners progressively acquire Indonesian language competence. This system reflects the professional approach of

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Indonesian language planners and continues to evolve in response to the changing demands of language education in the contemporary global context.

UNY's BIPA Education Policy

Since 2020, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) has actively responded to national initiatives by launching its own BIPA program, primarily targeting international students especially those from China. Through a systematic curriculum, cultural integration, and structured assessment mechanisms, UNY's BIPA program enables foreign students to acquire foundational Indonesian language skills within a short period while deepening their understanding of Indonesian culture.

The program is specifically designed for international students undertaking short-term exchanges or degree studies, with a strong focus on undergraduate students from Chinese universities majoring in Indonesian language or related fields. By 2023, UNY had established credit-transfer partnerships with several Chinese institutions including Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Yunnan Minzu University, and Beijing Language and Culture University to host Chinese students for one to two semesters. The primary objective is to enhance students' Indonesian communicative competence within a limited timeframe and support their adaptation to academic language demands. The program aims to develop basic listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills so that students can engage in both active and passive communication to meet everyday and academic needs.

Courses are structured into required and elective modules (see below), typically covering beginner to intermediate levels across two semesters. Students with prior knowledge may complete the program in one semester based on placement assessment. Notably, UNY's BIPA curriculum aligns with national language promotion policies: it adheres to the Indonesian language teaching standards set by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Regulation No. 27 of 2017), which correspond to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ensuring authoritative and internationally comparable learning outcomes and level descriptors. In doing so, UNY operationalizes the government's "Bringing Indonesian to the World" strategy at the institutional level by offering structured language training to foreign learners and contributing to the internationalization of the national language.

The curriculum integrates language instruction with immersive cultural experiences. Core courses include the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as foundational modules in conversation and grammar. According to BIPA instructors, these six

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components form the essential core that all students must master to build comprehensive linguistic competence. Beyond required courses, students may select elective cultural modules or practical activities based on interest. Leveraging its local strengths, UNY offers hands-on cultural workshops in traditional music (e.g., angklung and gamelan), Balinese and Javanese dance, and batik-making, led by professional artists or trained instructors. These weekly sessions allow students to directly experience Indonesian artistic traditions. Additionally, the university organizes field visits to prominent cultural sites in Yogyakarta, such as the Sultan's Palace (Keraton), to bridge classroom learning with real-world cultural contexts. This integrated language-and-culture approach not only strengthens linguistic proficiency but also fosters deeper intercultural understanding fully embodying BIPA's core principle of balancing language acquisition with cultural literacy.

Course Schedule and Implementation

UNY's semester-based BIPA program aligns with the university's academic calendar, with each semester lasting approximately 16 weeks. Chinese students typically begin in February (spring semester) after orientation and placement testing, while fall-semester cohorts start in September. Weekly instructional hours vary by proficiency level: beginner courses feature more intensive contact time (e.g., four hours per day across multiple subjects) to accelerate foundational acquisition, whereas intermediate levels incorporate greater emphasis on independent study and cultural practice. Short-term summer programs employ intensive formats for example, a Thai student cohort completed a condensed course equivalent to one semester between June and July. UNY further supports international learners through its Language Training Center, equipped with multimedia classrooms and language laboratories dedicated to BIPA instruction. Overall, the program demonstrates clear targeting (undergraduate students from Asian countries), defined objectives (enhancing communicative and academic Indonesian proficiency), and a scientifically structured approach (staged instruction integrated with cultural immersion), effectively meeting individual learner needs while advancing Indonesia's national mission of promoting its language and culture globally.

Teaching Approach and Cultural Integration

UNY's BIPA program emphasizes a balanced integration of communicative function and cultural understanding through diverse pedagogical strategies. Grounded in a learner-centered communicative philosophy, classroom activities prioritize situational dialogues, role-plays, and

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group discussions to maximize authentic language use. Instructors design tasks rooted in daily life and campus contexts such as simulated conversations or short presentations to build students' confidence in real-world communication. Recognizing beginners' limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, teachers combine direct instruction with explicit grammar explanation. A dedicated "Indonesian Grammar" course, taught systematically by experienced instructors and reinforced with workbooks, complements core skills training. Reading and writing modules follow an explanation–demonstrate–practice sequence to deepen linguistic awareness.

A distinctive feature is the seamless infusion of Indonesian cultural content into language instruction, achieving simultaneous "language + culture" learning. Beyond elective cultural courses, instructors routinely embed cultural elements into everyday lessons: for instance, teaching greetings includes explanations of ethnic-specific etiquette; vocabulary lessons on fruits and vegetables are paired with tastings of local produce and visits to traditional markets for bargaining practice. Extracurricular activities such as the Indonesian Language Corner and cultural workshops further extend classroom learning. At the 2024 summer program closing ceremony, Thai students wore traditional Indonesian attire and performed dances and folk songs, showcasing both linguistic competence and cultural appreciation. This immersive approach significantly boosts motivation, transforming language learning from a classroom exercise into a gateway for meaningful intercultural experience.

Teaching Materials

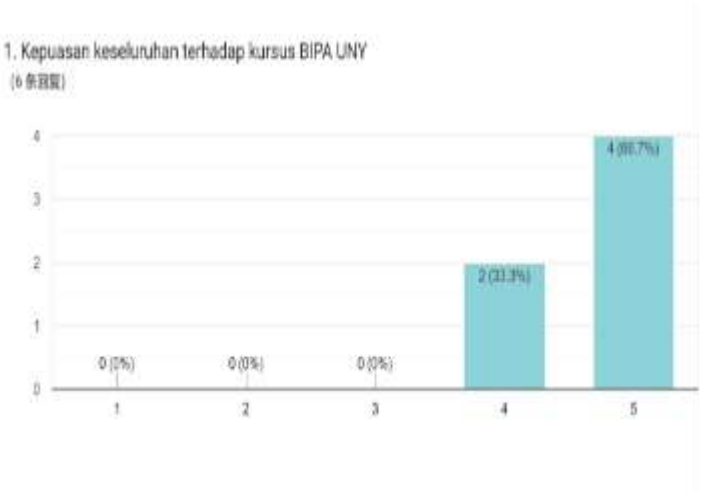
UNY primarily uses official BIPA textbooks developed by Indonesia's Language Development Agency (Badan Bahasa), Ministry of Education and Culture. Published between 2015 and 2016, these materials align with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and comply with the competency standards outlined in Ministerial Regulation No. 27 of 2017. Structured by proficiency level, the textbooks integrate situational dialogues, vocabulary lists, grammar explanations, exercises, and cultural notes, enabling systematic language acquisition.

UNY adapts these national materials to reflect local context: given Yogyakarta's status as a Javanese cultural hub, course content incorporates regional elements such as Javanese names, local cuisine, and readings about historical sites like the Keraton. This "local wisdom" approach helps foreign students develop familiarity with the host community while learning standard Indonesian, thereby strengthening cross-cultural competence. Additionally, instructors flexibly tailor instruction for Chinese learners, who often struggle with pronunciation and word order due

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to L1 interference. Teachers provide Mandarin glosses, targeted drills, and contextual analogies to clarify challenging concepts. While adhering to standardized textbooks, this responsive customization ensures pedagogical effectiveness for specific learner groups, demonstrating a pragmatic balance between national curriculum fidelity and localized, learner-centered adaptation.

Final Assessment



At the end of each semester, UNY's BIPA program conducts a formal, comprehensive final evaluation equivalent to a traditional final exam. This assessment comprises two components: a written test and an oral examination. The written portion evaluates listening, reading, and writing skills through multiple-choice listening questions, reading comprehension tasks, and short essay writing. The oral component involves individual interviews conducted by two instructors, assessing students' speaking fluency and communicative competence through self-introductions and situational dialogues. Notably, reflecting its academic orientation, UNY also requires students to complete a small research project as part of their final assessment. Students select topics related to Indonesian language or culture such as introducing traditional arts or comparing cultural practices between Indonesia and China, write a short report in Indonesian under faculty supervision, and deliver a brief presentation before graduation. This approach simulates real academic contexts, training students in information gathering, academic writing, and public speaking, while reflecting high expectations for learning outcomes. Final grades are reported as percentage scores or letter grades and recorded as official transcripts in UNY's student records.

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Upon completion, UNY issues a certificate of completion or official transcript indicating the student's proficiency level and course grades, enabling credit transfer or credential verification upon return to their home institutions. These documents also serve as valuable references for future academic or professional pursuits.

Application of Assessment Outcomes

BIPA assessments serve not only evaluative purposes but also inform credit recognition and subsequent learning pathways. For Chinese students participating in credit-transfer programs, their final transcripts are forwarded to their home universities as evidence for credit conversion. Typically, students must achieve passing grades (or higher) in all BIPA courses to qualify for credit equivalency abroad, incentivizing serious engagement with coursework. Additionally, assessment results guide students' future academic decisions: those demonstrating exceptional proficiency may receive scholarships to continue their studies at Indonesian universities; others, recognizing their weaknesses, may opt for targeted language training after returning home. For instance, some students have reported struggling with academic Indonesian despite completing BIPA, prompting them to seek advanced preparation. Assessment data also function as key quality indicators. UNY's Language Center systematically collects grade distributions and pass rates per cohort, cross-referencing these with student satisfaction surveys to evaluate program effectiveness. Low performance in specific skills such as reading comprehension triggers pedagogical review. For example, 2023 placement test data revealed that most new BIPA students scored between 30–65 on reading (out of 100), below the 75-pass threshold. In response, UNY introduced multimedia tools to enhance reading instruction, increasing engagement and efficiency. Overall, UNY's BIPA assessment system is continuously refined from formative feedback to summative exams and standardized testing with dual focus

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on process and outcome, ultimately ensuring teaching quality, supporting student success, and informing program improvement.

CONCLUSION

This study applies the Language Education Planning (LEP) framework to analyze how Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY) implements its Basic Indonesian for Foreigners (BIPA) program for Chinese students. Using policy analysis, surveys, and interviews, the research finds that UNY effectively translates national language policy particularly the 2009 Language Law's goal of internationalizing Indonesian into institutional practice through a dedicated BIPA center, tiered curriculum, and learner-centered design. The program combines communicative and task-based teaching with cultural immersion, uses both standard and locally adapted materials, and employs a balanced assessment system (formative and summative, including UKBI). Results show significant improvements in students' language proficiency, academic communication skills, and cross-cultural confidence. The UNY case confirms the relevance of LEP theory in foreign language education and offers a practical model for other Indonesian universities seeking to implement national BIPA policy effectively.

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