

# THE CONDITION OF INDONESIAN SOCIETY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BIPA PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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# THE CONDITION OF INDONESIAN SOCIETY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BIPA PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

The positive development of foreign learners' *interest* and *attention* to Bahasa Indonesia and/or Indonesia as a whole has a significant impact on the BIPA learning program or *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing* (Indonesian Language for Foreign Learners). As a consequence, BIPA instructional program, which is a part of *Indonesian Studies* also gain increased importance. The existing condition of BIPA instructional program is also showing signs of complex problems in the effort to improve BIPA instructional program. Its complexity lies not only in the internal learning process, but also in the non-instructional factors that may have significant impact on the development of BIPA learning program.

The implementation of BIPA instructional program cannot be set apart from the condition of Indonesian people. In this case, Indonesian society/people is understood here not merely as the *representation of linguistic community* of Bahasa Indonesia, but also taken in a different and deeper role in a *macro* context. The relatedness of Indonesian people with BIPA instructional programs is not merely a simple relation between objects but a *functional-contributive* function. In certain situation and context, this relation may become *significant* and *critical*.

The creation of strategic condition in Indonesian society is related to the situational development and several aspects that contribute significantly to the creation of that

condition. The aspects that are being referred to here include: (1) historical-philosophical, (2) geographical, (3) demographic, (4) economics, (5) political, (6) socio-cultural, and (7) global phenomena. The strategic condition of Indonesian society needs to be approached tactically and empowered so that the condition may bring positive contribution for the development of BIPA instructional program and Indonesian Studies in general.

**Key words:** BIPA program, Indonesian society, perspective.

## INTRODUCTION

The positive development of foreign learners' *interest* and *attention* to Bahasa Indonesia and/or Indonesia as a whole has a significant impact on the BIPA learning program or *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing* (Indonesian Language for Foreign Learners). As a consequence, BIPA instructional program, which is a part of *Indonesian Studies* also gain increased importance. Therefore, it is natural to expect that BIPA instructional program is facing a challenge to improve the performance of its implementation, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The challenge primarily lies in the *effort to develop and reinforce* the implementation of BIPA instructional program. Including its organizational networks, both domestic and abroad. This development effort is important, since the condition in the environment of BIPA instructional program changes quickly in a continuous and significant manner. One of the changes in this condition which is taken as the focus of this paper is the condition of *Indonesian people*.

The effort to develop BIPA learning has been expanded by several parties in various ways. One of them is the opening of forum for BIPA such as seminars, workshops, congresses and conferences. The level of these activities also varies, ranging from local,

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regional, national, up to international level. The variety of BIPA-related programs and events has deepened and brought *recognition* to the *significance* and *existence* of BIPA instructional programs. The discussions in these for a no longer revolves around the question about the existence and non-existence or the importance of BIPA instructional programs anymore, but already take a further step to the question of how to maintain the *continuity* of BIPA instructional programs. Several main issues that are currently under discussion include: (1) the instruction of BIPA, (2) the institutional/organizational arrangement for BIPA programs, (3) collaboration between BIPA institutions (4) BIPA publication, (5) BIPA professional association, (6) research on BIPA, and (7) study on the factors that influence the implementation of BIPA instructional program (Widodo 2004). These for a have identified and collected factual and actual information on the condition of BIPA instructional programs, its environmental condition and its problems. Besides, several policies and decision has been made for the implementation of BIPA program by taking the perspective of its development (Huda 1999; Supono 2004).

Based on the information in these for a, the existence and condition of BIPA instructional program is considered to be inadequate in its management. Generally, the implementation of BIPA instructional program is still limited by the existing condition in each institution. Many BIPA programs are even opened in incidental or seasonal basis, where the program is offered only when the students are available. The similar ad hoc approach is also evident in other aspects and practice which become the focus of BIPA program, where these are arranged solely by the internal vision of each institution. Such a condition is caused by the lack of understanding and unavailability of clear patterns for BIPA instructional program which can be used as basis for the implementation, making it inevitable that each BIPA instructional program moves along its own divergent and unique path in accordance with their own visions. This condition shows that the implementation of BIPA instructional program in one institution is

markedly different from the ones in other institutions. Such a divergence is made possible by the following factors: (1) differences in the perception of the BIPA instructional program, (2) lack of basic reference for the program, (3) differences in local condition and capacity of each institutions, (4) vision and mission of each institution, (5) the management practices in each BIPA program. These differences also reflect the *diversity* in the implementation of BIPA instructional program.

From the above description, it can be gathered that in general terms, the existence and condition of BIPA instructional program has not been fully *established* and is still looking for its definite form (Kridalaksana 1996; Alwi 1999; Widodo 2004). Furthermore, the existing condition of BIPA instructional program is also showing signs of complex problems in the effort to improve BIPA instructional program. Its complexity lies not only in the internal learning process, but also in the non-instructional components which may have significant impact on the development of BIPA learning program. One of the non-instructional components that are discussed here is the *condition of Indonesian society*.

The implementation of BIPA instructional program cannot be set apart from the condition of Indonesian people. In this case, Indonesian society/people is understood here not merely as the *representation of linguistic community* of Bahasa Indonesia, but also taken in a different and deeper role in a *macro* context. The relatedness of Indonesian people with BIPA instructional programs is not merely a simple relation between objects but a *functional-contributive* function. In certain situation and context, this relation may become *significant* and *critical*. The significance of this relationship is based on the assumption that however well a BIPA instructional program is planned and managed, it cannot be guaranteed that the *teaching-learning process* and *outcome* of BIPA instruction will be adequate unless the instruction is supported by conducive situation and positive image of the Indonesian people. The relation between the

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conditions of Indonesian people with the development of BIPA learning program will be described in more detail in the next section.

### **PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIPA INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

The development of BIPA instructional program requires objective description about the existing condition in the implementation that has been going on so far. Such description will be useful as a source of factual and actual information, which may simultaneously serve as the basic framework for the formulation of the appropriate strategy in the development of BIPA program. It is already well-known that BIPA instructional program is a *system* that consists of several supporting elements, that is the instructional and non-instructional components. The manifestation and *functional interaction* between these components will create a *teaching-learning process* and *learning outcome*, which will specifically be formed into a special entity, that is the one, termed as BIPA or Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Learners. The term “foreign” here not only gives a special nuance of *politics*, but also have specific consequences for the treatment and management of instruction. In order to *develop* the program, the attitude and treatment for BIPA instruction must also attend to the condition outside instructional environment. Such an attention is necessary, considering that BIPA learning program is permeated with *international* dimension.

In terms of the background of its emergence, BIPA instructional program does not simply appear out of nowhere. Its existence has a certain historical background, which can be understood from the various information and facts related to BIPA, such as: where, when and how BIPA programs were conceived in the first place, in both domestic and abroad context. Based on the data in Pusat Bahasa Jakarta, until 1996, BIPA instructional programs have been opened in 35 countries (Alwi 1996). The time

when these programs were first established in Indonesia and foreign countries is different from one program to another. This difference is caused, among others, by the initial phenomena and condition in each BIPA program.

Historical information and facts concerning BIPA instructional program basically give the picture of its existence, both domestic and abroad.

This picture shows the factual information of when and how a BIPA instructional program is established in an institution or in a country. On the other hand, this picture also shows that the *existence* of BIPA program has been *acknowledged* by many parties. In conclusion, the existence and scope of BIPA instructional programs are supported by *factual and empirical* evidence. This evidence will serve further as the foundation for the development and review on BIPA instructional program.

In a BIPA instructional program, the role of *learner* is very significant. This learner component is the defining characteristics that distinguish BIPA instruction from other forms of instruction (Ellis, 1987). A BIPA learner has certain characteristics, that is: (1) personal trait, (2) social background, (3) field of expertise, (4) qualification, (5) interest and motivation of learning, (6) learning strategy, (7) period of learning, (8) status of the learner, and (9) objectives or targets of learning. These defining characteristics of BIPA learner will make an impact on the role and relation of a BIPA learner with other elements in BIPA instruction. Furthermore, the characteristics of the learner must also be considered as an important *variable* which will impact on the development of BIPA instructional program (Stern 1987).

BIPA instruction has several specific targets to be achieved, that is to produce learners who have natural competence in Bahasa Indonesia in accordance with their objective, level, field of expertise and personal interest. In wider sense, the naturalness of the competence is related to several other factors outside the instruction itself that are still related significantly to the learning process, such as social and cultural phenomena

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which are inseparable from the substance of Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, besides the personal characteristics of the learner, social and cultural factor also play a role in the implementation of BIPA instruction. Moreover, when BIPA instruction is held in Indonesia, then the consideration on socio-cultural aspects and other supporting factors will acquire additional significance. Such consideration is the means and also at the same times an urgent need in BIPA instruction, especially in order to accommodate and actualize the factual condition of Indonesia in a concrete and direct manner (Armstrong 1996; Surajaya 1996).

In order to understand the objective condition and development of BIPA instructional program, a review must be made on the sources and field data of BIPA instruction, both past and present. The objective condition includes the *internal* and *external* aspects of BIPA instructional program. The *internal* aspects cover things directly related to the implementation of BIPA instruction, such as: (1) planning/syllabus, (2) learners, (3) teacher/tutor, (4) teaching material, (5) learning method and media, (6) learning activity, (7) program evaluation, and (8) problems of learning. While the *external* condition covers significant factors that are not directly related or supporting the process of BIPA instruction, such as: (1) the institution, (2) collaboration, (3) forum on BIPA, (4) publications on BIPA, (5) professional association of BIPA, and (6) development in the condition of Indonesian society. The general condition in BIPA instructional program is described in detail as follows.

In a BIPA instruction, there are several aspects that demand attention, including: (1) the direction and target of learning, (2) objectives of learning, (3) level of competence, (4) duration of learning, (5) learning mechanism or activities, and (6) achievement or measurement of learning outcome. These aspects are the variables that need to be considered in implementing the design of BIPA instruction. This instructional design can be transformed into a *syllabus* of BIPA instruction. This syllabus describes in a



systematic manner the basic aspects of BIPA instruction. The role and function of this BIPA syllabus is not only as the distinctive identity of BIPA program but also as basic framework, guideline and at the same time to control the implementation of BIPA instructional program.

The basic problems which are related to BIPA syllabus include, among others, the lack of framework and general reference for the implementation of a BIPA instructional program. These framework and general reference can be termed as *BIPA curriculum*. The basic scientific principles of BIPA instruction for *various* purposes are not yet established. Another problem is the inadequacy of the treatments in BIPA program, which is mostly due to the lack of human resource. As a consequence, it is understandable that BIPA syllabus may be lacking in *effectiveness*, which is caused not only by differences in form, content and organization. The difference of BIPA syllabi between one institution and another is quite *significant*, especially in basic aspects. It seems that the differences in the syllabi is merely based on personal judgment rather than rigorous academic consideration (Huda 1999; Widodo, 2004).

In relation to teaching material for BIPA, the *availability* factor is very important for the implementation of BIPA instructional program. Teaching material is not only necessary for the continuity of the program but also plays significant role in the quality of the process and outcome of BIPA instruction. Teaching material for BIPA instruction may take the form of textbooks, supplementary material, newspapers, magazines, brochures, and other forms of publication or media which can be used as teaching material. The condition of the teaching material of BIPA instructional program is different between one institution and another. The differences are not only in terms of form, characteristics, and content, but also in terms of the quantity and quality of the materials. Several institutions already acquire teaching material in sufficient quantity and variety, but on the other hand, there are also several institutions where the teaching

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material for the BIPA program is limited in quality and quantity (Huda 1999).

During the subsequent development, there is a tendency of the BIPA programs to compose their own teaching material, each with their own characteristics and versions. The rationale for this tendency is the wide opportunity to write BIPA material and its practicability, in the sense that such independently written material is regarded as more feasible and practical. Most of these materials have been published for limited distribution or wider public, especially those in the form of textbooks. In this way, there are now several titles of BIPA material (in the form of textbook) commercially available in the bookstores. Of these titles, there has been no clear information about the feasibility and quality of these materials. The feasibility and quality still depend in large measure on the way these materials are applied.

Concerning BIPA learners, this component of BIPA instruction has an important strategic role. The existence of this component will make a strong impact on the implementation and continuity of BIPA instructional process. The number of BIPA learners and their qualification will be influential to the process and outcome of BIPA instruction. Several factors play a role in the existence and condition of BIPA learners, among others: social background, field of expertise, status/profession, objectives/target and interest/motivation. BIPA learners are also related to the condition in Indonesia, both as the medium for imagery, object of study and setting for learning/instruction. The condition in Indonesia, on the other hand, is related to the socio-cultural, political, economy, and security aspects.

As participants of BIPA instructional programs, BIPA learners have different background from one another. They come from various fields of expertise, such as: anthropology, economics, social sciences, South-East Asian Studies, international relation, history, study of religions and linguistics (Nothofer 1988; Sumarno 1989). Their objectives or targets in participating in BIPA instruction are also varied. They

learn Bahasa Indonesia for many purposes, among others: (1) to be able to speak Indonesian language, (2) to be able to read Indonesian newspapers, (3) to visit Indonesia, (4) to study Indonesian culture, (5) write correspondence in Bahasa Indonesia, (6) to work in Indonesia, (7) for professional/business purpose, (8) to write books in Bahasa Indonesia, (9) to work as translator, and (10) to conduct research. In subsequent development, it is likely that the interest or objective of the BIPA learners will change. This change may occur due to the developments in the condition and aspects that are considered relevant and influential for the interest of BIPA learners.

The description of the components of BIPA program as syllabus, teaching material and BIPA learners above is expected to have informed the reader about the objective condition of BIPA instructional programs in general. The description of other components of BIPA instructional programs will also be related to the condition of the components.

## **INDONESIAN SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF INDONESIAN STUDIES**

Indonesian people, like any other society, are a group of people who are tied by the geographic-cultural setting of Indonesia. As a social system, the national cultural institutions that are integral parts of its existence unite Indonesian society. Therefore, in every words and deeds, the Indonesians are expected to abide by the national cultural institutions so that they always reflect on the image of Indonesian people. These social acts are generally directed to achieve certain objectives, to respond to something, to fulfill certain interest/motivation, or to reflect certain values/norms that is held as reference. Such acts will result in the formation of sub-systems of society in all walks of life, such as: the family, economy (the system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services), health services, religion and worship, education,

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science and technology, politics and arts (Bachtiar 2005). Each of these sub-systems or sectors also abides by the cultural institutions of Indonesian society. In this case, the behavior of people in the society tends to show certain personal characteristics in dealing with each role, for instance bureaucratic outlook, business-like outlook, farmer's outlook, etc.

The conceptual description above brings the insight that Indonesian society is not a *monolithic* system. The system of Indonesian society not only consists of several supporting components, but it is also organized into several *strata* and *relations* within each of the components. From this indicator, it can be said that Indonesian society basically has specific *entity* and *characteristics*. One of the specific characteristics of Indonesian society is its diversity (plural society). In this sense, the characteristics of Indonesian society, which is exemplified in its motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (Diverse But One) is no longer the diversity of ethnicity and tribal cultures, but the *plurality* of culture within the Indonesian society. So, Indonesian society is seen as a society who has a general culture whose characteristics is like a *mosaic*. In each piece of the mosaic, there exist sub-cultures of smaller cultures that make up the whole society (Suparlan 2006).

Other than existing as a community with a distinctive entity, the Indonesian society is also part of the *global* society. Within this context, the life of Indonesian society is inevitably bound up with and influenced by the developments of the international world. Changes and development may occur within the Indonesian society due to the *internal* factors that stem from Indonesian society itself and to *external* factor stemming from the developments outside Indonesia. The blending process that results in changes and developments in Indonesian society will give rise to a *certain condition* with its own specific characteristics, too. The specific condition of the social developments in Indonesia can be approached as a *unique phenomenon*. This unique condition will

further make it possible to exploit and empower, so that the unique characteristics will be a source/potential for the creation of a certain *image* of Indonesian people.

In relation to the changes and image-creation of Indonesian society as described above, it cannot be denied that the Indonesian society is changing continuously to keep up with the times. The development of Indonesian society and culture today is undergoing an accelerated process in all aspects of life in Indonesia. The accelerated change is mainly due to the increasing pace of the advances in science and technology, especially *information technology*. As it is well known, the transformation of an *agricultural* society to *industrial* society tends to take a longer time in comparison with the transformation of industrial society to an *information-based* society. In the case of Indonesia, it can be said that Indonesia is still undergoing a *transitional period* from agricultural to industrial society, which after the industrial base is formed, will soon turn to an information-based society (Supriadi 1990).

How is the outlook of the condition in Indonesian society today? How is the relationship between the conditions of Indonesian society with the development of the field of Indonesian Studies (including BIPA instruction)? Some clues from the description above may be useful as the initial step to *identify* the condition of Indonesian society nowadays. Then, the result of the identification can be transformed into descriptions in order to obtain insights on the condition of Indonesian society in each of its aspects and as a whole.

## **CONDITION OF INDONESIAN SOCIETY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIPA INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

“Education is always encased within a certain social and cultural context.” This statement implies that *education* is linked with *society* and *culture*. This statement is equally applicable to BIPA instruction. Taking the analogy of this statement and

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considering the empirical phenomena, the implementation of BIPA instructional program as part of the *Indonesian Studies* cannot be separated from the condition of Indonesian society. The linkage between Indonesian societies with BIPA instruction is not limited to mere relation between independent objects but rather a *functional-contributive* relation. In certain situation, this relation can be significant and critical. The manifestation of this relation can be determined by the perspective of BIPA learning subjects on the substance and condition of Indonesian society. On the other hand, the manifestation of this relation is also influenced by the effort to empower the potential and condition of Indonesian society as research object in the BIPA instructional program.

As state above, the characteristics of Indonesian society are not only its *diversity* but also *openness* and *dynamics*. Therefore, the changes of *certain condition* in Indonesian society is always related with the *situational* development and several aspects which may give significant contribution to the formation that that development. These aspects include: (1) historical-philosophical aspects, (2) geographical aspects, (3) demographic aspects, (4) economic aspects, (5) political aspects, (6) socio-cultural aspects and (7) global phenomena. Due to these aspects, the condition in Indonesian society may change. The condition that is being referred to here is the *strategic condition* of Indonesian society, where *strategic* here is understood as the *meaningfulness, significance, functionality, appropriateness* and *contributive value* in the strategic condition of Indonesian society. In certain context, the term *strategic* may also refer to the *conducive situation*. The term *conducive* in the context of Indonesian society is related to the *safety, comfort* and *beauty*.

The information and explanation above come to the conclusion that the relation between the *strategic conditions* of Indonesian society with the development of BIPA instructional program hinges on two aspects. *The first* is the relation between BIPA

instructional program with the strategic condition of Indonesian society. This relation can be divided into three, that is: (1) Indonesian society as *object* of study, (2) Indonesian society as *background* of study, and (3) Indonesian society as the phenomenon of *image*. *The second* is the relation between the conditions of Indonesian society with the BIPA instructional program. This relation may vary, depending on the development of the aspects in society which is related significantly with BIPA instructional program.

## CONCLUSION

The following remarks summarize the main points of this paper.

- The implementation of BIPA instructional program as one of the form of Indonesian Studies cannot be separated from the condition of Indonesian society. The linkage between Indonesian societies with BIPA instructional program is not merely a relation between objects but a functional-contributive relation.
- The manifestation of this relation is evident in the perspective of BIPA instructional program concerning the substance and condition of Indonesian society. On the other hand, the manifestation is also evident in the empowerment of potential and condition of Indonesian society to facilitate the development of BIPA program.
- The implementation of BIPA instructional program is lacking in several aspects so far. This implementation is related with the development of various aspects of the instructional program, both internal and external, including the condition of Indonesian society.
- The creation of strategic condition in Indonesian society is related to the situational development and several aspects that contribute significantly to the creation of that condition. The aspects that are being referred to here include: (1)

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historical-philosophical, (2) geographical, (3) demographic, (4) economics, (5) political, (6) socio-cultural, and (7) global phenomena.

- The strategic condition of Indonesian society needs to be approached tactically and empowered so that the condition may bring positive contribution for the development of BIPA instructional program and Indonesian Studies in general.

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