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AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS ON BARRIERS OF LEARNING INDONESIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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A B S T R A C T

Foreign language acquisition is one of the important issues in the current era of globalization. Indonesian is not an exception because, within the last twenty years, the significance of Indonesian language has increased. This study aims to reveal the problem of the learning of Indonesian language as a foreign language. It focused on adolescent learners from the United States of America in a reputable language institution. More specifically, there are two questions in this study. First, what are the barriers of learning Indonesian that were found by the American learners? Second, what are the types of teaching materials that these learners like? This study is a case study with descriptive methods. It was conducted in a training institution focusing to train Christian preachers. Four learners from the United States of America were the informants in this study. The data were generated from the four American learners in obtained through (1) observation; (2) depth interviews with informants; and (3) relevant documents. This study concluded that (1) in general, the barriers faced by the American learners can be classified into four types: social, mental, phonological, and grammatical; and (2) the learners prefer various teaching materials but their common preference is the authentic learning materials that consider aspects of audiovisual media use, Indonesian cultural diversity, and language formality. Since the study only relied on four informants, the results cannot be generalized to all learners of Indonesian Language. However, they can provide a figure in the learning of Indonesian language involving non-native speakers, especially the Americans.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the most populous nations in the world. It makes the Indonesian language, bahasa Indonesia, one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. There are over 270 million speakers of Indonesian across the world. In addition to native Indonesian speakers, the language also attracts non-native speakers. Along with the rapid development of globalization, the interest to learn Indonesian among the non-native is increasing. Since more than two decades ago, Kirkpatrick (1995) reported the increasing interest of non-native to learn Indonesian in another countries, especially Australia. For instance, at the time in Australia, people have various reasons to learn Indonesian: (1) Indonesian is easy to learn compared to other languages like Chinese and Japanese; (2) Indonesian is considered important due to its various local languages and cultures; (3) Indonesian uses the same alphabet with English; (4) the people of Indonesia are hospitable to foreigners; and (5) Indonesia has a lot of amazing beautiful landscapes to visit.

In line with the increasing interest of non-native speakers to study Indonesian and the development of Indonesian language teaching, the term Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing (BIPA), Indonesian language for foreign speakers, has emerged and become common. Indonesian also has been a subject that is taught in international schools in Indonesia, as well as regular schools in other countries (cf. Cahyaningsih , 2021, p. 115). It can be included that Indonesian has become a formal subject taught with certain teaching standards, like other popular languages. However, up to the present, there is no official data on the number of formal Indonesian learning. The fact of increasingly popular Indonesian can only be confirmed in plain view through increasing the involvement of people from various nations, which of course is non-native speakers of Indonesian, to learn Indonesian in various institutions.

Theoretically, learning Indonesian as a foreign language will certainly not be too much different from other languages. There are common degrees as general parameters. One of the foreign language learning experts, such Johnson and Wu (2008), since long ago, has already put forward the nature of Foreign Language Learning. Some of the latest studies related to Foreign Language Learning have also been developed in line with the progress of science and technology, and Indonesian is not an exception. Some of the latest studies of the Indonesian language as a foreign language for non-native speakers have quite diverse spectrums. Some studies try to cover Indonesian learning from a fundamental point of view, such as methodology (cf. Permadi et al., 2022; and Zamzamy, 2020). To complete the gap in the study of teaching Indonesian for speakers of other languages, this study chooses to focus on the experience and perception of learners.

Learning a language in any institution always face obstacles. Among some obstacles are barriers that may be felt perceptively by learners. Problems also occur in the institution where this study was carried out. Some learners claim that they experience barriers and have expectations related to teaching materials used in the learning process. This certainly needs to be responded to increase the effectiveness of learning.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method. It was conducted at a language institution focusing on training Christian Missionaries who are commissioned to Indonesia and need to learn Indonesian. The institution was chosen since there is no other researchers investigating this institution. In addition, the study used a case study approach. This approach was chosen because Indonesian learning for foreign speakers is believed to provide unique results to each learning. Moreover, in this study, informants are learners that have reached the age of adult, which is not included in the age of school, so the results will certainly be different and unique compared to learners in schools.

Informants

The subjects of this study are four Americans. One of them is female and the other three are males. Surely, they are non-native Indonesians with English as their mother tongue. Table 1 below summarizes important information related to the four informants.

Table 1. Informants' Age and Gender

Code	Initial	Age	Gender
#1	JM	50	Male
#2	JC1	50	Female
#3	DOST	56	Male
#4	JC2	60	Male

The data is sufficient because there are two causes of BIPA learners from the states, namely (1) they are hard to find educated Indonesian natives to talk with. They need face to face meetings. Therefore, they need something to discuss or talking some topics that Indonesians like most, are the best strategies. The topics can get from books written by Indonesianists. (2) students from the states are hard to participate in social activities with Indonesians. This is due to difference culture, difference way of thinking, custom, and the like.

Data collection
This study conducted interviews with four Americans who had participated in the Indonesian language learning program, related to their experiences during the program. The data of this study was collected through the analysis of learners' perceptions and their personal experience during learning. The interview was designed based on the construct of perception theory. The interviews were carried out spontaneously, unstructured. Nevertheless, the interview questions are focused on efforts to explore the perceptions of each informant. Since this study focuses on two major topics on barriers and learning materials, the questions were arranged based on the topics. The results were then collected and transcribed before they were analyzed.

Techniques of analysis
The technique of analyzing data in this study incorporates the nature of ethnography method. There are four stages of analysis in ethnography namely domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural values finding (Spradley, 1980). To map the findings, the study classifies the data based on the idea about the correlation between cognition and language performance

The description of the problems obtained from the four informants is considered as an illustration that can represent the problems being studied, not to be generalized. As an illustration, the results that arise are expected to be (1) reflection for other Americans who want to learn Indonesian; (2) contribution to the development of Indonesian language learning for foreign speakers; and (3) the source of referrals in related language studies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The four informants shared their experiences and perceptions related to the learning Indonesian as foreign language. Surely, each informant provided unique experiences and perceptions to this study. The fact provided the ground for this study to classify the informants' responses into some issues proposed by this study.

1. Barriers of Learning Indonesian as a Foreign Language
This study classified the barriers based on the Levels of Analysis in Language in Weisberg and Reeves' book entitled *"Cognition: from memory to creativity"* in 2013. The learning in the institution is not merely a process of learning but also complete acquisition because the objectives of the learning is to make the learners able to communicate fluently in Indonesian for the purpose. Thus, this study is of the position to view the link between the language learning and cognition, on the similar background of the informants as Americans. To adjust the classification of Weisberg and Reeves' analysis with data and findings in this study, this study's classification took different terms to refer Social and Pragmatics aspects into Social, Mental, Phonological, and Grammatical aspects as follows.

Table 2. The Classification of Barriers Encountered by the Informants

Informants	Social	Mental	Phonological	Grammatical
#1	√	√	√	√
#2	√	√	√	√
#3	-	√	√	√
#4	√	√	√	-

Those respondents have different learning experiences at IMLAC. Respondent #1, #2, and #4 studied for 9 months, while respondent #3 only studied for 6 months. Furthermore, there are two kinds at BIPA learners, namely: (1) the ones who against Indonesian "*basa-basi*" (small talk), for example: "*Dari mana? Mau kemana?"* (From where? where to?) to American these *"basa-basi"* bother them. (2) the ones who are ready to go out and talk with Indonesian natives. They know that Indonesian native is the best resource for language acquisition process and for the process of de-alienation They are true learners and submit to Indonesian native speaker willingly.

The four respondents were selected from ex-students of BIPA (ex-learners of a BIPA Institution in Bandung). All learners are Americans. The barrier they faced: BIA Institution teach them Indonesian standard language, while in the community Indonesians speak (use) Indonesian vernacular (Indonesian dialect, or Indonesian non-formal). Therefore, the problem is: learners learn Indonesian language in short time. What they need is to understand and speak Indonesian daily spoken in natural (real) environment. It is contradictory to BIPA experts and expert of Indonesian language.

Essentially, the classification is the same. This study divided the pragmatics aspects into social and mental, considering the findings reveal that the pragmatic aspects are not only connected to structural language features; they are more related to cognition and surrounding environment. In a nutshell, the most common barrier proposed by learners began with the expression *I feel.* Certainly, the feeling is very personal and is closer to the concept of mental in personal view. All informants uniquely explain the pragmatic barriers according to their respective perceptions, either in social context. Thus, the 'mental' and 'social' features are classified as a separate aspect from the phonological and grammatical, which are more structural (cf. Finnegan, 2014).

To clarify the findings and how the reflection of The Four Informants' perception, the next section provides the findings and discusses them following the classification of these findings: Social, Mental, Phonological, and Grammatical Barriers.

a. Social Barriers

Social barriers here refer to all exogenous factors related to other individuals. Some studies related to learning have discussed this issue specifically, for example Bakar, et al. (2020, P.258) and García-González et al. (2021, p. 579). Table 2 has explained that this type of barriers is quite significant. This is proven through the fact that only one informant is suspected of not getting it.

Informant #2 states that the institution requires learners to go out in the community daily as much as possible and have discussions and ask questions with nationals. Unfortunately, the informant feels that it was very difficult to find the right person. Personally, he thought that it was his big weakness. He did not get out enough to communicate outside of the class. It took a lot of courage to go out. At first, he did, then quickly tapered off. Up to this point, he thinks that the barrier was his own lack of motivation and courage to do the "assignment" to go out and talk with Indonesians. Although Informant #3 stated the feeling of "*difficult to find the right person*", this study does not consider it as mental barrier. It is social barrier since the surrounding social environment provides limited option to Informant #3.

Informant #1 and #4 proposed different barrier: Indonesians' attitude towards foreigners. Both informants stated that most Indonesians are reluctant to talk to foreigner. Apparently, it affected their intentions to practice Indonesians with the native. Specifically, this type was felt by Informant #1 who intentionally lived with several Indonesian families and was actually picking language up informally in a self-made method.

Informant #1 strategically choose to learn certain things first and based upon basic survival needs. Once he decided what he need, he then went ahead and mastered it. Once learned, he practiced it as much as possible in real life situations. At this point, he felt the barrier when he was trying to practice it with native Indonesians. For Informant #1, the key then is that he takes the time to reflect and evaluate what he has learned and used. Thus, evaluation leads him to see the barrier. He tried his own shortcomings and helps himself to go back to step one all over again.

Based on the explanation given by the three informants, it can be concluded that there are two types of social barriers. The first barrier is social performance that comes from the psychological side, as felt by informant #2. The second barrier is a social problem that is felt in the surrounding environment, as stated by informants #1 and #4. The first type of barrier seemed to have a similarity with the findings of Sharmin (2019, pp. 30-33) related to feelings of reluctant in learning new language. On the other hand, the second type can be false and actually more to the personal feelings of informant. However, it still requires attention. The possibility of a native speakers' reluctance to help foreign learners needs to be observed in the Indonesian language learning process.

b. Mental Barriers

Table 2 has explained that the four informants found mental barriers. Surely, each informant stated unique perception but, at least, there is only one common feature that can be proposed here. Informant #1 mentioned that he feels desperate and mentally down after he found great disparities between formal and non-formal Indonesian language. Subsequently, his passion to learn was also down. Many moments he found himself unconfident and started to think that he may not acquire the language properly. Reduced passion is the keyword here to explain the phenomenon perceived by Informant #1.

Informant #2 and #4 proposed different statement that they had less passion to learn Indonesian. Personally, both informants think that learning Indonesian will add nothing to their capacity in communicating with Indonesians. They had already perceived that many Indonesians have good level in English, their native language, making them believe that learning Indonesian is unnecessary. However, both informants also stated that it does not mean that they underrate Indonesian language. It is just that they focus on the necessity related to their purposes to be in Indonesia. It can be concluded that both informants have less interest to learn Indonesian.

Informant #3 revealed a different mental barrier, stating that she was not sure that she can work well with Indonesians. Although the perception was changed after some time, she thinks that the idea affect her so much during the learning. In her words, her spirit to learn Indonesian was not in high-level in the beginning.

All traits of mental barriers, essentially, include about the uncertainty in the informants' feelings. In this case, each informant filtered their awareness towards learning Indonesian, resulting in unique anxiety that form barriers.

In general, the informants' mental barriers can be found in two types: confident and interest. The confident type covered the barriers found by informants #1 and #3. Both informants perceived the barriers as something related to their respective readiness to learn Indonesian. On the other hand, informants #2 and #4 stated almost similar reason about the necessity that reveals their actual interest in learning Indonesian. Such encountered must be related to motivation that affect their interests.

c. Phonological Barriers

All informants stated that they encountered phonological barriers. Informants #4 and #1 recognized that they have difficulty in pronouncing certain sounds. For example, both of them put forward the difficulty of pronouncing sound /r/ in Indonesian. A similar sound in English, their native language, sounds thinner. On the other hand, informants #1 and #3 expressed their difficulties in reciting the sound of diphthong. There are four diphthong phonemes in Indonesian. They are only in open syllables: /ai̯/, /au̯/, /oi̯/ (or /ʊi̯/), and /ei̯/.

All informants feel that the difficulty of pronunciation is due to the strong influence of mother tongue (English). In this case, they often experience the inaccuracy of Indonesian pronunciation. In addition, the difficulty of the pronunciation of Indonesian diphthong and consonant /r/ is often experienced by learners is a significant problem. They feel the need for special training in dealing with these barriers. Over time, the informants then began to succeed in practicing better pronunciation. Among all learners, informants #3 showed pronunciation approaching the original speaker. This is because of independent pronunciation exercises.

This phenomenon can actually be understood, especially if it is compared with some findings from previous studies, such as from Edwards (2006) and Sato (2019). Difficulties in the adaptation of phonemes in L2 are a usual phenomenon. This finding is actually not a unique thing. Some learners from different age groups and origin also experience it (cf. Wiratsih, 2019). This finding is not a uniqueness that is specific to the four informants. This finding and several previous findings (such as Wiratsih, 2019) need to be the concern of practitioners of Indonesian for foreign speakers. There can be something to be added up to the development of Indonesian language teaching materials for foreign learners.

d. Grammatical Barriers

Among the four barriers classifications in this study, Grammatic Barriers is the type that most raises a variety of perceptions among informants. All informants provide different answers. This diversity can at least be summarized in two types of Grammatical Barriers. They are the Indonesian They are agglutination characters and predication compositions.

Indonesian is a language with agglutinative characters. On the other hand, the four informants are native speakers of English, a language with flexion characters. This fact contributed to the number of barriers faced by Participants #2 and #3. They put proposed grammatical barriers that are revolved around the agglutination issues. Specifically, Informants #2 argued that their biggest obstacle was to face derivation patterns in Indonesian. For instance, there are some affixes that can be joined together to change a phrase, not a word, like *pertanggungjawaban* (responsibility) that is came from two words *tanggung* (literally means to carry over the shoulder) and *jawab* (literally means answer) with prefix *per-* and suffix *-an.*

Informant #3 proposed some derivations with meaning irregularities as a barrier. In Indonesian, if a word is combined together with the prefix *ke-* and suffix *-an*, they will form a noun or a passive verb. However. in some cases, the meaning can be so far from the basic word. For instance, the word *malu* (shy) that is combined with the prefix *ke-* and suffix *-an,* will form the word *kemaluan* (literally refers to human genital organ), a word that has nothing related with shy. Therefore, the word *kemaluan* has nothing to do with the word *shy*, so it should be changed to *rasa malu*.

In contrast to informants #2 and #3 who feel they have problems with agglutinative characters, informants #1 and #4 classified themselves as having problems facing predication patterns in Indonesian. Informant #2 suggests that, before, he received a lesson about the predicate position in Indonesian. According to the lesson, one of the characteristics of the Indonesian predicate is that its position in a sentence must follow the subject. However, on several occasions, he found that the predicate position came before the subject.

Informant #3 argues that, she is often influenced by predication patterns in her mother's language. In Indonesian, any word class can occupy the predicate position. Meanwhile, the predicate in English can only be occupied by verb. Therefore, she felt confused when people called her Indonesian has not natural yet when she said the following sentence.

Saya	*adalah*	*sibuk*
I	is/am/are	busy
	I am busy	

In fact, in Indonesian, someone just need to say *"Saya sibuk"* to state that she/he is busy.

The diversity of Grammatical Barriers of the informants can be understood given the significant difference between Indonesian and English. Indonesian is classified as an Austronesian language family with a strong agglutinative character. Meanwhile, English is a Germanic language family, in the Indo-European family, with the flexion characters. Syaputri (2019, p. 619) has proposed that interference can be happened in bilingual speaker. Different language form can make learner to become bias in comprehending new language formation between one language to another language. The classification of Grammatical Barriers in Agglutination Characters and Predication Compositions is not to simplify the uniqueness of each informant. This study does this to make it easier to mapping Barriers.

2. Preferred Learning Materials

To provide an overview of informants' expectations related to the teaching materials, there are some points to be explained here. First, the preparation of the teaching materials in the institution was carried out by each tutor independently. The teaching materials are divided to four basic skills of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In its use, informants, in general do not feel there are obstacles to the use of teaching materials provided by the tutors. Second, the informants began to feel there was a mismatch in teaching materials when their understanding of Indonesian began to increase; and they began to communicate directly using Indonesian.

Informant #1 concluded that teaching materials based on audiovisual media should be the main teaching material. He argues that audiovisual media will train their listening and speaking directly. By using this type of media, he believes that learners will quickly find new vocabulary that they can use and can be applied directly in

everyday life. In addition, audiovisual media is considered to be a medium that can make learners to be able to learn anywhere and anytime. It is because the effectiveness of the media compared to books or text.

Then, Informant #2 came with different perspectives. He focused on the topics discussed in the material since he felt that the materials were lack of cultural aspects. In this case, he referred to his experiences when he engaged with native Indonesians. He thought that there were many cultural aspects that he did not get from the materials. According to him, cultural aspects are the most important in language learning. He considered that the cultural aspects are always covered in any conversation. Therefore, it is important for learners to know about target language culture.

Uniquely, Informant #3 focused her response on the nature of the teaching materials that only covers standard Indonesian. She has found out that there is a wide disparity between standard and non-standard Indonesians. It became more problematic to her when she found out that there are many non-standards variations in forms of regional dialect, sociolect, idiolect, etc. Most Indonesian only know the non-standard variation. She still did not count the other fact that most Indonesian also more familiar with regional languages. On the other hand, her activities demand her to communicate actively with non-academic communities. She found it difficult because she only learned non-standard forms. In this case, the learning of Indonesian for foreign speakers may need to consider the determination of the targets to be achieved by learners. In the case of informant #3, it is clear that the target is not to master the academic or standard form, it will continue to communicate massively with non-standard speakers.

Informant #4 has a concern that is almost in line with informant #2. For him, learning Indonesian needs to emphasize the cultural aspects. However, informant #4 put forward more specific things, namely cultural aspects relating to religion. In this case, informant #4 links his work that requires him to come into contact with the adherents of a minority religion in the midst of the majority of people with other religions. The majority of Indonesians are Muslim. Therefore, according to him, learning Indonesian for foreign speakers needs to include aspects related to Islam as general knowledge. Informant #4 just found out that Indonesian Muslims have different cultures from the Middle Eastern Muslims after he came to Indonesia. The idea of informant #4 is unique because it is different from the idea of other three informants. However, essentially, the idea can be grouped into ideas related to culture such as the idea of informant #2.

By paying attention to the responses of the four informants, this study sees the teaching materials needs to get extra attention in the teaching of Indonesian for non-native speakers. Some of the findings put forward are in line with some of the findings of previous studies related to the teaching materials of Indonesian for speakers of other languages. To make it easier, the following table will summarize the informants' statements.

Table 3. Statement of Preferred Learning Materials

Informant	Preferred Learning Materials
#1	Audiovisual media use
#2	Indonesian Cultural diversity
#3	Language variation containment
#4	Indonesian Cultural diversity, with religious aspect

First, the effectiveness of the use of audiovisual media was revealed by informant #1. Likewise with its significance, it has been stated by Farinda (2023). The idea of informant #1 in this study confirmed the learning needs of the Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages that have been discussed in those previous studies.

Second, the idea of the cultural context in the learning materials is also not a new thing. In fact, Informants #2 and #4, who proposed the idea, were also sure that there must be abundant studies on this matter. They understand that it has been a long concern in language teaching. Rahma & Suwandi (2021) discuss the suitability of the cultural content in the Teaching of Indonesian for Speakers of Other Languages. Similarly, the studies from Purwono & Aster (2021); Herdiawati & Isnaniah (2020); and Muzaki (2021) have also covered the issue. This study chooses not to elaborate the Informant #4 idea on religious cultural containment in the materials since it is very sensitive to the Indonesian audiences. However, it notes the idea to provide a gap for further studies on the learning materials.

Third, the issue of standard vs non-standard language variation is an issue in all studies on language learning and teaching. James (2013) have already discussed it more than a decade ago. Within the last five years, Manjavacas et al. (2019) and Clark et al. (2021) has covered it. In the context of teaching Indonesian for speakers of other languages, Alifiani & Mujianto (2023) have mentioned the issue in their works. In the case of this study, however, the informant stated the importance for learners to know the non-standard variations.

All issues put forward in this section, in the end, confirm various preferences for learning materials needed by learners. In many aspects, informants in this study clarify the validity of several previous studies. Some specific things may be casuistic in the perception of specific learners, so that it is inimitable only for this study. However, some of these points can also provide consideration in the preparation of teaching materials.

This study contradicts with the previous studies in terms of materials teaching. Other BIPA Institution to emphasize having student's materials teaching *(Buku Paket)*, while at IMLAC, the authentic materials should be discussed in the community. Additionally, special topics given by their Instructors of BIPA.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has tried to examine the cases and experiences of informants in finding barriers and thinking about preferred teaching materials. In line with the purpose of this study, two conclusions can be taken to answer this study's questions. Firstly, the American learners revealed that they felt Social, Mental, Phonological, and Grammatical Barriers. The social barriers consisted of (1) social performance that comes from the psychological side, as felt by informant #2 and (2) social problem that is felt in the surrounding environment, as stated by informants #1 and #4. The mental barriers also consisted of two types: (1) the confident type found by informants #1 and #3; and (2) the interest type found by informants #2 and #4. The phonological barriers include Informants' difficulties in sounding Indonesian /r/ and diphthongs. The grammatical barriers contain problems with agglutinative characters and predication patterns in Indonesian. Those barriers faced by the BIPA learners make them frustrated to go out and talk with Indonesian natives. Therefore, they need their neighbors as a medium for doing involvement.

Secondly, the learning materials that are preferred by the American learners are not specific. However, learners revealed their expectations on form and content of the materials. Learners prefer audiovisual media form and content with Indonesian cultural diversity (including religious aspects) and Indonesian language variation. The preferences are surely very unique and specific since they may be casuistic in the learners' perceptions. Yet, these preferences may also provide consideration in the preparation of future teaching materials.

Most Americans adult learners are very critical in learning Indonesian affixation (Indonesian grammar). There are some strategies as follows: (1) let the learners read books on affixation (Indonesian grammar) written in English, (2) students need what so-called silent period (3 months). Get together with Indonesian natives. They do not speak Indonesian at all. Additionally, they do not use any kind of electronic communication, (3) students get to know and listen to educated Indonesian natives talk in real environment.

This study is a case study. Therefore, the conclusions of this study are unique and not to be generalized. However, the findings and responses of informants are expected to provide some implications for the development of Indonesian language teaching for foreign speakers, as well as for related studies. This study recommends educators, researchers, practitioners, teachers, and educational institutions conduct more in-depth studies on comprehensive Indonesian learning methods for foreign speakers. Studies on Indonesian learning barriers to non-native speakers can be done more massively with many participants. In addition, studies that examine the effectiveness of teaching materials can also be done more extensively to produce teaching materials following the expectations of learners.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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