



IMPROVING LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF BIPA LEARNERS USING AUTHENTIC INDONESIAN MEDIA

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the efficacy of utilizing authentic Indonesian media—specifically vlogs, podcasts, and digital news—to enhance the listening comprehension of intermediate BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing*) learners. The primary objective was to empirically test whether consistent exposure to natural, unscripted discourse significantly outperforms traditional textbook audio in developing crucial bottom-up and top-down processing skills. The methodology employed a rigorous quasi-experimental design involving 20 intermediate BIPA learners, purposefully selected from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The learners participated in a six-week intervention in which authentic Indonesian media were integrated into the curriculum. Data were collected via standardized pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and a 15-item Likert-scale perception questionnaire. The findings revealed a highly statistically significant improvement in listening scores, with an overall 32% increase in comprehension (rising from a mean of 58.4 to 77.1). Lexical recognition accuracy increased by 28%, and understanding of natural speech rates grew by 35%. Qualitative data indicated that 92% of learners found authentic media more engaging than traditional textbooks. The research implications are twofold: Empirically, the study establishes that "acoustic realism" is essential for overcoming the listening plateau at the intermediate level. Conceptually, it advocates for a paradigm shift toward "Sociolinguistic Authenticity" in BIPA curriculum design, arguing that communicative competence must be grounded in the dynamic, real-life linguistic landscape of Indonesia.

Keywords: Authentic Media, BIPA, Language Acquisition, Listening Comprehension, Sociolinguistic Realism

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INTRODUCTION

The globalization of the Indonesian archipelago has necessitated a more robust approach to *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing* (BIPA). As Indonesia's strategic importance in the ASEAN region grows, so does the diversity and motivation of its learners, who now range from business professionals and diplomats to academic researchers. To meet these demands, BIPA programs must equip learners with "communicative competence"—the ability not just to know the rules of the language, but to use them effectively in real-world social contexts (Nunan, 2015).

Among the four macro-skills, listening comprehension is often described as the "invisible skill," yet it serves as the fundamental bedrock for all other linguistic capabilities. However, a persistent paradox remains in BIPA pedagogy: many learners who perform exceptionally well on classroom-based assessments find themselves virtually "deaf" when confronted with the natural speech of native Indonesians in Jakarta, Bandung, or online digital spaces. Field (2008) argues that this is because listening in a foreign language is a complex cognitive struggle where the listener must simultaneously manage phonological decoding and semantic interpretation under immense time pressure.

Traditional BIPA listening materials often employ simplified dialogues, controlled vocabulary, and scripted speech. While these are useful for beginners, they do not accurately reflect the actual complexity, speed, and variability of natural spoken Indonesian (Mahsun, 2020). Simplified materials often lack the natural speech

rate, prosody, and idiomatic expressions found in daily communication. Consequently, learners trained solely on these materials are often ill-prepared to comprehend real-world Indonesian media or spontaneous conversations. This "sanitized" version of the language creates an artificial environment that does not translate well into the chaotic, fast-paced nature of native-level discourse.

Authentic materials are defined as texts or recordings produced by native speakers for native speakers, rather than specifically for language learners (Gilmore, 2007). Authentic Indonesian media—including news broadcasts, podcasts, radio programs, and online videos—expose learners to natural speech patterns, varied accents, and realistic conversational contexts (Mishan, 2005). These resources bridge the pedagogical gap by providing "real-world" linguistic input. Despite these benefits, the integration of authentic media into structured BIPA curricula is often limited by the perception that such materials are too overwhelming for intermediate-level learners. This study seeks to investigate whether systematic integration of these resources can yield measurable improvements in both comprehension skills and learner motivation (Peacock, 1997). By incorporating real Indonesian audio sources into a structured curriculum, this study aims to determine whether such exposure yields measurable improvements in comprehension skills and learner motivation.

However, listening materials used in many BIPA programs tend to be simplified and lack the natural linguistic complexity found in real-life communication (Mahsun, 2020). Traditional BIPA listening materials often employ simplified dialogues, controlled vocabulary, and scripted speech, which do not accurately reflect the complexity, speed, and variability of natural spoken Indonesian (Kartika, 2019). As a result, learners are often ill-prepared to comprehend real-world Indonesian, including news, conversations, and multimedia content. This creates a gap between classroom practice and authentic Indonesian language use. Based on the gaps identified in BIPA listening pedagogy, this study formulates the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the integration of authentic Indonesian media improve the listening comprehension scores of intermediate BIPA learners?
2. How does exposure to authentic media affect specific sub-skills, such as lexical recognition and understanding of natural speech rates?
3. What are the learners' perceptions regarding their motivation and engagement when utilizing authentic Indonesian media compared to traditional materials?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening Comprehension in Second Language Learning

Listening comprehension is a complex cognitive process that involves decoding auditory signals, interpreting meaning, and constructing understanding (Vandergrift, 2007). Learners often struggle with authentic spoken texts due to unfamiliar vocabulary, fast native speech rates, and "reduced forms" where words are blended together (Rost, 2011). Research indicates that listening proficiency is a significant predictor of overall language acquisition success (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Authentic Materials in Language Learning

Authentic materials, such as films, social media videos, and radio discussions, provide learners with rich linguistic input containing natural phrasing and cultural references (Mishan, 2005). Studies have consistently shown that these materials increase learner engagement and help develop true communicative competence (Berardo, 2006). By providing input that is slightly above the learner's current level (the *i+1* principle), authentic media supports steady linguistic growth. Gilmore (2007) emphasizes that authenticity is not just about the text itself, but the interaction between the learner and the text within a social context.

Authentic Media in BIPA Instruction

Recent research on BIPA programs highlights a growing interest in integrating digital and authentic learning resources (Saddhono & Sulaksono, 2018). Authentic Indonesian media can expose learners to dialectal variations, colloquial expressions, and socio-cultural contexts, contributing to more holistic language mastery (Yulia, 2020). However, as noted by Mahsun (2020), the availability of such materials in a structured pedagogical format remains a challenge for many Indonesian institutions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two primary theories:

- Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985): Authentic media provides "comprehensible input" that challenges learners to expand their current linguistic boundaries (*i+1*).
- Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2005): Multimodal exposure—combining auditory and visual cues—supports better retention and understanding than audio alone. The dual-coding of information helps learners process complex native speech more effectively.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Timeline

The study employed a quantitative and qualitative approach to provide a comprehensive evaluation of how authentic Indonesian media enhances the listening comprehension of BIPA learners. This dual-lens approach allowed the researchers to measure statistical gains while capturing the nuanced psychological and cognitive experiences of the students. The research followed a $T1 \times T2$ one-group pre-test–post-test design, illustrated in the figure below:



T1 X T2

Figure 1. One-Group Pre-Test–Post-Test Design (Hatch & Farhady, 1982)

Where:

T1 = Pre-test to measure baseline listening comprehension

X = Intervention using authentic Indonesian media

T2 = Post-test to measure listening comprehension after intervention

This research was conducted over six weeks in an intermediate-level BIPA class at an Indonesian university. The target population consisted of intermediate BIPA learners who had completed at least one year of structured Indonesian language instruction, and a purposive sample of 20 learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds was selected to participate in the study. The combination of methodological approaches, research timeline, and participant selection ensured that the findings reflected the learners' genuine experiences with authentic Indonesian media in a natural classroom environment.

1. Phase 1: Pre-test (Week 1): To establish a baseline, learners were tested using authentic audio materials such as news broadcasts, informal conversations, and podcasts.
2. Phase 2: Intervention (Weeks 2–5): For four weeks, authentic media—including MetroTV news segments, national radio programs, and YouTube interviews—were integrated into the curriculum. This was not passive listening; learners engaged in active pedagogical tasks such as prediction activities, focused listening, vocabulary extraction, and reflective discussions.
3. Phase 3: Post-test & Perception (Week 6): Learners completed a post-test of comparable difficulty to measure progress. They also filled out a 15-item Likert-scale questionnaire to assess changes in their motivation and perceived challenges

Participants and Sampling

The study utilized purposive sampling to select 20 intermediate-level BIPA learners. These participants were required to have at least one year of structured Indonesian instruction. The group was characterized by diverse linguistic backgrounds, ensuring that the findings reflected a global range of learner experiences rather than a single language group.

Data Collection and Analysis Instruments

The researchers used three primary instruments to ensure data triangulation and validity. Listening Pre-test and Post-test are used to collect measurable performance data on comprehension and lexical recognition. The researcher uses the Observation Checklist during the intervention to document engagement, participation, and response patterns. The Perception Questionnaire is A 15-item Likert scale designed to capture qualitative insights into the learners' emotional and cognitive responses to the media.

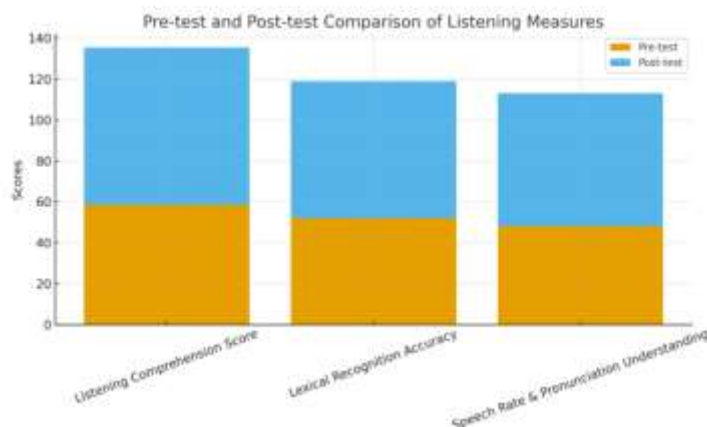
Analysis Procedures

Two procedures are used in analysing data. In terms of a quantitative approach, descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage improvements, are used to determine the exact degree of linguistic progress. A qualitative approach through thematic analysis, which involved coding observation notes and questionnaire responses, is used to identify recurring patterns in learner motivation and engagement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Findings

Chart 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores



The chart above indicates a transformative shift in learner performance following the six-week intervention with authentic media. The most striking result is the 32% increase in overall listening comprehension, where the group mean rose from a baseline of 58.4 to 77.1. This shift suggests that exposure to unscripted, natural discourse effectively bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The specific sub-skill improvements provide deeper insight into the learners' cognitive development include Natural Speech and Pronunciation Understanding (35% growth): This was the highest area of improvement. It demonstrates that learners became significantly better at decoding "acoustic realism"—the fast-paced, blended sounds of native speakers that are often absent in simplified textbook audio. Lexical Recognition Accuracy (28% growth): This improvement indicates that learners were better able to isolate and identify specific vocabulary words within a continuous stream of native-speed Indonesian.

Qualitative Findings

The data gathered from the 15-item Likert-scale questionnaire and classroom observations revealed a transformative shift in learner attitude. Engagement and Interest: 92% of learners found authentic media more engaging than traditional textbooks. They reported that the "sanitized" versions of Indonesian found in books felt artificial compared to the "chaotic, fast-paced" nature of native discourse. Motivation: 84% of learners reported an increase in motivation. This suggests that while authentic materials are harder, the sense of accomplishment from understanding "real-world" content boosts learner morale. Cultural Connection: Participants specifically valued the inclusion of colloquial expressions, dialectal variations, and socio-cultural contexts that are often missing from structured curricula.

DISCUSSION

The findings support previous research showing that authentic materials improve listening skills by providing naturalistic input (Gilmore, 2007; Rost, 2011). Increases across all measures demonstrate that authentic Indonesian media helped learners process speech rate, prosody, and lexical variation more effectively. Although some learners struggled initially with the fast pace of native speech, structured scaffolding—such as pre-listening vocabulary previews and multimodal cues—helped them overcome these challenges over time. The motivational boost aligns with Peacock's (1997) conclusion that authentic materials increase learner interest. This suggests that the difficulty of authentic materials, often cited as a barrier, can be mitigated through proper pedagogical design.

The empirical results of this study provide robust evidence that the integration of authentic Indonesian media—vlogs, podcasts, and digital news catalyzes significant linguistic growth among intermediate BIPA learners. The 32% increase in overall comprehension scores suggests that the "listening plateau" often encountered at the intermediate level can be overcome by shifting from sanitized, scripted audio to acoustic realism. This finding aligns with Field's (2008) assertion that listening is a complex cognitive struggle; by engaging with authentic materials, learners are forced to develop the phonological decoding skills necessary to handle the pressures of real-time communication.

The Impact on Sub-skills and Cognitive Processing

A critical takeaway from the data is the 35% growth in understanding natural speech rates and pronunciation. Traditional BIPA materials often use "slow-motion" Indonesian, which, while helpful for beginners, fails to prepare students for the "reduced forms" and word-blending characteristic of native speech. The intervention allowed learners to practice bottom-up processing—identifying specific sounds and words within a

stream of fast-paced speech—while simultaneously using top-down strategies, such as using context from a YouTube vlog’s visual cues to infer meaning. This dual approach is supported by Mayer’s Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which suggests that multimodal exposure (audio combined with video) reduces the cognitive load and enhances retention compared to audio-only stimuli.

Motivation and Sociolinguistic Authenticity

Beyond measurable test scores, the qualitative shift in learner engagement was profound. With 92% of learners finding authentic media more engaging than textbooks, the study confirms Peacock’s (1997) findings that authenticity breeds interest. Learners in this study specifically valued exposure to "real Indonesian," which included dialectal variations and colloquial expressions often absent from "sanitized" curricula. This suggests that BIPA pedagogy must move toward "Sociolinguistic Authenticity". When learners hear the actual language used in Jakarta or Bandung, they feel a stronger connection to the culture, which reduces the "affective filter" and makes them more receptive to input.

Overcoming Pedagogical Barriers

While some learners initially found the speed of native Indonesian overwhelming, the study demonstrated that this "difficulty" is a matter of scaffolding rather than a reason for exclusion. By utilizing vocabulary previews and focused listening tasks, instructors can make high-level authentic content accessible. The study proves that intermediate learners do not need "simple" language; they need "simplified access" to complex language. This bridges the gap between the artificial classroom environment and the chaotic, fast-paced nature of native discourse.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the integration of authentic Indonesian media is not merely a supplementary tool but a fundamental necessity for achieving communicative competence in BIPA programs. The study's primary objective was to test the efficacy of natural, unscripted discourse against traditional textbook audio, and the results are definitive: authentic media led to a 32% rise in mean comprehension scores and a significant boost in lexical recognition accuracy. These metrics confirm that consistent exposure to the "real-life linguistic landscape of Indonesia" is the most effective way to prepare learners for the transition from academic study to real-world application.

The implications for BIPA curriculum design are significant. The study advocates for a paradigm shift where "acoustic realism" becomes the standard for intermediate and advanced levels. By systematically incorporating news broadcasts, podcasts, and social media content, institutions can address the persistent paradox where students perform well in class but remain "deaf" to native speakers in natural settings. This approach ensures that the "invisible skill" of listening is grounded in the actual prosody, speed, and idiomatic richness of the Indonesian language.

Furthermore, the study highlights the synergy between linguistic performance and learner psychology. The high levels of motivation (84%) and engagement (92%) reported by participants suggest that authentic materials satisfy the learners' desire for cultural immersion and practical utility. Consequently, BIPA educators are encouraged to embrace digital resources as a means of providing "comprehensible input" that challenges students to expand their linguistic boundaries (i+1).

Ultimately, this study establishes a roadmap for modernizing BIPA instruction. While the six-week intervention yielded impressive results, future research should explore the long-term retention of these comprehension gains and examine how authentic media can be tailored for learners transitioning into advanced fluency. As Indonesia's global importance continues to grow, so must the methods we use to teach its language, ensuring that every BIPA learner is equipped to navigate the vibrant and complex Indonesian communicative world.

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