

## Language Diplomacy Through BIPA: An Indonesian Language Training Program For NEUST Philippines Students

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### Abstract.

*This community engagement program was initiated in response to the linguistic needs of foreign students from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Philippines, who required Indonesian language proficiency to participate effectively in a student exchange program with the Institute of Technology and Business Asia Malang, Indonesia. The partner institution faced two primary challenges: the absence of a practical and systematic Indonesian language training program for foreign learners and the limited initial language competence among NEUST students. Interestingly, structural similarities between Tagalog and Indonesian—particularly in basic morphemes and affixation patterns—offered a promising foundation for language acquisition. The program aimed to introduce fundamental Indonesian language proficiency equivalent to BIPA Level 4, focusing on communicative competence in academic and social contexts. It was conducted online through five sessions, including one orientation, four core training sessions based on the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, and one evaluation session. The learning materials were adapted from Sahabatku Indonesia – BIPA 4, published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The outcomes demonstrated significant improvement in participants' linguistic competence, reflected in higher evaluation scores and active engagement throughout the training. Additional outcomes included online media publications and the adoption of the developed modules as sustainable BIPA teaching materials at NEUST. Overall, this initiative represents an effort in Indonesian language diplomacy, contributing to the strengthening of academic mobility and intercultural collaboration across Southeast Asia.*

**Keywords:** BIPA; NEUST; Indonesian language; Tagalog; student exchange; TBLT and community engagement.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the strengthening of international collaboration between the Institute of Technology and Business Asia Malang (Institut Asia), Indonesia, and the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Philippines, has resulted in a range of academic exchange initiatives. Since 2020, both institutions have actively promoted student mobility and intercultural academic exchange as part of their efforts to internationalize higher education in Southeast Asia. However, one of the primary prerequisites for the success of such programs is linguistic readiness, particularly in mastering basic Indonesian for academic and social interaction. Without adequate language competence, visiting students face challenges in adapting to academic discourse, engaging with peers, and participating in campus life [1]. To address this gap, the development of a Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) training program became essential as a preparatory linguistic course for NEUST students. The BIPA initiative is part of Indonesia's broader educational diplomacy strategy to promote the Indonesian language globally [2]. The program not only serves a pedagogical purpose but also represents a form of language diplomacy, strengthening Indonesia's cultural and academic presence in the region. Since advancing cultural values has gained broad recognition worldwide, enabling other nations to relate to them; as a result, these values are perceived as appealing, significant, and worthy of appreciation [3].

Interestingly, linguistic similarities between Tagalog and Indonesian—the native and target languages of the program participants—present a strong foundation for effective language acquisition. Both languages belong to the Austronesian family, sharing comparable morphological and syntactic features such as affixation, reduplication, and compounding [4]. For instance, both languages use similar numeral formation systems through free morphemes and affixes (*se-* / *isang-*, *dua puluh* / *dalawampu*). This shared

linguistic structure facilitates positive transfer and reduces the cognitive load in learning Indonesian for Tagalog speakers, who already possess a familiar grammatical and semantic framework [5] [6]. This theoretical and linguistic proximity provided the pedagogical basis for developing an online Indonesian language training model specifically tailored for NEUST students. To maximize learning outcomes, the program adopted the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, which emphasizes communication through authentic, goal-oriented tasks.

TBLT has been widely recognized as an effective framework for second language acquisition (SLA), particularly among adult learners with limited exposure to the target language but high cognitive readiness [7] [8] [9]. This method allows learners to acquire the target language through meaningful interaction rather than isolated grammar drills, thus aligning well with the communicative objectives of the BIPA program. The teaching materials were adapted from the official BIPA textbook *Sahabatku Indonesia – BIPA 4* published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), which provides structured, culturally relevant content suitable for beginner-level learners. The training design consisted of one orientation session, four instructional meetings, and one evaluation session, all conducted virtually to accommodate cross-border participation. Before this initiative, a pilot BIPA guest lecture had been conducted at NEUST, consisting of a single 180-minute session. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and faculty indicated a strong demand for a more sustained and structured training program. Building upon this initial success, the BIPA Training Community Service Program was formally implemented by the Institut Asia Malang team as part of its international service-learning agenda. The program was designed not only to develop Indonesian language competence among NEUST students but also to foster academic diplomacy and intercultural engagement between Indonesia and the Philippines.

## II. METHODS

This study adopted an educational intervention design grounded in the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The TBLT framework emphasizes communicative competence through meaningful, goal-oriented tasks rather than decontextualized grammar practice [7], [9]. Within the context of the Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program, this approach was applied to enhance learners' ability to use Indonesian effectively in authentic communicative situations. The training was implemented as part of an international community service collaboration between the Institute of Technology and Business Asia Malang (Indonesia) and the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (Philippines), targeting NEUST students with little or no prior exposure to Indonesian. Approximately 350 undergraduate students participated voluntarily in the online training, which consisted of one orientation session, four instructional sessions, and one evaluation. Each session lasted about 90 minutes and was conducted synchronously via Zoom Pro, supported by Google Docs for written collaboration and WhatsApp Groups for peer communication.

Learning materials were adapted from *Sahabatku Indonesia – BIPA 4* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019), focusing on four communicative themes: numbers and colors, greetings, family, and shopping. Instruction followed the TBLT cycle of pre-task preparation, task execution, and post-task reflection, integrating interactive dialogues, short writing tasks, and role-play simulations. Participants were encouraged to apply target vocabulary and sentence patterns in realistic communicative contexts. Two student facilitators provided ongoing guidance, while lecturers offered corrective feedback and reflection prompts to reinforce linguistic accuracy. Program effectiveness was measured using a pre-test and post-test to assess participants' improvement in vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence formation. In addition, a satisfaction survey employing a 5-point Likert scale evaluated perceptions of material clarity, instructional relevance, confidence, and engagement. Quantitative scores were complemented by qualitative feedback gathered from post-session reflections. The integration of multiple digital tools enabled flexible participation across borders while maintaining interactive learning dynamics. This design ensured both pedagogical effectiveness and accessibility, aligning with the broader goal of promoting Indonesian language diplomacy through sustainable, technology-based language education.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the international community service program produced substantial pedagogical, intercultural, and diplomatic outcomes. The most significant achievement was the successful execution of an online Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) training program for students from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Philippines. The initiative aimed not only to improve students' basic communicative competence in Indonesian but also to serve as an instrument of academic diplomacy and language-based collaboration between Indonesia and the Philippines. The results presented here detail the instructional outcomes, participant learning progress, evaluation data, and broader pedagogical and intercultural implications, all of which are discussed in relation to established theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and task-based learning.

#### Implementation Outcomes and Learning Products

The program consisted of four core sessions, totaling 240 minutes, following an orientation phase and concluding with a comprehensive evaluation. Each session corresponded to a specific communicative theme—*numbers and colors, greetings, family, and shopping*—and was designed following the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework. The progression of these themes reflected a structured scaffolding model, in which linguistic input and communicative complexity increased gradually from lexical comprehension to situational fluency. In the first session, learners were introduced to basic vocabulary for numbers and colors. Activities such as counting classroom objects, identifying colors in their environment, and stating telephone numbers allowed students to practice immediate, functional communication. These seemingly simple tasks established the foundation for more complex linguistic structures in later sessions. In line with [10] *Input Hypothesis*, this stage provided “comprehensible input” that supported acquisition through meaningful exposure rather than rote memorization.

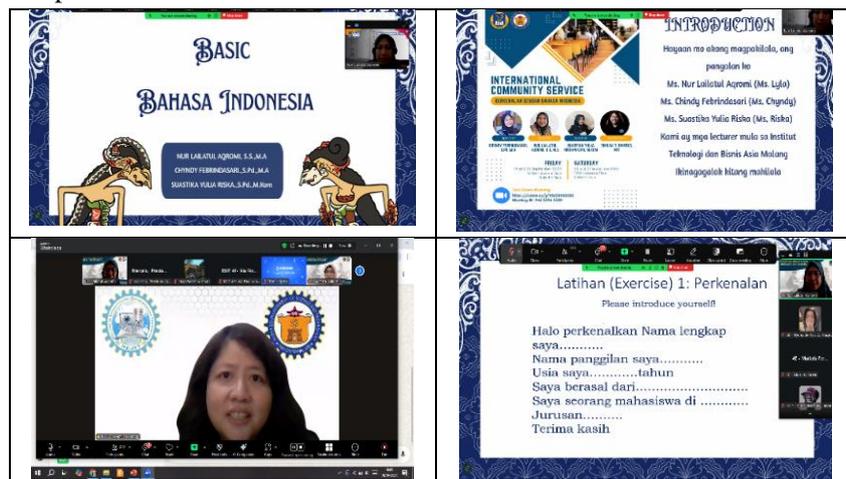


Fig 1. Session 1: Introduction of Basic Bahasa Indonesia.

The **second session** emphasized greetings and polite expressions, developing the learners' ability to engage in social interaction appropriately. Through role-plays, simulated dialogues, and peer exchanges, participants practiced different levels of formality (e.g., *halo, selamat pagi, permisi, terima kasih*) across contexts. These activities supported both grammatical and pragmatic competence, echoing Canale and Swain's [11] communicative competence framework that integrates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic components.



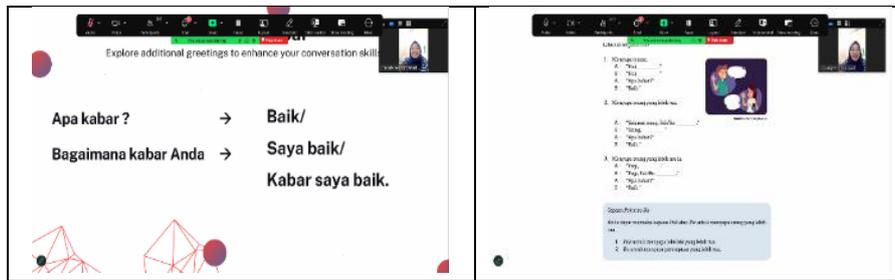


Fig 2. Session 2 Greeting in Bahasa Indonesia

The **third session** explored the topic of *family and relationships*, which required learners to describe their own family members using possessive and descriptive structures (e.g., *ini ayah saya, dia bekerja di sekolah*). The repetition of this topic across oral and written tasks encouraged *output-based learning* [12] where students constructed meaning actively through interaction.

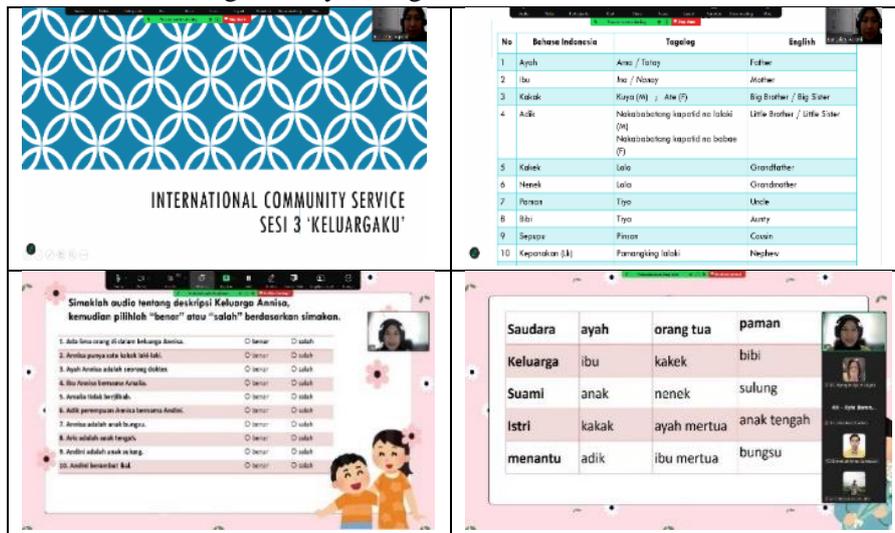


Fig 3. Session 3 Family in Bahasa Indonesia

Meanwhile, the fourth session focused on shopping and daily transactions, representing the highest level of communicative application within the program. Students simulated buyer–seller interactions, practiced vocabulary for goods and prices, and developed strategic competence in asking for clarification or repetition. This stage reflected [13] assertion that authentic task negotiation encourages learners to deploy language resources spontaneously for meaningful purposes.

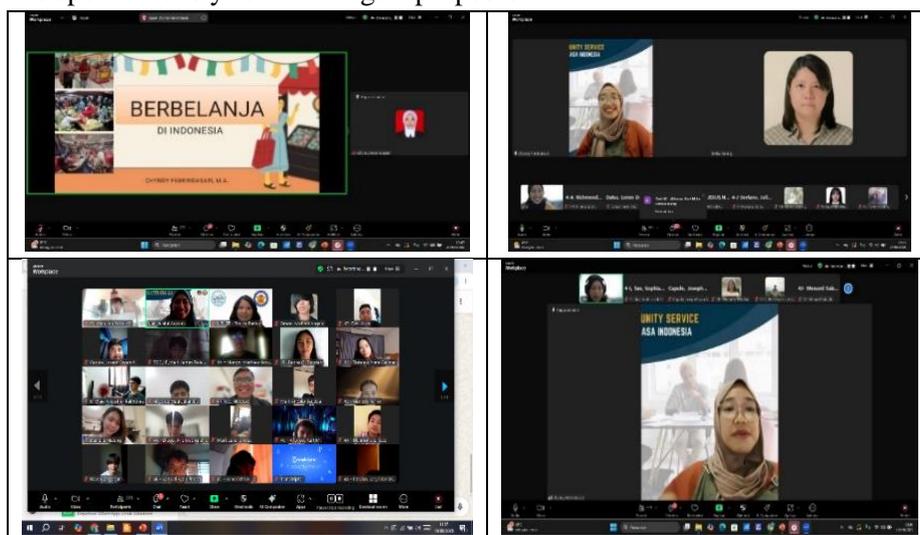


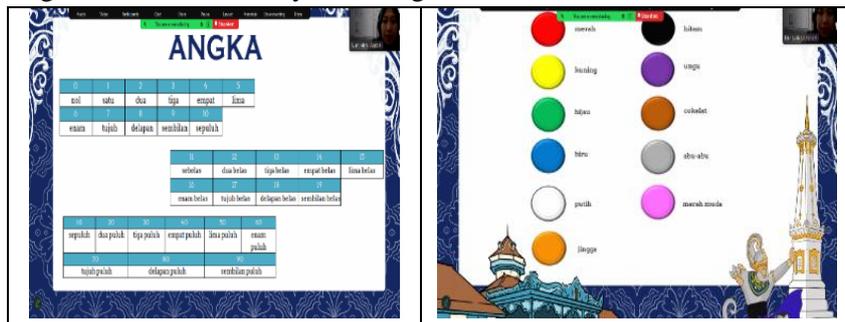
Fig 4. Session 4 Shopping Terms in Bahasa Indonesia

Each session generated structured teaching modules, digital worksheets, and collaborative exercises. The integration of Google Forms for session evaluation and Google Docs for collaborative writing fostered active participation beyond synchronous class time. The asynchronous component provided learners with

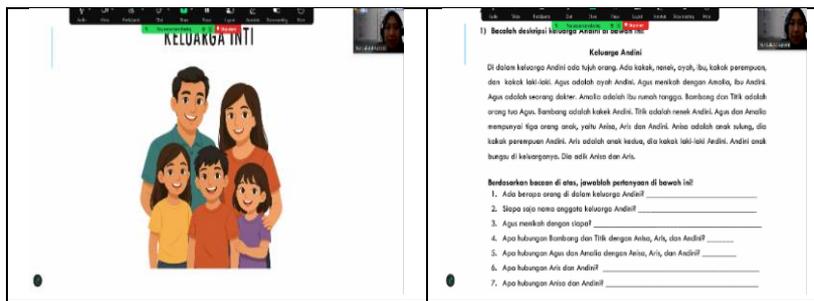
additional exposure to written Indonesian, thereby extending the learning process outside the virtual classroom. This digital infrastructure also ensured continuity and accessibility for participants across different geographical and temporal settings.

**Effectiveness of the TBLT Approach**

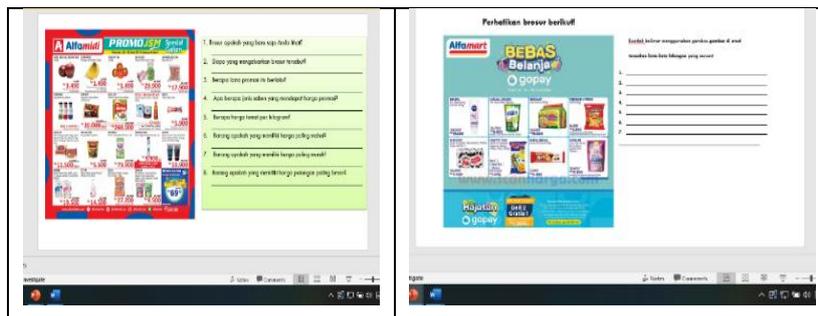
The program’s pedagogical results substantiate the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in developing communicative competence among beginner-level adult learners. As [7] [9] argue, TBLT transforms language from an abstract system to a communicative tool. In this program, the framework was realized through a cyclical process consisting of pre-task, task performance, and language focus/reflection. During the pre-task phase, instructors contextualized the lesson theme, provided vocabulary input, and clarified communicative objectives. In the task phase, learners engaged in pair or group work—ranging from structured dialogues to open-ended simulations—conducted via Zoom breakout rooms. The post-task reflection allowed instructors to give corrective feedback and guide learners to notice linguistic forms in use. These figures show the task cycle during the sessions.



**Fig 5. Number and Colour in Bahasa Indonesia**



**Fig 6. Family Tas in Bahasa Indonesia**



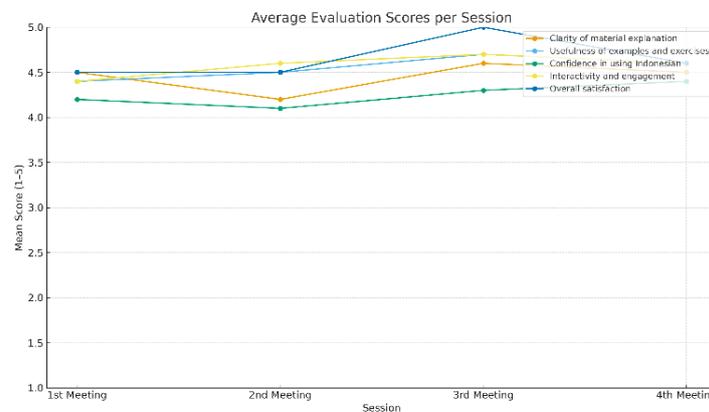
**Fig 7. Shopping Terms in Bahasa Indonesia**

This structure encouraged both fluency-oriented and accuracy-oriented learning. The communicative nature of tasks reduced anxiety and created a low-stakes environment conducive to experimentation with new language forms [14]. The familiar themes, combined with visual aids and contextual materials, facilitated comprehension and retention through dual coding [15]. Furthermore, the linguistic proximity between Tagalog and Indonesian—including similarities in affixation patterns, sentence structure, and phoneme inventory—supported positive transfer and minimized cognitive load during acquisition. Learners quickly recognized parallel morphemes such as ma- (adjectival prefix) and -an (nominal suffix), which aided in pattern recognition and productive use. TBLT’s learner-centered nature also fostered motivation and

autonomy. Learners assumed active roles as meaning-makers, aligning with [16] concept of learner agency in task design. Instructors reported observable improvements in spontaneous speech production and willingness to communicate—a key predictor of successful SLA [17]. As participants engaged in real-world tasks, they demonstrated progressive command of core vocabulary and syntactic structures, validating the principle that form–function alignment is best achieved through meaningful interaction [18].

### Quantitative Evaluation and Learner Perceptions

Program effectiveness was assessed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. A Likert-scale survey (1–5) administered after each session gauged participants’ perceptions of content clarity, relevance, interactivity, and confidence. The overall mean ratings ranged between 4.1 and 4.7, indicating high satisfaction and perceived effectiveness. Material clarity received scores from 4.3 to 4.6, suggesting that even novice learners found the input comprehensible. Task usefulness achieved a similar range (4.3–4.6), showing that participants valued the practicality of the activities. Confidence in using Indonesian improved to 4.1–4.3, a significant indicator of affective development. Meanwhile, interactivity and engagement attained some of the highest scores (4.4–4.6), demonstrating the success of the digital TBLT design in maintaining student motivation in an online environment.



**Fig 8.** Average Evaluation Scores

Qualitative responses supported these numerical findings. Participants described the sessions as interactive, fun, and meaningful. Many highlighted that the use of Zoom breakout rooms and WhatsApp group discussions provided them with safe spaces to communicate, collaborate, and make mistakes without judgment—conditions essential for language acquisition [10]. Several students also commented that the integration of cultural explanations helped them connect linguistic forms with real Indonesian contexts, increasing both interest and retention. These reflections align with [19]. research showing that technology-mediated TBLT enhances learner engagement, social interaction, and linguistic awareness in online settings.

### Pedagogical, Intercultural, and Diplomatic Implications

From a pedagogical standpoint, the program offers empirical evidence that task-based, digitally supported instruction effectively bridges linguistic, cultural, and cognitive dimensions of learning. It demonstrates that communicative language learning, when implemented with contextual and technology-enhanced support, can be both efficient and transformative. The combination of synchronous and asynchronous modes ensured continuity and inclusivity, accommodating diverse learning preferences and technical conditions. This approach aligns with UNESCO’s (2021) recommendations for resilient, inclusive, and digitally driven language education in the post-pandemic era. Interculturally, the program served as an experiential platform for cross-cultural understanding. Participants not only learned Indonesian vocabulary and grammar but also explored values, etiquette, and cultural practices embedded in the language. The politeness strategies, family terms, and market interactions discussed in class reflected Indonesian cultural norms of collectivism, respect, and modesty.

Such exposure allowed Filipino learners to reflect on similarities and differences between their own linguistic identities and those of Indonesians, fostering intercultural communicative competence. At the diplomatic level, the initiative embodies language diplomacy—a form of soft power in which language education strengthens bilateral relations and promotes international cooperation [2]. By equipping NEUST

students with basic proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia, the program enhanced academic mobility and cultural connection between the two nations. It also aligns with Indonesia's national strategy to internationalize its language through educational collaboration and ASEAN partnerships. The successful implementation of this model has potential implications for scaling up Indonesian language promotion across the region, reinforcing the country's role as a cultural and educational hub in Southeast Asia.

#### **Sustainability and Future Directions**

The establishment of standardized, digital-based training materials and evaluation instruments ensures the sustainability of the program. The modules, digital worksheets, and feedback templates can be reused, localized, or expanded for future cohorts, creating a scalable model for other ASEAN universities. The plan for the next phase includes the development of intermediate-level BIPA training, integration of project-based learning, and co-teaching models involving both Indonesian and Filipino instructors. These innovations aim to deepen linguistic competence, critical cultural literacy, and research collaboration between institutions. Moreover, the experience of implementing this online program has informed the institutional policy of both partner universities regarding international service learning and virtual exchange programs. The project demonstrated that digital community service—when grounded in sound pedagogical principles—can yield tangible intercultural and academic benefits. This finding contributes to ongoing discussions in applied linguistics and educational technology on how online learning can transcend geographical boundaries to achieve global learning objectives [20].

In summary, the online BIPA program produced multiple layers of impact:

- (1) measurable improvement in participants' communicative competence, confidence, and engagement;
- (2) validation of the TBLT model as a pedagogically sound and technologically adaptable framework; and
- (3) demonstration of the potential of language education as a vehicle for intercultural diplomacy.

The convergence of linguistic achievement, learner satisfaction, and diplomatic value underscores the transformative power of language learning within community engagement and international cooperation. The initiative confirms that Bahasa Indonesia, beyond being a tool of communication, is an instrument of connection—linking people, cultures, and academic institutions across Southeast Asia through education and shared understanding.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This study shows that a strategically designed, fully online **BIPA** program grounded in **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)** can measurably enhance beginner learners' communicative competence, confidence, and engagement. Across four scaffolded sessions—numbers & colors, greetings & politeness, family, and shopping—NEUST students demonstrated steady gains in functional Indonesian, supported by interactive tasks, targeted feedback, and technology-mediated collaboration. Survey results (mean 4.1–4.7 on a 5-point scale) corroborate high perceived clarity, usefulness, interactivity, and overall satisfaction, indicating that the instructional design was both accessible and effective for complete beginners. Pedagogically, the findings validate the dual focus of TBLT on fluency and form: tasks elicited authentic language use while post-task reflection consolidated emerging structures. The digital ecosystem (Zoom, Google Docs, WhatsApp) extended practice beyond synchronous meetings and fostered low-anxiety participation, while linguistic proximity between Tagalog and Indonesian supported positive transfer. Together, these elements formed a replicable model for beginner-level foreign-language instruction in cross-border settings. Beyond classroom outcomes, the program illustrates the role of language education as academic diplomacy.

By equipping Filipino students with functional Indonesian, the initiative strengthened institutional ties and advanced Indonesia's soft-power agenda in Southeast Asia, demonstrating how community-engaged language programs can contribute to regional mobility and intercultural understanding. Limitations and future work. The study relied on descriptive statistics and perception data; future iterations should incorporate pre-post proficiency testing with standardized rubrics and, where feasible, control/comparison groups. Scaling to intermediate BIPA with project-based assessment, longer follow-up, and co-teaching across institutions will help evaluate durability of learning and deepen intercultural competence. In sum, this

program offers a sustainable, technology-enhanced template for BIPA delivery that bridges pedagogy, technology, and diplomacy. It positions Bahasa Indonesia not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium for regional partnership—an approach that IJCS-oriented community service programs can adopt and adapt across ASEAN.

## V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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