



Motivations Driving Thai BIPA Students to Learn Indonesian Language in Java Region Indonesia

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-05-05 Revised: 2026-05-17 Accepted: 2026-06-26 Keywords: BIPA; Integrative Motivation; Instrumental Motivation; Motivation; Thai Students. DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10446 Corresponding Author: Abdulrohim E-sor s200249009@student.ums.ac.id Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta	<i>Research on the motivational factors influencing Thai students learning Indonesian through BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing) programs remains limited, particularly in the Java region of Indonesia. This study investigates the motivational factors driving Thai BIPA students to learn Indonesian and examines how these motivations relate to contemporary perspectives on second-language motivation. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 101 Thai students enrolled in BIPA programs at universities in Java through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and reliability analysis, while qualitative responses were examined thematically to identify learners' experiences, perceptions, and reasons for studying Indonesian. The findings reveal a multidimensional motivational profile in which integrative motivation ($M = 3.94$) was stronger than instrumental motivation ($M = 3.69$). Students demonstrated strong interest in Indonesian culture, social interaction, and engagement with Indonesian communities, while academic achievement, scholarship requirements, and future career opportunities also served as important instrumental motives. The qualitative findings further show that personal interest, cultural immersion, positive attitudes toward Indonesian people, and opportunities for social interaction were perceived by participants as important contributors to sustained engagement in Indonesian learning. By combining quantitative patterns with learners' own accounts, the study provides a more contextualized understanding of how cultural, social, academic, and personal factors interact in shaping Thai learners' motivation. The study contributes to second-language motivation research by demonstrating how integrative and instrumental orientations can coexist within a multidimensional motivational profile shaped by the cultural and educational context of Java, offering implications for the development of culturally responsive BIPA curricula.</i>

1. Introduction

The increasing mobility of international students in Southeast Asia has expanded the importance of Indonesian as a language for academic study, intercultural communication, and regional engagement. Within this context, Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) has become an important educational pathway for international learners who study, work, or participate in cultural exchanges in Indonesia. For Thai students in particular, learning Indonesian may involve more than acquiring linguistic competence; it can also provide access to academic opportunities, social interaction, cultural participation, and future professional mobility. Previous studies have identified both academic and cultural motivations among Thai learners of Indonesian, but the motivational processes underlying their engagement remain insufficiently examined across different Indonesian contexts (Ambarwati et al., 2023; Krismayani et al., 2024; Srikandi, 2022).

Existing research on Thai BIPA learners provides useful evidence but remains geographically fragmented. Studies conducted in Medan have reported that Thai students are motivated by academic and future-oriented considerations while also showing interest in Indonesian culture and everyday interaction (Srikandi, 2022). Research in Denpasar has similarly highlighted the importance of communicative opportunities, teacher support, and exposure to Balinese and Indonesian cultural practices (Krismayani et al., 2024). Recent evidence from an in-country BIPA program in Bali further indicates that learners' motivation may shift from instrumental toward integrative orientations as they gain sustained exposure to the Indonesian language and local community (Dewi et al., 2025).

At the broader ASEAN level, Hardini et al. (2023) found that students' interest in learning Indonesian was associated with professional, sociocultural, and personal-development purposes, demonstrating the wider regional relevance of Indonesian language learning. However, their descriptive ASEAN-wide perspective did not specifically examine the motivational orientations of Thai BIPA learners within an immersive Indonesian-speaking environment. These studies suggest that Thai learners do not possess a single, uniform motivational orientation. Rather, their motivation appears to emerge from the interaction between pragmatic goals, interpersonal relationships, cultural experiences, and the immediate learning environment.

However, the existing literature provides limited comparative understanding of how these motivational dimensions operate in the Java region, particularly among Thai students studying in culturally distinctive Javanese environments. This geographical gap is important because motivation is not independent of context; learners' goals, identities, and attitudes toward the target language may be shaped by the social and cultural environments in which language learning takes place.

Java represents a particularly important context for examining this relationship. Unlike studies conducted in Medan and Denpasar, research in Java can situate Thai BIPA learners within a Javanese cultural environment characterized by distinctive traditions, social practices, arts, and patterns of everyday interaction. Surakarta, in particular, provides a culturally rich setting in which learners may encounter Indonesian through both formal educational activities and informal participation in local social and cultural life. Such exposure creates opportunities for learners to connect language learning with lived cultural experience.

This relationship between culture and motivation is also evident in BIPA research, which identifies Indonesian cultural content as a potential motivational trigger for foreign learners of Indonesian (Astoria & Nofitasari, 2023). Previous research has shown that culturally oriented BIPA instruction and authentic communicative activities can strengthen learners' engagement and learning motivation (Anggari et al., 2020). Thus, Java is not simply a geographical location for this study; it provides a sociocultural context in which

instrumental purposes for learning Indonesian may intersect with learners' developing relationships with Indonesian people, culture, and communities.

Theoretically, this study draws on Gardner's socio-educational perspective and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) while treating them as complementary rather than interchangeable frameworks. Gardner's framework distinguishes between integrative and instrumental orientations. Integrative motivation concerns learners' interest in and positive attitudes toward the target-language community and culture, whereas instrumental motivation reflects pragmatic purposes such as education, employment, and career development (Gardner, 2014). The L2MSS provides a broader identity-oriented perspective by conceptualizing motivation through the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience (Dörnyei, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2010).

Empirical research further suggests that L2 motivational self-components may develop and change through learners' language-learning experiences. Using a mixed-methods design, Üstünbaş and Üstünbaş (2022) found that learners' Ideal L2 Self was a major source of L2 motivation and that positive changes in learners' future L2 self-images were associated with their current learning experiences. This finding supports a dynamic view of L2 motivation in which learners' future-oriented identities may develop through their experiences in particular learning environments.

From this perspective, integrative and instrumental motives should not be understood as direct equivalents of the three L2MSS components. Instead, they represent motivational orientations that may contribute to learners' developing future-oriented selves and may be shaped by their immediate learning experiences. For example, the desire to participate in Indonesian society may contribute to an Ideal L2 Self associated with becoming a competent and socially engaged Indonesian-language user, whereas scholarship requirements or academic obligations may be connected to the Ought-to L2 Self. The L2 Learning Experience further provides a contextual dimension through which teachers, peers, curriculum, and cultural encounters can influence the development and maintenance of motivation.

Recent international research supports a more contextual and multidimensional understanding of L2 motivation. Contemporary studies increasingly examine the relationship between learners' motivational selves and their learning contexts rather than treating motivation as a stable individual characteristic. For example, Li and Tsung (2025) demonstrate through a mixed-methods study that L2 motivation can be understood through the interaction of learners' selves and contextual influences. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2025) show that future L2 selves are associated with learners' emotions, willingness to communicate, and personality traits, highlighting the importance of motivational identity in understanding language-learning behavior. Li and Han (2025) further demonstrate through a mixed-methods study that learners' motivational orientations can be shaped by attitudes, competitive dispositions, and contextual factors.

These developments are particularly relevant to international students because studying abroad places learners in an environment where language learning, academic mobility, social participation, and identity development occur simultaneously. Research in study-abroad contexts also indicates that language-learning motivation is closely connected to learners' social and educational experiences in the host environment, suggesting that international mobility can reshape the motivational processes underlying language learning (Yue et al., 2022). Recent scholarship has therefore called for greater attention to diverse linguistic contexts and to motivational processes beyond the traditionally dominant English-learning settings.

Despite these developments, relatively little is known about how Thai BIPA learners' motivational orientations and emerging motivational identities interact within the cultural environment of Java. Existing studies have largely examined Thai learners in particular institutional or regional settings, leaving limited evidence concerning the combined influence of cultural immersion, social interaction, academic goals, and future-oriented learner identities in Java.

This study addresses this gap by examining the motivational factors driving Thai students enrolled in BIPA programs across the Java region. By combining quantitative measures of integrative and instrumental motivation with qualitative accounts of learners' experiences, the study seeks to identify not only which motivational orientations are most prominent but also how learners interpret and experience these motivations in their everyday educational and cultural environments. The novelty of the study therefore lies in connecting motivational orientation with cultural immersion and motivational identity among Thai BIPA learners in Java, contributing to a more context-sensitive understanding of second-language motivation in a Southeast Asian and non-English learning context.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant motivational factors driving Thai students in the Java region to learn Indonesian?
2. How do these motivational factors relate to contemporary theoretical perspectives on second-language motivation, particularly Gardner's socio-educational model and the L2 Motivational Self System?

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design to investigate the motivational factors influencing Thai students enrolled in BIPA programs in the Java region of Indonesia. The design was selected because quantitative and qualitative data were collected within the same overall period and addressed complementary aspects of learners' motivation. The quantitative strand measured the strength of integrative and instrumental motivational orientations using Likert-scale items, while the qualitative strand examined learners' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and personal reasons for learning Indonesian through open-ended questions. The two strands were analyzed separately and subsequently integrated during interpretation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Thai BIPA learners' motivational patterns.

A mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because numerical patterns alone could indicate the relative strength of particular motivational orientations but could not fully explain how learners experienced cultural, social, academic, and personal influences on their motivation. Conversely, qualitative responses could provide contextual explanations but could not indicate the overall distribution of motivational tendencies across the participants.

Research Participants

The participants were 101 Thai students enrolled in BIPA programs at universities in the Java region of Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) they were Thai nationals, (2) they were enrolled in a BIPA program in Java, and (3) they had studied BIPA for at least one semester. The participants came from different provinces in Thailand and represented different age groups and educational backgrounds. Data collection was conducted from April 2025 to February 2026. Questionnaires were distributed directly to participants in BIPA classes. The researcher

provided clarification when participants required assistance in understanding questionnaire items, while participants completed the questionnaire independently.

Instrument Development and Validation

The research instrument was developed based on the theoretical distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation in second-language learning and was informed by established motivational perspectives, particularly Gardner's socio-educational model and the L2 Motivational Self System. The questionnaire was designed to capture two major motivational constructs: integrative motivation, referring to learners' interest in Indonesian culture, society, and interpersonal interaction, and instrumental motivation, referring to pragmatic purposes such as academic study, scholarships, employment, and future career opportunities.

The questionnaire consisted of five parts. Part I collected general demographic information, including age, gender, institution, length of study, and language background. Part II collected information concerning participants' regional and educational backgrounds in Thailand. Parts III and IV contained the main motivational measures. Each construct consisted of 10 statements rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Part V contained 13 open-ended questions designed to obtain participants' descriptions of their learning experiences, challenges, expectations, and reasons for studying Indonesian.

Before the main data collection, the questionnaire underwent both expert review and pilot testing. The expert review was conducted to assess the relevance, clarity, wording, and alignment of the questionnaire items with the intended motivational constructs. Feedback from the review was used to refine the wording and organization of the instrument before its administration to the study participants. Pilot testing was subsequently conducted to identify potential problems in item comprehension, response procedures, and questionnaire administration. The results of the pilot stage informed further refinement of the instrument prior to the main data collection.

The internal consistency of the final quantitative scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The instrumental motivation scale produced an alpha coefficient of 0.793, while the integrative motivation scale produced an alpha coefficient of 0.861, indicating acceptable to strong internal consistency for the respective scales.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection followed four main stages. First, the researcher recruited eligible Thai BIPA students from participating institutions in the Java region. Second, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were provided with information concerning their participation. Third, after providing informed consent, participants completed the questionnaire independently. Finally, the completed questionnaires were collected and prepared for quantitative and qualitative analysis. The questionnaire was administered during the period from April 2025 to February 2026. Researcher assistance was available when participants needed clarification concerning the meaning or interpretation of questionnaire items. Such assistance was limited to clarification and did not direct participants toward particular responses.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the 20 Likert-scale items were analyzed using IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to identify the relative strength of the two motivational orientations. The mean scores of the integrative and instrumental motivation scales were subsequently compared to determine the dominant motivational orientation among the participants. Item validity was examined

using Pearson item-total correlations. The reliability of each scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The quantitative analysis therefore provided evidence concerning the distribution, central tendency, and internal consistency of the motivational constructs.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data consisted of responses to the 13 open-ended questions. The responses were analyzed thematically following the principles of thematic analysis. The analysis proceeded through several stages: familiarization with the responses, identification of meaningful statements, initial coding, grouping related codes into broader categories, development of themes, and interpretation of the themes in relation to the quantitative findings and theoretical framework.

The qualitative coding was conducted by a single researcher. The researcher repeatedly reviewed the responses, compared coded statements across participants, and grouped recurring patterns into themes related to cultural interest, social interaction, academic goals, personal motivation, career aspirations, and learning experiences. Because the qualitative analysis was conducted by one researcher, intercoder reliability was not calculated. To enhance consistency, the researcher revisited the coded responses and compared emerging themes with the original responses throughout the analytical process.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The two strands of evidence were integrated at the interpretation stage. Quantitative results were used to identify the relative strength of integrative and instrumental motivation, while qualitative responses were used to explain the experiences and contextual factors underlying these motivational patterns. Areas of convergence between the two datasets were identified and used to develop an integrated interpretation of Thai BIPA learners' motivation.

This integration enabled the study to move beyond identifying which motivational orientation was stronger by examining how academic, cultural, social, and personal factors interacted within learners' experiences in the Java context.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose and general procedures of the study and provided informed consent. Participants were informed that their responses would be used for research purposes. No participant was required to participate against their wishes.

The study obtained participant consent as the ethical procedure for data collection. No separate institutional ethics approval was obtained or reported for this study. This information is stated explicitly to ensure transparency regarding the ethical procedures applied during the research.

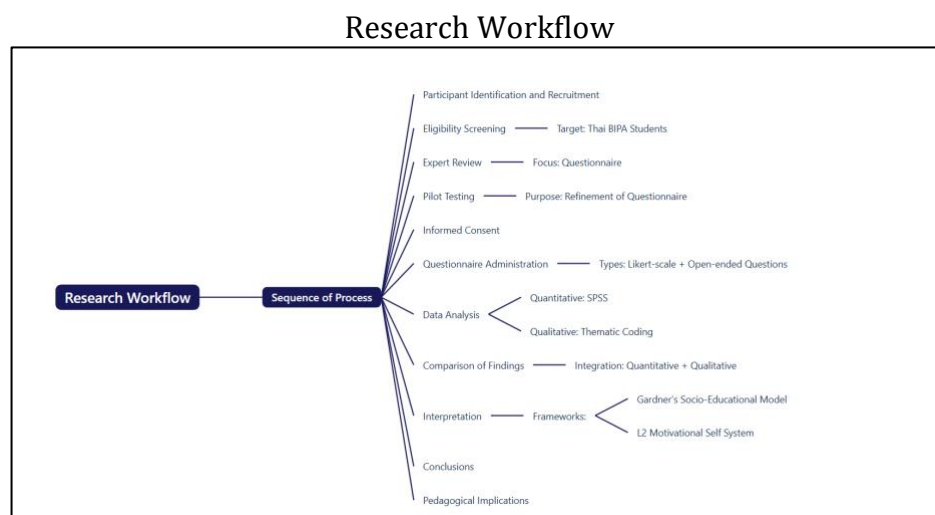


Figure 1: The research process followed the sequence below

3. Results

Participant Characteristics

The study included 101 Thai students enrolled in BIPA-related programs at universities and educational institutions in the Java region of Indonesia. The sample consisted of 57 female participants (56.44%) and 44 male participants (43.56%). Most participants were between 20 and 29 years old (79 participants, 78.22%), followed by those aged 10–19 years (12 participants, 11.88%), 30–39 years (8 participants, 7.92%), and 40–49 and 50–59 years (1 participant each, 0.99%). The participants represented diverse educational backgrounds, including English education and linguistics, Indonesian and other languages, Islamic studies, economics and business, medical and health sciences, education and social sciences, and science and technology.

Participants also came from several provinces in Thailand. The largest groups were from Pattani (25.7%), Narathiwat (16.8%), and Yala (14.9%), indicating substantial representation from Southern Thailand. Other participants came from Bangkok and several other provinces. This geographical distribution is relevant to the interpretation of the qualitative findings because some participants referred to linguistic and cultural familiarity between Southern Thailand and Indonesia.

Overall Motivational Profile

The quantitative findings indicate that both integrative and instrumental motivation were rated at a high level among the participants. As shown in Table 1, the mean score for integrative motivation was higher than that for instrumental motivation.

Table 1. Overall Descriptive Statistics of Motivational Constructs

Motivational construct	Total score (M)	Average item mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
Integrative motivation	39.38	3.94	6.56	High
Instrumental motivation	36.94	3.69	6.41	High

The integrative motivation scale produced a total mean score of 39.38, corresponding to an average item mean of 3.94 (SD = 6.56). The instrumental motivation scale produced a total mean score of 36.94, corresponding to an average item mean of 3.69 (SD = 6.41). Thus, both motivational orientations were strongly endorsed, with integrative motivation showing the higher average score.

The quantitative results therefore indicate that participants' motivation was not restricted to either cultural or pragmatic purposes. Instead, both orientations were present, although the integrative dimension received the stronger overall endorsement.

Instrumental Motivation

The instrumental motivation scale consisted of 10 items addressing pragmatic and educational reasons for learning Indonesian, including university requirements, academic achievement, future employment, opportunities to live in Indonesia, and perceptions of the usefulness and accessibility of Indonesian.

The scale produced a total mean score of 36.94 ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 6.41$), indicating a high level of instrumental motivation among participants. Item-total correlations ranged from 0.361 to 0.734, with all reported coefficients exceeding the reference value of 0.195. Cronbach's Alpha was 0.793, indicating acceptable internal consistency for the scale.

The open-ended responses provide contextual evidence for these quantitative results. Participants described Indonesian as useful for university study, daily communication, scholarships, and future employment. For example, one participant stated, "It is a scholarship requirement," while another explained that Indonesian was necessary because they were studying in Indonesia and needed to communicate with others and understand their academic environment.

Other responses linked Indonesian proficiency with future academic and professional opportunities. One participant reported that learning Indonesian was motivated by "future study and career," while another described Indonesian as a useful language for study, work, and communication within ASEAN. These responses indicate that instrumental motivation was expressed through both immediate academic needs and longer-term educational and career aspirations.

Integrative Motivation

The integrative motivation scale also consisted of 10 items and addressed participants' interest in Indonesian culture, society, traditions, media, interpersonal communication, and cultural participation. The scale produced a total mean score of 39.38 ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 6.56$), which was higher than the instrumental motivation score. Item-total correlations for the integrative motivation items ranged from 0.554 to 0.788, and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.861. These results indicate strong internal consistency among the items measuring integrative motivation.

The qualitative responses provide substantial support for the quantitative pattern. Participants repeatedly referred to Indonesian culture, local people, communication, and everyday interaction as reasons for learning Indonesian. One participant explained that the main reason for studying Indonesian was to "understand Indonesian culture more deeply and be able to communicate with local people more fluently." Another participant reported being interested in Indonesian culture and traditions while also wanting to communicate with the local community.

Cultural interest was also expressed through participants' engagement with Indonesian entertainment and everyday cultural practices. One participant described an interest in Indonesian culture and entertainment, including dramas and films, while another stated that Indonesian culture was a major motivation for participating in BIPA.

The importance of interpersonal interaction was particularly evident in responses concerning learning experiences outside the classroom. Participants described opportunities to communicate with Indonesian friends, lecturers, and local residents in daily situations. One participant reported using Indonesian every day outside the

classroom, while another described regular interaction with local people through shopping, markets, friends, and community activities.

Personal Motivation and Social Support

The general motivation data indicate that personal motivation was the most frequently selected source of motivation. Seventy-eight participants (77.2%) identified themselves as a source of motivation for learning Indonesian. Friends were identified by 19.8% of participants, teachers by 16.8%, and parents or family by 12.9%. Other sources were selected by smaller proportions of participants.

The open-ended responses further demonstrate that personal motivation was closely connected to self-development, curiosity, language interest, and future goals. Participants also described the influence of friends, teachers, family members, and the surrounding environment. For example, one participant stated that support from friends, teachers, and the local community increased confidence and reduced fear of making mistakes when using Indonesian.

Other participants described friends and the local environment as important sources of encouragement. Some reported that interaction with Indonesian friends made them more comfortable using Indonesian, while others emphasized the importance of a supportive learning environment.

Cultural Immersion and Learning Experience

The qualitative findings also revealed that participants frequently connected motivation with opportunities to use Indonesian in authentic social and cultural settings. Participants described learning experiences involving Indonesian culture, local communities, cultural activities, field activities, and direct communication with native speakers.

One participant described BIPA as a program that combined language learning with cultural knowledge and reported that out-of-class activities made learning more meaningful. Another participant reported that learning Indonesian involved not only grammar and vocabulary but also speaking activities, interaction with native speakers, and cultural activities such as arts and traditions.

Participants also identified direct interaction as an important component of their learning experience. Responses indicated that opportunities to communicate with native speakers occurred in everyday activities, including interactions with friends, lecturers, local residents, markets, and other community settings.

The relationship between language and culture was particularly prominent in participants' responses. Many participants indicated that integrating cultural media and activities into language learning increased their interest and made learning more contextual. One participant stated that cultural media such as films, music, food, and traditions helped learners understand the context of language use in real life.

Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings show a multidimensional motivational profile among Thai BIPA learners in Java. Quantitatively, both integrative and instrumental motivation were highly endorsed, with integrative motivation receiving the higher mean score ($M = 3.94$) than instrumental motivation ($M = 3.69$). Qualitatively, participants described motivations related to cultural interest, communication with Indonesian people, academic requirements, scholarships, career aspirations, personal development, and opportunities to use Indonesian in everyday life.

The two strands therefore show convergence between the numerical results and participants' own descriptions. The quantitative findings identify the relative strength of the two motivational orientations, while the qualitative responses provide contextual detail concerning how these motivations were experienced in academic, social, and cultural settings.

4. Discussion

Overall Interpretation of the Findings

This study examined the motivational factors influencing Thai students enrolled in BIPA programs in the Java region of Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that participants possessed a multidimensional motivational profile in which both integrative and instrumental orientations were important. However, integrative motivation received the higher mean score ($M = 3.94$) than instrumental motivation ($M = 3.69$). The qualitative findings reinforce this pattern by showing that participants frequently associated Indonesian-language learning with cultural interest, communication with Indonesian people, participation in local social life, and opportunities to experience Indonesian culture. At the same time, academic requirements, scholarships, future study, and career opportunities remained important instrumental motives.

The finding that integrative motivation ($M = 3.94$) was slightly higher than instrumental motivation ($M = 3.69$) suggests that Thai BIPA students were motivated not only by pragmatic benefits such as academic and career opportunities but also by their interest in Indonesian people, culture, and social interaction. This finding is noteworthy because previous research on Asian language learners has often emphasized instrumental considerations, particularly academic achievement, employment, and future career opportunities. The relatively strong representation of students from Southern Thailand may provide a contextual explanation for the relatively high level of integrative motivation, given the linguistic and cultural familiarity that may exist between Southern Thailand and Indonesia.

However, this interpretation remains tentative because the study did not directly test cultural proximity as a predictor of motivation. The finding may also be interpreted through the L2 Motivational Self System. As learners interact with Indonesian speakers and participate in local cultural activities, their language-learning experience may contribute to the development of a more personally meaningful Ideal L2 Self. In this sense, instrumental reasons for learning Indonesian may coexist with, and potentially become connected to, learners' developing desire to participate in Indonesian social and cultural life.

This pattern suggests that Thai BIPA learners cannot be adequately characterized as learners motivated primarily by academic or economic utility. Rather, their motivation appears to involve the interaction of pragmatic goals with cultural and interpersonal engagement. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary approaches to L2 motivation, which increasingly conceptualize motivation as dynamic and context-sensitive rather than as a fixed individual characteristic. Recent research using the L2 Motivational Self System has similarly shown that learners' motivated behavior can emerge from the interaction between future-oriented self-images, learning experiences, and emotional engagement with the learning environment (Wu, 2024).

The present findings therefore extend previous research on Thai BIPA learners by showing that instrumental and integrative motives may coexist without one necessarily displacing the other. For students studying Indonesian while physically situated in Indonesia, language learning is simultaneously connected to academic mobility and everyday participation in the target-language environment.

Why Did Integrative Motivation Slightly Exceed Instrumental Motivation?

One of the most notable findings is that integrative motivation slightly exceeded instrumental motivation. The present finding that integrative motivation slightly exceeded instrumental motivation can also be interpreted through the dynamic perspective of the L2 Motivational Self System. Üstünbaş and Üstünbaş (2022) found that learners' Ideal L2 Self was a major source of motivation and that positive changes in future L2 self-images were associated with learners' language-learning experiences. In the present study, Thai BIPA learners' sustained exposure to Indonesian people, culture, and everyday communication may similarly provide experiences through which pragmatic reasons for learning Indonesian become connected to a more personally meaningful image of oneself as an Indonesian-language user.

This result deserves particular attention because studies of language learners in Asian educational contexts have often emphasized academic achievement, employment, examination performance, and other pragmatic goals. The present findings suggest that the physical and sociocultural context in which Thai students learn Indonesian may help explain this difference.

First, the participants were not learning Indonesian exclusively in a classroom or in a foreign-language environment outside Indonesia. They were studying BIPA while living and studying in Indonesia, where Indonesian was available for everyday communication. The qualitative responses indicate that participants used Indonesian with friends, lecturers, local residents, and other people in their daily environments. This continuous exposure creates opportunities for learners to experience the target language as a means of social participation rather than merely as an academic subject.

Second, the participants' motivations were frequently connected to Indonesian culture. Responses referred to Indonesian traditions, entertainment, food, local communities, cultural activities, and opportunities to understand Indonesian society. Such experiences can make the target language personally meaningful because learners encounter direct relationships between language and cultural participation. The quantitative finding that integrative motivation received the higher mean score is therefore consistent with the qualitative evidence showing that cultural and interpersonal experiences were important components of learners' motivation.

Third, the Java context provides a particularly rich environment for cultural immersion. Participants studying in Java encountered Indonesian in universities as well as in broader social environments. In Surakarta and other parts of Java, opportunities to encounter local traditions, arts, community activities, and everyday communication may provide repeated occasions for learners to connect language learning with lived experience. The finding should therefore not be interpreted simply as evidence that Thai learners are inherently more integratively motivated than other Asian learners. Rather, it suggests that motivational orientations may be sensitive to the learning environment in which learners are situated. This interpretation is also consistent with study-abroad research showing that sustained exposure to a host-language environment can contribute to changes in learners' motivation and the development of motivational L2 selves (Matsumoto, 2020).

This interpretation is compatible with recent L2 motivation research emphasizing the role of context in the development of learners' motivational selves. Recent research similarly emphasizes that learners' motivational selves develop through interaction with particular learning contexts rather than independently of them (Üstünbaş & Üstünbaş, 2022; Zhang et al., 2025). A meta-analysis further supports the relevance of the Ideal L2 Self to L2 motivation and learning (Yousefi & Mahmoodi, 2022). Cultural Proximity Between Southern Thailand and Indonesia

The strong representation of participants from Southern Thailand provides another possible explanation for the relatively strong integrative orientation. More than half of the participants came from Southern Thai provinces, including Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala, and Songkhla. The manuscript's participant distribution therefore provides an important contextual characteristic that should be considered when interpreting the motivational findings.

Southern Thailand has historical and contemporary connections with Malay-speaking communities, and some participants may have prior familiarity with linguistic forms related to Malay. This background may make Indonesian appear comparatively accessible and culturally familiar to some learners. The possibility of linguistic familiarity is consistent with previous work on Thai learners and Indonesian-Malay varieties, although the present study did not directly measure participants' Malay proficiency.

Cultural proximity may also reduce psychological distance between learners and the target-language community. When learners perceive elements of a target culture as familiar while simultaneously encountering new cultural practices, language learning may become both accessible and interesting. In this study, the qualitative responses suggest that participants were motivated by opportunities to communicate with Indonesian people, develop friendships, experience local culture, and participate in Indonesian social life. Such experiences may strengthen the integrative dimension of motivation.

However, cultural proximity should be interpreted cautiously. The present study did not statistically test whether Southern Thai origin caused higher integrative motivation, nor did it compare participants from Southern Thailand with participants from other Thai regions. Therefore, the findings support cultural proximity as a plausible contextual explanation rather than establishing a causal relationship. Future comparative research should directly examine whether regional background predicts differences in BIPA motivation.

Integrative and Instrumental Motivation Through Gardner's Framework

The findings are consistent with Gardner's socio-educational perspective in showing that learners can simultaneously possess integrative and instrumental reasons for learning a second language. Integrative motivation in this study was reflected in interest in Indonesian culture, interpersonal communication, and participation in Indonesian social life. Instrumental motivation was reflected in academic requirements, scholarships, future employment, and educational advancement.

The higher integrative mean does not mean that instrumental motivation was unimportant. The difference between the two mean scores was relatively modest, indicating that the motivational profile was better characterized as multidimensional than as exclusively integrative. Instrumental goals may provide an initial or practical reason for learning Indonesian, while continued interaction with Indonesian people and culture may strengthen the affective and social dimensions of motivation.

This interpretation is also compatible with contemporary developments in L2 motivation research. Recent work has increasingly questioned a simple separation between external utility and internal identity. In a 2024 study of Chinese EFL learners, Ideal L2 Self and different dimensions of the L2 Learning Experience were significant predictors of motivated behavior, demonstrating that future-oriented identity and immediate learning experiences can operate together (Wu, 2024).

Relationship to the L2 Motivational Self System

The findings can also be interpreted through the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), particularly the relationship among learners' future-oriented selves and their learning experiences. The study did not directly measure the L2MSS components; therefore, the relationship is interpreted conceptually rather than empirically tested.

Participants' academic and career goals can be understood as compatible with future-oriented L2 selves. For example, some participants reported learning Indonesian for future study, employment, teaching, or professional development. These goals represent possible future identities in which Indonesian proficiency forms part of learners' academic or professional selves. At the same time, participants who expressed a desire to communicate with Indonesian people, understand Indonesian culture, and participate in Indonesian society described motivations that may be connected to an Ideal L2 Self involving socially competent and culturally engaged language use.

The L2 Learning Experience is particularly relevant to the present findings because participants were learning Indonesian within Indonesia. Their everyday interactions with Indonesian speakers, cultural activities, teachers, friends, and local communities provided repeated experiences through which motivation could be reinforced. Recent research similarly emphasizes that L2 selves develop through interaction with particular learning contexts rather than independently of them (Üstünbaş & Üstünbaş, 2022; Zhang et al., 2025).

Thus, the findings suggest a useful conceptual connection between Gardner's motivational orientations and the L2MSS: integrative and instrumental motives describe important orientations toward language learning, whereas the L2MSS helps explain how these orientations may become connected to learners' future identities and actual learning experiences. The two frameworks should therefore be viewed as complementary rather than equivalent.

Comparison With Previous BIPA and International Research

The findings broadly correspond with previous studies of Thai BIPA learners while extending their geographical scope. Previous research in Medan identified academic, scholarship, and future-oriented motivations alongside interest in Indonesian culture and social interaction (Srikandi, 2022). Similarly, research involving Thai learners in Denpasar reported the importance of communicative opportunities, teacher support, and exposure to Indonesian and Balinese cultural practices (Krismayani et al., 2024). The present study confirms the coexistence of these motivational dimensions but shows that, in the Java context, integrative motivation received the higher overall mean.

The findings also contribute to the broader international L2 motivation literature. Recent research in China has demonstrated that L2 motivation is shaped by the interaction of learner identity, learning experience, and emotional engagement rather than by a single motivational factor (Wu, 2024). Research on Korean-language learners has likewise examined motivation through attitudes toward the L2 community and learner-related motivational factors, illustrating the continuing relevance of social and identity dimensions in Asian L2 learning contexts (Li & Han, 2025).

At the same time, the present study should not be interpreted as demonstrating that integrative motivation generally dominates among Asian learners. Rather, it provides evidence that the relative strength of motivational orientations can vary according to language, learner population, educational purpose, and sociocultural setting. The Java context is therefore an important part of the explanation for the present motivational pattern.

Pedagogical Implications for BIPA Instruction

The findings have several implications for BIPA instructors and curriculum developers. First, BIPA instruction should integrate language learning with meaningful cultural content rather than treating culture as an additional or peripheral topic. Lessons can incorporate Indonesian food, music, films, local traditions, social etiquette, public communication, and community practices as contexts for developing vocabulary, speaking, listening, and intercultural competence. The findings also support the need for BIPA programs to consider learners' existing competencies and contextual learning needs when designing instructional activities (Pratiwi et al., 2022).

Second, instructors can provide structured opportunities for authentic communication. Activities such as interviews with Indonesian speakers, language-exchange programs, community visits, collaborative projects with Indonesian students, and guided field activities can allow learners to use Indonesian for genuine communicative purposes. Such activities are particularly relevant to the present findings because participants frequently described communication with Indonesian people and everyday interaction as motivational.

Third, instructors should connect cultural and communicative activities with learners' instrumental goals. For example, a lesson on academic Indonesian can be connected to university presentations, scholarship interviews, or future professional communication. This approach allows integrative and instrumental motivation to reinforce one another rather than treating them as competing categories.

Fourth, instructors can support learners' developing future-oriented identities by asking students to formulate realistic Indonesian-language goals. Students might identify themselves as future BIPA teachers, researchers, professionals, university students, or culturally competent members of Indonesian–Thai communities. Such activities can connect immediate classroom learning experiences with future-oriented L2 selves.

Finally, BIPA programs should provide supportive learning environments in which learners feel comfortable communicating and making mistakes. The qualitative responses indicate that encouragement from teachers, friends, and local communities can strengthen confidence and motivation. A supportive environment may therefore help learners transform initial academic or instrumental reasons into sustained engagement with Indonesian language and culture. From a program-design perspective, evidence from BIPA implementation research suggests that effective programs require alignment among curriculum, learning materials, teaching processes, and learners' academic needs (Mwakapemba et al., 2024).

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study used purposive sampling and included 101 Thai BIPA learners. The sample therefore cannot be assumed to represent all Thai students learning Indonesian in Indonesia. Second, the participants were distributed across the Java region, but the study did not systematically compare different cities or provinces within Java. Consequently, differences in local educational environments and cultural experiences could not be examined statistically.

Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported questionnaire responses. Although the mixed-methods design provided both quantitative and qualitative evidence, participants' responses may have been influenced by individual perceptions and social desirability.

Fourth, qualitative coding was conducted by a single researcher. Inter-coder reliability was therefore not calculated. Although the researcher repeatedly reviewed the responses and themes, future studies could strengthen qualitative trustworthiness through independent coding, peer debriefing, or researcher triangulation.

Fifth, the study did not directly measure changes in motivation over time or statistically examine the relationship between motivation and Indonesian proficiency. Therefore, the findings demonstrate motivational patterns but do not establish causal relationships between motivation, language proficiency, or long-term retention.

Finally, although the strong representation of participants from Southern Thailand provides an important contextual perspective, the study did not directly test whether cultural or linguistic proximity caused stronger integrative motivation. This interpretation should therefore remain cautious until supported by comparative or longitudinal evidence.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should examine how Thai learners' motivation changes over time. Longitudinal studies could follow students from their initial BIPA enrollment through later stages of Indonesian-language learning to determine whether instrumental motives become stronger or weaker as learners gain greater cultural and social experience in Indonesia.

Comparative studies across Indonesian regions would also be valuable. Comparing Thai BIPA learners in Java, Sumatra, Bali, and other regions could clarify whether motivational patterns differ according to local cultural environments, educational institutions, opportunities for social interaction, and degrees of cultural immersion.

Future studies should also compare Thai learners from different regions of Thailand, particularly Southern Thailand and other parts of the country. Such research could directly test whether linguistic and cultural proximity is associated with stronger integrative motivation.

In addition, future research could combine motivational measures with objective indicators of Indonesian proficiency and longitudinal measures of language use. This would help clarify whether particular motivational orientations are associated with measurable language development and sustained participation in BIPA programs.

Finally, future studies could examine L2 motivational identity more directly by measuring the Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience alongside integrative and instrumental motivation. Such research would provide a stronger empirical basis for examining how cultural immersion, academic mobility, and future-oriented identity interact in the motivation of Thai learners of Indonesian.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the motivational factors driving Thai students to learn Indonesian through BIPA programs in the Java region of Indonesia. Using a convergent mixed-methods design, the study combined quantitative measures of integrative and instrumental motivation with qualitative accounts of participants' learning experiences, cultural engagement, and reasons for studying Indonesian. The findings demonstrate that Thai BIPA learners possess a multidimensional motivational profile in which both integrative and instrumental orientations play important roles.

The quantitative findings showed that both motivational orientations were highly endorsed, with integrative motivation receiving a higher mean score ($M = 3.94$) than instrumental motivation ($M = 3.69$). The qualitative findings supported this pattern by showing that participants were strongly motivated by opportunities to understand Indonesian culture, communicate with Indonesian people, develop social relationships, and participate in everyday Indonesian life. At the same time, academic requirements,

scholarship opportunities, future study, employment, and career development remained important instrumental motives. These findings indicate that Thai learners' motivation cannot be adequately explained by a single motivational orientation; rather, cultural, social, academic, and future-oriented motives coexist within the BIPA learning experience.

The relatively stronger integrative motivation is particularly noteworthy because previous research involving Asian language learners has frequently emphasized instrumental motives associated with academic achievement, employment, and educational advancement. The present findings suggest that the learning context may influence the relative strength of motivational orientations.

Thai students learning Indonesian while living and studying in Indonesia have opportunities for continuous interaction with Indonesian speakers and direct engagement with Indonesian cultural practices. Such cultural immersion may strengthen learners' interest in the target-language community and make Indonesian meaningful beyond its practical utility. However, this interpretation should be understood as a contextual explanation rather than a causal conclusion because the present study did not experimentally examine the effects of cultural immersion.

The study also contributes theoretically by demonstrating the value of considering Gardner's socio-educational perspective and the L2 Motivational Self System as complementary perspectives for understanding Thai BIPA learners. Integrative and instrumental motivation help describe learners' orientations toward Indonesian language and culture, while the L2 Motivational Self System provides a useful perspective for understanding how these motivations may connect with learners' future-oriented identities and learning experiences. The findings therefore support a context-sensitive understanding of second-language motivation in which motivation is shaped not only by individual goals but also by cultural immersion, social interaction, and the immediate learning environment.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that BIPA programs should integrate language instruction with meaningful cultural and communicative experiences. BIPA instructors can incorporate Indonesian cultural materials, authentic communication tasks, language-exchange activities, community-based learning, field activities, and opportunities to interact with Indonesian speakers. At the same time, academic and career-oriented tasks can be integrated into these activities so that instrumental and integrative motivations reinforce one another. Such an approach may help learners develop both communicative competence and a stronger sense of connection with Indonesian language and culture.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The use of purposive sampling and a sample of 101 Thai BIPA learners limits the generalizability of the findings. The cross-sectional design also does not allow conclusions about changes in motivation over time or causal relationships between cultural immersion and motivational development. In addition, qualitative coding was conducted by a single researcher, and the study did not directly measure participants' L2 Motivational Self System components or objective Indonesian-language proficiency.

Future research should therefore employ longitudinal designs to examine how Thai learners' motivation develops throughout their BIPA experience. Comparative research across different Indonesian regions, such as Java, Sumatra, and Bali, could further determine how regional cultural and educational contexts influence motivation. Studies comparing Thai learners from Southern Thailand with learners from other regions of Thailand would also help clarify whether linguistic and cultural proximity contributes to differences in integrative motivation. Finally, future research could directly measure the Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, L2 Learning Experience, and Indonesian-language

proficiency to provide a more comprehensive empirical examination of the relationship between motivational identity, cultural immersion, and language development.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing literature on second-language motivation by highlighting the experiences of Thai BIPA learners in the Java region, a relatively underexplored Southeast Asian context. The findings suggest that Indonesian-language motivation among Thai learners is shaped by the interaction of cultural engagement, interpersonal communication, academic purposes, and future aspirations. By connecting motivational orientations with cultural immersion and learners' developing motivational identities, the study provides a more context-sensitive understanding of why Thai students learn Indonesian and offers practical directions for strengthening BIPA instruction in Indonesia.

6. References

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