

Title : Strategi Japan Foundation Dalam Memperkuat
Diplomasi Budaya Jepang Di Indonesia Melalui
Program Nihongo Partners Tahun 2022-2024
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ABSTRACT

This research examines the strategy of the Japan Foundation in strengthening Japan's cultural diplomacy in Indonesia through the implementation of the *Nihongo Partners* Program during the 2022–2024 period. Cultural diplomacy is recognized as an effective soft power instrument for fostering mutual understanding and trust across nations by means of direct and personal cultural exchanges. The *Nihongo Partners* Program was selected as the focus because it is specifically designed to dispatch Japanese nationals as partners to assist local Japanese language teachers in secondary schools across Asia, including Indonesia. Their roles extend beyond language teaching to introducing Japanese culture through various activities such as origami, shodō, yukata, and traditional dances.

The study employs a qualitative approach using library research, drawing on official reports from the Japan Foundation, cooperation documents, academic publications, and online news articles. Analysis focuses on the program's dynamics in the post-COVID-19 context, including adaptation to hybrid learning models and expansion to Islamic senior high schools (*madrasah*) through collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Findings reveal that the *Nihongo Partners* Program significantly contributes to increasing Indonesian students' motivation and interest in learning Japanese, while also enhancing their appreciation of Japanese culture. Moreover, the program has played a vital role in shaping Japan's image as a peaceful, friendly, and trustworthy nation, and serves as a strategic instrument of nation branding. Challenges identified include maintaining the consistency of volunteer quality, adapting to local educational contexts, and ensuring the sustainability of face-to-face exchanges amidst global uncertainties. Nevertheless, the Japan Foundation's strategy has proven effective in reinforcing Indonesia–Japan bilateral relations through sustainable soft power, while also contributing to Japan's broader position in Southeast Asia by cultivating younger generations with strong cultural affinity toward Japan.

Keywords: Cultural diplomacy, *Nihongo Partners*, Japan Foundation, soft power, Indonesia–Japan relations