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THE LANGUAGE IDENTITY OF AN ENGINEERING PROFESSOR: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO MULTICULTURAL AND MULTILINGUAL EXPERIENCES

Abstract. One of the key aspects of exploring language identity in multicultural and multilingual environments is the transition from one's native language to shared languages. This transition refers to the shift between languages that individuals experience within both everyday interactions and professional settings. However, this transition process remains underexplored despite its complexities. The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating the effects of language transitions on academics, especially those working in non-language disciplines. It aims to explore the complexities of language identity through the narrative of an engineering professor with over 30 years of academic experience in Indonesia, England, and Malaysia. Adopting a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, the researchers employed semi-structured interviews to examine the professor's personal and professional journey, capturing detailed accounts of his experiences with Indonesian, English, and Malay. Key findings reveal that language adaptation extends beyond proficiency, encompassing emotional, cultural, and professional dimensions. The professor's transition from vernacular languages to Indonesian, and later to English and Malay, highlights the challenges and strategies involved in balancing professional obligations with the imperative of cultural preservation. Immersion in English-speaking environments has significantly shaped his self-perception and communication styles, while returning to his hometown introduced complexities in reconciling global and local identities. The findings suggest a need for greater sensitivity to the broader implications of language transitions, particularly among academics outside language-focused disciplines, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of language identity in diverse academic contexts.

Keywords: cross-cultural experiences; English-speaking environment; language identity; multilingual; multicultural.

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Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, language serves as a cornerstone of identity, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and interact with others across cultural and linguistic boundaries. According to Piacasca (2019), language identity as a dynamic and multifaceted concept reflects the ways individuals relate to their native and acquired languages, influencing their sense of self and belonging. In multicultural and multilingual environments, this identity is often shaped by transitions between languages, as individuals navigate the complexities of adapting to shared languages while preserving their native linguistic roots (Maliutina & Oberemko, 2020). Such transitions, however, are not merely linguistic shifts; they encompass emotional, cultural, and professional dimensions, often accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and insecurity as individuals reconcile differing linguistic and cultural norms (Walz & Fitzgerald, 2020). Despite the profound implications of these transitions, research remains limited, leaving a gap in understanding how language identity evolves in diverse professional and cultural contexts.

Adapting to a new language in multicultural contexts is a multifaceted process that extends far beyond linguistic proficiency. As Chao (2023) emphasizes, it touches on deep aspects of cultural and social identity, often creating tension between adopting a new language and maintaining one's native language and cultural heritage. As individuals navigate these environments, they must balance their sense of belonging with the different linguistic and cultural customs they encounter (Markey et al., 2023). This process significantly affects their psychological and emotional well-being (Mosanya & Kwiatkowska, 2023). Therefore, moving from a native language to a common language requires not only learning new words and grammar but also adjusting to new cultural and social norms (Bahtiyarovna, 2019). Additionally, the dominance of global languages like English can put extra pressure on individuals to conform, which may overshadow their original language and cultural identity.

In multicultural environments, immersion in English-speaking settings significantly influences how individuals navigate their language identity. While Wang et al. (2022) argue that exposure to English in both inner and outer-

circle countries enhances proficiency and self-perception as competent English speakers, Hayakawa et al. (2022) highlight concerns about native language attrition and cultural identity shifts due to increased reliance on English. Furthermore, the global dominance of English creates implicit hierarchies, associating proficiency with success and higher social status, prompting individuals to prioritize English over their native languages (Mashwani & Noori, 2023). This pressure can result in internal conflicts as individuals struggle to reconcile English-speaking expectations with the desire to maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage (Hajar & Mhamed, 2024). Such conformity pressures significantly impact individuals' connections to their native languages and cultures, intensifying in educational settings where teachers face dual challenges of personal linguistic adaptation and supporting linguistically diverse students (Atobatele & Mouboua, 2024; Muniroh et al., 2022). Despite extensive research on language teachers, limited studies address how academics in non-language disciplines, typically lacking formal language training, navigate these challenges (Ardi et al., 2025; Do & Hoang, 2023). Therefore, further exploration is needed to fully understand the impact of immersion in English-speaking environments on individuals with diverse linguistic backgrounds and professional roles.

Exploring how language identity evolves requires a deeper understanding of individuals' lived experiences, particularly how they negotiate their sense of self within diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Personal narratives offer valuable insights into this complex interplay, highlighting varied ways individuals navigate their evolving language identities and sense of belonging (Zhang & Lütge, 2024; Zhou & Liu, 2023). Therefore, this study focuses on the narrative of an engineering professor who has used Indonesian, English, and Malay as mediums of instruction. By examining the professor's journey, the challenges and strategies involved in adapting to different linguistic environments and the impact on both personal and professional identity can be uncovered. Furthermore, as universities in Indonesia and other countries increasingly adopt English as a medium of instruction (Bolton, 2023), the experiences of educators such as the professor whose linguistic trajectory spans a remarkable more than 30-year of academic career across Indonesia, England, and Malaysia become essential in informing policy and practice.

Grounded in four pivotal research questions, the exploration seeks to unravel the multifaceted tapestry of language identity amid shifting contexts:

1. How does one navigate the intricacies of language identity, transitioning from the vernacular to national language, and eventually to English as the medium of instruction?
2. To what extent does immersion in English-speaking environments, both in inner and outer circle contexts, shape one's language adaptation and self-perception as an English speaker?
3. How do cross-cultural experiences throughout an academic career influence the evolution of language identity?
4. How does the return to one's native country after years of academic career abroad impact language identity?

Language Identity in Multicultural Environments

Language identity is a core component of an individual's self-concept, significantly influencing how they perceive themselves and engaged with others within multicultural contexts. It shapes social interactions, interpersonal communication, and the ability to navigate diverse cultural environments (Zhou & Liu, 2023). As individuals interact with various languages and cultural frameworks, their linguistic identity continuously adapts, reflecting their personal, social, and cultural experiences (Zhang & Lütge, 2024). Thus, language identity is understood as a dynamic construct that is constantly reshaped by the settings in which speakers live and communicate.

Multiple factors contribute to this evolving identity, including socioeconomic class, professional roles, age, gender, and broader sociocultural dimensions such as race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation further influence language practices (Ma, 2024). Additionally, personal experiences, such as family interactions, childhood memories, and significant life events, create deep emotional connections to language, making it not only a tool for communication but also a reflection of cultural heritage and identity (Fitriyah et al., 2024). Consequently, language serves not only as a practical tool for communication but also as a living reflection of who individuals are, how they want others to perceive them, and how they preserve cultural traditions.

Understanding language identity, therefore, is essential for appreciating the ways in which individuals negotiate their place in increasingly multicultural societies.

Transitioning Linguistic Identity

Transitioning linguistic identity involves a deeply intricate process of adapting to new languages, navigating cultural nuances, and meeting social expectations. Arcidiacono et al. (2019) emphasize that individuals who frequently move between different cultural contexts often encounter challenges in clearly defining their identity, which can impact their mental health and overall well-being. This continuous adaptation demands flexibility in linguistic resources to communicate effectively and create meaning within multicultural environments.

Beyond linguistic competence, Karlik (2023) asserts that this transition extends beyond linguistic competence to include embracing unique cultural experiences, perspectives, and insights offered to each language, and it requires individuals to explore their cultural roots, upbringing, and evolving connections to multiple languages within deeper cultural and historical context. Moreover, this blending of languages and cultures creates a dynamic interplay that further enriches an individual's linguistic identity (Watiningrum, 2023). Ultimately, the interaction of multiple languages and cultures enriches linguistic identity, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and their place within diverse social landscapes.

Immersion in English-Speaking Environments

Immersion experiences significantly shape the process of language adaptation, influencing an individual's linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and sense of identity. Immersion in English-speaking environments involves constant exposure to the language, either by staying in an English-speaking country or participating in English-speaking activities and communities (Nalyvaiko et al., 2021). This immersion enhances linguistic proficiency and helps individuals grasp cultural nuances and social interactions

tied to the language (Kakita & Palukuri, 2020). Furthermore, Kotzor et al. (2021) believe that being surrounded by native speakers allows for the natural acquisition of rhythm, intonation, and colloquial expressions not easily learned through formal education, as well as cultural references and idiomatic expressions essential for effective communication.

Yet immersion is not an unalloyed good. Onosu (2021) believes that immersion can lead to isolation, cultural disconnection, and challenges in maintaining one's native language. Furthermore, Poudel (2022) adds that it may also unintentionally perpetuate linguistic and cultural dominance, marginalizing other languages and cultures, ultimately hindering meaningful interactions. Thus, understanding and managing the complexities of immersion are essential to fostering meaningful linguistic growth while safeguarding cultural diversity and identity.

Cross-Cultural Experiences and Language Identity

Cross-cultural experiences play a significant role in shaping and redefining an individual's linguistic identity. Eslami et al. (2023) mention that interactions across cultural boundaries profoundly influence how individuals perceive themselves through language. Additionally, Wahyuni et al. (2023) also believe that through processes of identity negotiation, individuals incorporate elements from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, thus developing more flexible and adaptable identities. Therefore, Baghana et al. (2023) conclude that engaging in diverse cultural practices involves navigating different linguistic conventions, dialects, and nonverbal communication patterns, which ultimately shape how individuals interpret and express themselves linguistically.

However, exposure to heterogeneous linguistic norms can also spark identity conflicts. Cox et al. (2021) report that exposure to varied linguistic norms can also generate identity conflicts, complicating efforts to maintain a stable linguistic identity and potentially triggering confusion or identity crises as individuals juggle multiple cultural influences. Furthermore, Hayawaka et al. (2022) mention that pressures to conform linguistically might diminish authentic language expression, sometimes reinforcing stereotypes or biases.

Zhang and Lütge (2023) further highlight that identity negotiation in multicultural settings may lead individuals toward assimilation rather than genuine integration, prompting them to sacrifice parts of their original language identity to fit in. Therefore, effectively navigating cross-cultural experiences demands balancing openness to diversity with a commitment to preserving one's linguistic and cultural authenticity.

Impact of Returning to Native Country

Returning to one's native country after extended periods abroad often results in significant shifts in an individual's language identity. Casado et al. (2023) note that prolonged international experiences frequently alter how returnees perceive and utilize their native language upon coming home. According to Włosowicz (2020), changes in cultural context and social interactions influence the ways individuals engage with their native languages. Factors contributing to these shifts include altered linguistic proficiency, exposure to new cultural norms, and the ongoing influence of foreign language practices (Román, 2022).

Personal narratives underscore the challenges of re-establishing a cohesive language identity after returning home, with some individuals struggling to readjust linguistically (Hajar & Mhamed, 2024). Conversely, Zhang and Wang (2022) observe that others experience a renewed appreciation for their native language, finding that foreign language skills gained abroad can complement and enrich their native linguistic abilities. Consequently, returning home after years abroad involves complex negotiations of linguistic identities, reflecting a dynamic interplay between past international experiences and renewed connections to native cultural contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative narrative inquiry to explore language identity through participant's personal experiences. Narrative inquiry, as outlined by Mertova and Webster (2020), allows the participant to share

personal stories, revealing the complexities and subjective interpretations of language identity development. By focusing on participant's own words, the method uncovers deeper meanings and emotions that go beyond surface-level descriptions (Sudarwati et al., 2022). Thus, the narrative data collected in this study provides detailed insights into the evolving relationship between language, culture, and identity, particularly throughout an academic journey across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Participant's Profile

The participant in this study is referred to as Professor Eyta (a pseudonym). Prof. Eyta was born and raised in Palembang, Indonesia, where he also completed his primary and secondary education. For his tertiary education, he initially obtained a diploma in Mechanical Engineering. This diploma degree is a three-year vocational qualification typically awarded by Indonesian polytechnics. Later, he completed a one-year top-up program provided by the university to earn a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He continued his academic journey in the United Kingdom, obtaining a master's degree and a Ph.D. in Engineering. Prof. Eyta has extensive academic and professional experience in Indonesia, England, and Malaysia, holding various academic leadership roles such as Department Head, Deputy Dean, and Dean. He currently serves as a professor in the Occupational Health and Safety department at a university in Indonesia. Prof. Eyta's career spans over three decades, and he has supervised numerous postgraduate students from diverse international backgrounds and published extensively in engineering-related fields.

Data Collection

Before collecting data, ethical considerations were carefully addressed by obtaining informed consent from the participant. The participant was clearly informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the use of a pseudonym to protect the identity. Participation proceeded only after the participant explicitly agreed to these conditions and granted permission to share the narrative for research purposes.

Data were collected through a face-to-face semi-structured interview with the participant in his office. The interview lasted 50 minutes and 27 seconds and was conducted in English to ensure the participant's comfort in expressing his experiences. To ensure data reliability, the session was recorded concurrently using two devices (an audio recorder and a video recorder) as a precaution against any potential device failure. This conversational-style interview provided the flexibility to explore key research questions while allowing the participant to share the stories openly. The interview served as the primary data source for the study, with its transcript later analyzed to uncover patterns in language identity and adaptation. The interview was structured with nine open-ended questions that mapped onto the study's four research questions: three questions addressed research question 1, and two questions each targeted research questions 2, 3, and 4.

For Research Question 1 (multilingual backgrounds), the participant reflected on childhood language experiences, including the use of local language, Indonesian, and English, and how these transitions shaped his linguistic identities and communication patterns over time. For Research Question 2 (language adaptation), the participant described his experiences in English-speaking environments (in England and Malaysia), discussing changes in his language use and self-perception during immersion in those contexts. For Research Question 3 (cross-cultural experiences), the analysis examined how interactions with diverse cultural backgrounds influenced the participant's language identity, focusing on shift in communication styles and social adaptation across different cultural contexts. Last, for Research Question 4 (returning to the native country), the interview explored how the participant's language use and identity evolved after returning to Indonesia, focusing on how past experiences and the current environment shape their self-perception as speakers today.

Data Analysis

After the interview, the audio and video recordings were transcribed verbatim using an AI transcription service (Transkrip.com by Meeting.ai),

yielding a transcript of 6,413 words. This study employed a thematic approach to analyse the interview data, identifying recurring themes, patterns, and narratives that reflect the evolution of language identity in multicultural environments. The transcripts were reviewed and coded, with key concepts systematically grouped into broader themes that capture the essence of participant's experiences and perspectives. These themes were then analysed in relation to the four research questions to explore the complex dynamics of language, culture, and identity. The thematic analysis provides a comprehensive view of the emotional and professional dimensions of language identity evolution, offering insights into how personal and academic experiences intertwine to shape identity in diverse linguistic environments.

To enhance rigour, the six-phase procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006) guided the thematic analysis: (a) familiarisation, (b) initial coding, (c) theme search, (d) theme review, (e) theme definition, and (f) reporting. The coding was conducted inductively in NVivo 14, allowing data-driven codes to emerge without imposing pre-existing categories. After open coding, axial coding was used to collapse related codes into higher-order categories. NVivo's "Text Search" query was subsequently employed as a validation step—specific lexical items, such as English, identity, adapt, return, were searched to ensure that no relevant excerpts had been overlooked. Thus, keyword searches served only as a completeness check; the codes and themes themselves were generated inductively from the participant's narrative.

For Research Question 1, the analysis identified themes related to the participant's multilingual backgrounds, including childhood language experiences and transitions between different languages over time. Research Question 2 focused on themes concerning language adaptation, such as changes in language use and self-perception during immersion in English-speaking environments. Research Question 3 examined how cross-cultural experiences influenced language identity, focusing on interactions with diverse cultural groups and changes in communication styles across different contexts. Finally, Research Question 4 explored the impact of returning to one's native country on language identity, including changes in language use and self-perception since moving back to Indonesia.

Results

Language Identity in Multicultural Environments and Transitioning Language Identity

Prof. Eyta's language identity developed through a series of six key transitions, each shaping his sense of self across personal, cultural, and professional contexts. These stages represent the evolution of his language use from vernacular languages at home to adapting within multicultural and international environments. Each transition brought unique challenges and growth, reflecting the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and professional identity. By examining these six stages ranging from early childhood exposure to vernacular languages, to his recent experiences re-integrating into Indonesia's academic landscape. This study reveals how language identity is continuously reshaped over time. Below there is a summary table of his language transitions.

Table 1

Key Language Transitions and The Impact

Stage / Transition	Key Experiences	Emotional Response	Impact on Identity	Statement
1 Vernacular Languages at Home	Spoke Padangnese and Palembangnese at home and locally.	Strong cultural pride and Sense of belonging	Built a foundation in cultural heritage and family bonds.	"My parents spoke Padangnese at home, especially when they argued" "When I started mingling with friends outside home, I spoke Palembangnese"
2 Multicultural Neighbourhood	Encountered Javanese, Sundanese, and Bugis languages in the community	Adaptability and curiosity	Developed ability to navigate diverse linguistic environments.	"My neighborhood had a mix of cultures, such as Bugis and Javanese, Sundanese which influenced my language."

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Stage / Transition	Key Experiences	Emotional Response	Impact on Identity	Statement
3 Formal Schooling in Indonesian	Shifted to Bahasa Indonesia in a formal school setting.	Initial anxiety and gradual acceptance	Strengthened academic language skills and formal communication.	"My strict teacher emphasized proper spelling... it influenced my strong dislike for misspellings."
4 British Education and Accents	Studied in England, adapting to various accents and dialects.	Initial struggle, eventual confidence	Enhanced professional identity and linguistic flexibility.	"The English was different... living with a host family helped me to adapt."
5 Malaysian English (Manglish)	Worked in Malaysia, using Manglish in professional settings.	Pride in adaptability and professional growth	Promoted inclusive communication and achieved career advancement.	"Malaysia's education system mimics the UK's... this contributed to my rapid promotion."
6 Return to Indonesia and Local Reintegration	Resumed teaching in Indonesia, integrating English as a medium of instruction.	Cultural pride and renewed linguistic challenges	Reintegrated local identity with global perspectives.	"Promoting English in meetings is important, but I also want to respect and teach our local language."

Immersion in English-Speaking Environments

Prof. Eyta's journey of language immersion and identity transformation can be best understood through a series of language proficiency milestones and corresponding identity shifts. Each milestone marks a significant step in his English proficiency, from initial translation barriers to bilingual professional use. These shifts also reflect changes in his personal and professional identity, revealing how immersion in English-speaking environments has reshaped his language processing, communication style, and self-perception. The following table presents these milestones alongside key identity and communication changes, illustrated by Prof. Eyta's own reflections, to provide a cohesive view of his evolving language identity.

Table 2

English Proficiency Milestones and Identity Changes

Stage	English Proficiency Milestone	Identity and Communication Change	Statement
1	Initial English Learning:	Early exposure to English, basic grammar and vocabulary, relying on translation.	Initial Hesitancy: Translation required before speaking, causing hesitation in communication. "In the beginning, I was always thinking twice before speaking in English... It made me feel like an outsider."
2	Direct Thinking in English	Immersion in England allowed him to think directly in English, eliminating the need for translation.	Identity Shift at Home: English became the primary language at home, with Bahasa Indonesia reserved for conversations with his wife. "The experience in England is really changing... I got so used to it that I do not have to convert my thoughts to English, it comes naturally." "I speak Bahasa only to my wife. My children speak English, so our household language shifted to English."
3	Adaptation to Malaysian English (Manglish)	In Malaysia, adapted his English to reflect local mannerisms, making communication more relatable.	Cultural Communication Style: Adapted language style to foster rapport, integrating local customs to fit in with the academic community. "To make people comfortable, I adjust my English to match the local style. It makes my coworkers and my students feel like I am part of them."
4	Bilingual Professional Use	In Indonesia, combined English with Bahasa Indonesia to enhance clarity and maintain respect for cultural norms.	Global-Local Identity Balance: Blended British directness with Indonesian norms to navigate professional roles effectively. "Promoting English in academic settings is important, but I also use Bahasa when needed to connect and make complex ideas clear." "My time in England shaped my direct way of speaking, and I keep that here in Indonesia. It brings clarity in meetings and is a unique part of my communication style."

Cross-Cultural Experiences and Language Identity

Prof. Eyta's cross-cultural experiences in England and Malaysia profoundly influenced his language identity and communication approach. These experiences involved adapting his speech and style to align with diverse

cultural norms, which allowed him to foster connections, assert his authority, and navigate the complex nuances of multilingual environments. His encounters highlight the impact of linguistic adaptation in reducing social distance, enhancing professional credibility, and shaping perceptions of identity across cultural boundaries. The following table outlines the four main aspects of his cross-cultural adaptation, along with his personal reflections, illustrating how each experience contributed to his evolving language identity.

Table 3
Cross-Cultural Experiences and Language Identity Adaptation

Aspect of Adaptation	Key Experience	Impact on Language Identity and Communication	Statement
Adaptation to Local Accents and Speech Patterns	Adjusted speech to match local accents and rhythms.	Created a sense of belonging and connection, reducing social distance and building rapport.	"To make people comfortable and make sure I'm part of them, I adapt my speech."
Cultural Sensitivity and Connection	Despite English policy, often used Bahasa Melayu to connect with colleagues.	Emphasized the social role of language in building bonds; demonstrated respect for cultural preferences in multilingual contexts.	"Language connects people. Even though I speak English, they still mix it with Malay, and that is fine."
Misidentification and Perceived Identity	Experienced misidentification due to his accent.	Highlighted the fluid nature of language identity and how linguistic markers can blur cultural boundaries.	"They thought I was Filipino or Chinese. Sometimes, people even said I sounded Japanese."
Professional Adaptation and Authority	Adopted a direct, assertive communication style influenced by England and Malaysia experiences.	Shifted away from traditional Indonesian indirect styles, enhancing his authority and credibility in professional settings.	"They did not expect an Indonesian to be assertive, but I refused to simply agree."

Impact of Returning to Native Country

Returning to Indonesia after extensive use of English abroad marked a significant shift for Prof. Eyta, impacting both his professional and personal

language use. While his transition to native languages, Palembang and Bahasa Indonesia, was initially smooth, the long-term immersion in English left residual influences on his language habits, occasionally creating challenges when switching back. His experience underscores the cognitive and cultural effects of prolonged foreign language immersion, highlighting the interplay between linguistic fluency, habitual language use, and identity. The following table summarizes these key aspects of his return, including his reflections, which illustrate how he balances his multilingual identity and cultural adaptability upon returning to his home country.

Table 4*Impact of Returning to Native Country on Language Identity*

Aspect of Transition	Key Experience	Impact on Language Identity and Communication	Statement
Transition to Native Language Use	Seamlessly returned to using Palembang and Bahasa Indonesia.	Maintained fluency in native languages, reflecting his strong foundation.	"There is no issue when I am back, I speak Palembang as well as Bahasa Indonesia."
Habitual Language Shifts	Found English habits ingrained, occasionally struggling to find words in Indonesian.	Prolonged use of English created subtle cognitive shifts, impacting native language processing.	"Switching from the habit is different for me. After teaching so long in English, sometimes I struggle to find the words in Indonesian."
Maintaining English in Professional Settings	Promoted English use in meetings and policies to maintain international standards.	Demonstrated a commitment to English proficiency while balancing native language with professional needs.	"I made a regulation here that everyone must speak English. Even in our monthly meetings, everything is done in English."
Multilingual Identity	Views himself as a communicator rather than confined to one language.	Embraces adaptability across languages, viewing language as a tool for connection.	"Rather than stamping myself as an English speaker or whatever, I think of myself as a communicator."
Practical Approach to Communication	Prioritizes ease of communication over linguistic precision.	Reflects a pragmatic view, emphasizing comfort and connection over language strictness.	"As long as I can communicate well, in a way that people are comfortable, that is what matters."
The Link Between Language and Culture	Recognizes the inseparable nature of language and cultural context.	Understands language as a vehicle for cultural nuances, shaping his communication practices.	"Language comes with culture. It cannot be separated from culture."

Discussion

Language Identity in Multicultural Environments and Transitioning Linguistic Identity

Prof. Eyta's linguistic journey illustrates how language identity continuously adapts in multicultural environments, aligning with the dynamic interplay of personal, social, and cultural influences on language use (Zhou & Liu, 2023). His early use of Palembangnese and Padangnese at home created deep emotional connections and a sense of belonging, echoing the emphasis on emotional connections to language through family interactions (Fitriyah et al., 2024). Furthermore, transitioning to Bahasa Indonesia in school, with a strict emphasis on correct spelling, mirrors Bahtiyarovna's (2019) insights on the significant impact of formal education on language practices.

Moreover, Prof. Eyta's adaptation to various English accents in England and Singapore or Malaysian English underscores the cognitive flexibility required in different linguistic landscapes. Besides, his professional experiences in teaching and academia highlight how language identity is influenced by one's profession and sociocultural environment (Ma, 2024). This adaptability and ability to maintain native languages while becoming proficient in new one support Zhang & Lütge's (2024) discussion on balancing acts in multicultural settings. His experience in Malaysia, where English and Arabic were primary languages of instruction, showcases the role of professional demands in shaping language use and identity (Ma, 2024). The acceptance he received in these settings also underscores the importance of social support in language adaptation, resonating with Hajar and Mhamed's (2024) findings.

Throughout his journey, Prof. Eyta's narrative reflects the theoretical perspectives that view language identity as fluid and evolving, influenced by his social class and profession (Ma, 2024). Moreover, his ability to navigate and negotiate his language identity in response to diverse contexts exemplifies how individuals adapt and maintain their cultural heritage through language. Ultimately, Prof. Eyta's story highlights that language identity is not fixed but continuously negotiated, shaped by emotional attachments, educational

experiences, professional roles, and sociocultural interactions across diverse linguistic settings.

Immersion in English-Speaking Environments

Prof. Eyta's immersion in England profoundly demonstrates the benefits and complexities of deep linguistic exposure, reflecting Nalyvaiko et al.'s (2021) insights on how such immersion enhances proficiency and cultural understanding. His ability to think and speak directly in English, bypassing mental translation, aligns with Kotzor et al. (2021) findings on acquiring natural language nuances through consistent exposure. However, this immersion also led to challenges in reverting to Bahasa Indonesia, echoing Onosu's (2021) concerns about potential disconnection from one's native language. Prof. Eyta's adaptation to local contexts in Malaysia, including adjusting his English to connect with colleagues and switching to Malay when necessary, illustrates Poudel's (2022) discussions on balancing institutional language expectations with practical communication needs. His straightforward communication style, shaped by his English experience, facilitated his career advancement in Malaysia, supporting Kakita & Palukuri's (2020) views on the role of cultural interactions in immersion. Overall, Prof. Eyta's experience reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of linguistic identity, highlighting the interplay of personal, social, and cultural factors in language transition and adaptation.

Cross-Culture Experiences and Language Identity

Prof. Eyta's cross-cultural experiences vividly illustrate the dynamic nature of language identity in multicultural environments, where linguistic adaptation is both a necessity and a reflection of deeper cultural interactions. His conscious efforts to adjust his speech to local accents and incorporate idiomatic expressions align with the notion that language is a tool for reducing social distance and fostering connections (Rohmah et al., 2024; Eslami et al., 2023). This process of linguistic modification highlights the flexibility required

to navigate diverse cultural contexts. Despite institutional pressures to maintain English, Prof. Eyta recognized the cultural significance of Bahasa Melayu, reflecting an inclusive approach to cross-cultural competence that values linguistic diversity. His experiences of being misidentified due to his accent underscore the complex relationship between language and identity, where linguistic adaptation can blur traditional cultural boundaries (Baghana et al., 2023). Moreover, his shift toward a more straightforward communication style, influenced by his experiences in England and Malaysia, illustrates how cross-cultural interactions can reshape professional identities and communication norms (Zhang & Lütge, 2023). These adaptations, while enhancing his effectiveness in multicultural settings, also highlight the potential challenges of maintaining a consistent language identity amidst diverse cultural influences (Cox et al., 2021; Hayakawa et al., 2022). Prof. Eyta's journey reflects the intricate balance between embracing linguistic diversity and preserving a coherent language identity, supporting the broader literature on the impact of cross-cultural experiences on language and identity.

Impact of Returning to Native Country

Prof. Eyta's return to Indonesia after years abroad reveals the complexities of language identity, where maintaining his native languages meets the challenge of adapting to new language habits. While he remained fluent in Palembangnese and Indonesian, his long-term use of English made it difficult to switch back smoothly, showing how extended exposure to a foreign language can alter speech patterns (Román, 2022). His prior overseas experiences have also influenced his teaching practice and professional conduct upon returning, for instance, he introduced an English-only policy in departmental meetings to uphold international standards, directly reflecting the influence of his overseas experience on his practices. This continued use of English in academic settings reflects a dual language identity, as he balances native-language interactions with the global orientation he gained abroad (Zhang & Wang, 2022; Włosowicz, 2020). Seeing himself as a "communicator" rather than being confined to one language, Prof. Eyta also adopts a practical multilingual approach in both teaching and administration, prioritizing clarity

and comfort in communication over strict linguistic correctness. This pragmatic outlook, shaped by his cross-cultural experiences, enhances his adaptability and cultural understanding in his academic role. Therefore, his experience highlights how personal, cultural, and professional influences come together to shape language identity in today's globalized world.

Conclusion

Considering the growing adoption of English as a medium of instruction in universities across Indonesia, Malaysia, and beyond, this study provides crucial insights into the nuanced evolution of language identity, particularly within non-language academic disciplines. Through the narrative of Prof. Eyta, an engineering professor with over 30 years of academic experience spanning Indonesia, England, and Malaysia, this research uncovers the profound complexities involved in linguistic transitions. By focusing on a professional in a field where the primary emphasis is on technical and scientific content rather than language acquisition, the study highlights how language adaptation is not merely about acquiring proficiency but is deeply intertwined with emotional, cultural, and professional dimensions. Prof. Eyta's journey illustrates the challenges of navigating multiple linguistic landscapes—transitioning from vernacular languages to Bahasa Indonesia, and then to English and Malay—while balancing the demands of professional efficacy and cultural preservation.

The research also reveals how immersion in English-speaking environments shapes self-perception and communication styles, and how returning to one's native country after years abroad can complicate language identity, necessitating ongoing negotiation between global and local identities. By examining these dynamics, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of language identity in multicultural and multilingual settings, affirming the fluidity and complexity of this process while also challenging the notion of a stable linguistic self. Ultimately, these findings inform educational policy and practice, emphasizing the need for sensitivity to the broader emotional and cultural implications of language transitions in academic environments, especially for professionals outside of language-focused disciplines.

Limitation

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, as a qualitative narrative inquiry, the research is inherently limited in scope and generalizability due to the participation of only one individual. Although this approach provides rich, in-depth insights into the complexities of language identity, the findings reflect a single personal journey and cannot be directly generalized to other contexts or individuals. Secondly, the participant's extensive experience across Indonesia, the United Kingdom, and Malaysia may represent a unique trajectory not necessarily reflective of experiences common to professionals from other disciplines or cultural backgrounds. Lastly, since data were primarily gathered through self-reported narratives, the data inherently rely on personal reflections and memories, which could be influenced by retrospective interpretation. Future studies could extend this research by including multiple participants across various disciplines and cultural contexts to deepen the understanding of language identity development in diverse multicultural settings.

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Appendix

Interview Questions Guidelines

Research Question 1: Multilingual Background

- 1 How did you talk when you were a kid? Did you speak the language people use in your home country, Palembang?
- 2 When you were learning another language, how did that affect the way you talk? Like, when you learned Indonesian, did it change how you speak?
- 3 When you were in England and later working in Malaysia, where they use English in different ways, did that make you talk differently too?

Research Question 2: Language Adaptation

- 1 After spending time in England, do you feel like you speak English more now?
- 2 When you were teaching in Malaysia, where English is not the first language, did you have to change how you spoke?

Research Question 3: Cross-Cultural Experiences

- 1 How did meeting people from different places change the way you speak?
- 2 Have you noticed any changes in how you talk over time, especially in different situations?

Research Question 4: Impact of Returning to Native Country

- 1 Since coming back to Indonesia, did that change the way you speak?
- 2 Can you talk about how your background and where you live affect how you see yourself as a speaker?

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**INŽINERIJOS PROFESORIAUS KALBOS TAPATYBĖ:
NARATYVINIS TYRIMAS APIE DAUGIAKULTŪRINES IR
DAUGIAKALBES PATIRTIS**

Anotacija. Vienas pagrindinių aspektų, tyrinėjant kalbinę tapatybę daugiakultūroje ir daugiakalbėje aplinkoje, yra perėjimas nuo gimtosios kalbos vartojimo prie kitų kalbų įsisavinimo ir vartojimo. Šis perėjimas reiškia kalbų kaitą, kurią asmenys patiria tiek bendraudami kasdien, tiek profesinėje aplinkoje. Tačiau dėl savo sudėtingumo šis procesas dar nėra pakankamai ištirtas. Straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kokią poveikį perėjimas nuo vienos kalbos į kitą turi akademinio pasaulio žmonėms, ypač nekalbinių disciplinų atstovams. Tikslas – ištirti kalbinės tapatybės sudėtingumą pasitelkus inžinerijos profesoriaus, turinčio daugiau nei 30 metų akademinės patirties Indonezijoje, Anglijoje ir Malaizijoje, naratyvinį pasakojimą. Taikant kokybinį naratyvinio pasakojimo tyrimo metodą, buvo panaudoti pusiau struktūruoti interviu ir užfiksuoti išsamūs profesoriaus patirties aprašymai indoneziečių, anglų ir malajų kalbomis. Pagrindiniai tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad kalbos adaptacija išplečia kalbos mokėjimo ribas ir apima emocijas, kultūrinės bei profesinės dimensijas. Profesoriaus perėjimas nuo vietinių kalbų vartojimo prie indoneziečių, vėliau – prie anglų ir malajų kalbų, atspindi iššūkius ir strategijas, išryškėjančius stengiantis išlaikyti pusiausvyrą tarp profesinių reikalavimų ir kultūros išsaugojimo. Anglakalbė aplinka smarkiai paveikė jo savęs suvokimą ir bendravimo stilių, o grįžimas į gimtąjį miestą sukėlė sudėtingų problemų derinant globalią ir vietinę tapatybę. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo: reikia jautriau vertinti perėjimo nuo vienos kalbos vartojimo prie kitų kalbų vartojimo pasekmes. Siekiant giliau suvokti kalbinę tapatybę įvairiose akademinėse aplinkose, tai ypač aktualu kalbant apie dėstytojus, dirbančius ne su kalba susijusiose srityse.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: anglakalbė aplinka; daugiakalbystė; daugiakultūriškumas; kalbinė tapatybė; tarpkultūrinė patirtis.