The Dual Valence of Identity:
A Quantitative Analysis of Cultural and Social Identity's Influences on English Language Usage in Indonesian Higher Education

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Abstract: The notable and often voluntary use of English by graduate students within Surabaya, Indonesia's multilingual academic sphere, points to a significant area of how their cultural and social identity correlates with this linguistic practice. This under-investigated question became the driving force for the present study. This quantitative study examines this interrelationship in Indonesian higher education using data from 137 graduate students in Surabaya, collected via surveys employing adapted, established scales (English Language Usage Scales, Feelings About Culture Scales, and Social and Personal Identities Scales). The data gathered was analyzed using descriptive statistics, assumption tests, and hierarchical multiple regression to determine the predictive influences. Statistical analyses demonstrated contrasting predictive relationships: a stronger cultural identity was linked to less frequent English language usage (β = -0.221, p = 0.012). In contrast, a more pronounced social identity was associated with higher English language usage (β = 0.180, p = 0.039). These opposing outcomes highlight that graduate students are engaged in complex identity negotiations. Ultimately, this quantitative evidence strongly indicates the pressing need for innovative educational frameworks to address and navigate the nuanced, paradoxical identity development processes in contemporary globalized and diverse academic landscapes.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Social Identity, English Language Usage, Graduate Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. English, Identity, and Indonesian Higher Education

In today's interconnected world, English has been emerging as the dominant international language, allowing for unprecedented levels of cross-cultural interaction and communication. With more than two billion speakers worldwide, the language has ingrained itself deeply into nearly all domains of human activity (Crystal, 2008; Schneider, 2011, as cited in Monfared & Khatib, 2018). This global linguistic proliferation has given rise to several key theoretical frameworks, such as "World Englishes" (Kirkpatrick, 2007), "International English" (McKay, 2012), and "English as a Lingua Franca" (Seidlhofer, 2011). While the instrumental advantages conferred by English proficiency are widely acknowledged and empirically supported, its impact on the construction and negotiation of identities is a crucial subject for quantitative research. Language is an intrinsic marker of identity (Santoso, 2006; Jaspal, 2009;

Blot, 2003); thus, English adoption, particularly in non-native contexts, is associated with self-perception, group affiliation, and cultural expression, all amenable to exploration.

With its motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), multilingual countries such as Indonesia encounter lively interactions between English and their native language(s). While Bahasa Indonesia serves as a unifying language, English proficiency is becoming increasingly valued. This fluidity is evident in urban areas such as Surabaya, the second-largest city in Indonesia and a multicultural centre where English and various regional languages (such as Javanese and Madurese) interact.

English is widely used in everyday communication by graduate students in Surabaya's universities, usually through voluntary code-switching in casual contexts, indicating functions beyond mere communication. This observed phenomenon prompts a greater inquiry at hand: What

identities are signalled, represented, and constructed by these linguistic choices? Although language and identity have been extensively studied, empirical data on graduate students in Indonesia remains limited within quantitative research. This study addresses the gap by undertaking a rigorous quantitative analysis of the relationship between social identity (SI), cultural identity (CI), and English language usage (ELU) among graduate students in Surabaya, Indonesia.

Two central research questions guide this quantitative study:

- What is the direction and statistical significance of the relationship between social identity, cultural identity, and English language usage among graduate students in Surabaya?
- To what extent do cultural identity and social identity influence English language usage among this population?

B. Discourses on Language, Identity, and the Global Role of English

The scholarly discussion on language and identity forms a strong basis for this study. A key idea in this field is that language is more than just a tool for communication; it plays a vital role in shaping, expressing, and negotiating identities. Gumperz (Ed., 1982) showed how conversational styles and interpretive methods are closely linked to social identity, often causing misunderstandings in intercultural interactions due to different communication norms. Likewise, Blot (Ed., 2003) highlights language as a powerful "badge of identity," essential for defining and preserving social boundaries.

Miller's (2010) study reveals that acquiring English plays a crucial role in shaping new social identities for international students, granting them social "audibility"—the ability to be recognized and understood within a community. This insight aligns with Ochs's (2010) language socialization framework, which views social identity as actively constructed through both linguistic interactions and wider social practices. These processes have global significance: Sharbawi (2021) documented how English becomes intertwined with the identity formation of Bruneian youth, while Zein et al. (2020) examined how Indonesian educational policies and cultural norms influence the identity meanings attached to English use in schools. Han's (2012) ethnographic research further illustrates the impact of language ideologies and power dynamics on identity. Studying a Chinese immigrant in Canada, Han shows how English proficiency and linguistic legitimacy become pivotal in negotiating the immigrant's evolving identity amid socioeconomic challenges and opportunities for empowerment.

The profound impact of context on identity is powerfully illustrated by Zhunussova et al. (2023). Their research on students at English as a medium of instruction (EMI) universities in Kazakhstan shows how these individuals actively engage with national language ideologies and power structures, exercising agency to construct multiple, often fragmented identities that mirror their complex social

environments. Complementing this perspective, Liu (2012) argues that truly understanding intergroup relations—particularly among cultural groups—requires moving beyond conventional "culture-free" psychological theories. Instead, it demands attention to culture-specific historical narratives, which play a crucial role in shaping national identity, fueling intergroup comparisons, and driving conflict. These powerful historical stories are strategically mobilized to validate identities and legitimize collective claims, underscoring the deep entanglement of culture and identity.

Collectively, these diverse studies underscore the intricate and context-sensitive nature of the language-identity relationship. They indicate that English, as a global language, is not adopted merely as a neutral instrument but becomes profoundly integrated with individuals' self-concepts, group memberships, and aspirations. Building on this foundation, the current study focuses on graduate students in Surabaya, aiming to provide precise, quantitatively grounded insights into how cultural identity and social identity serve as predictors of English language usage within this prominent Indonesian urban setting.

C. Theoretical Frameworks on Social Identity and Cultural Identity

This quantitative study is grounded in well-established social and cultural identity theories, which offer the conceptual foundation for defining variables and developing hypotheses about their relationship with language usage.

Social Identity Theory (SIT), formulated by Tajfel & Turner (1979), provides a vital lens for this study. They contend that social identity—an integral part of one's self-concept—emerges from perceived membership in social groups and the emotional significance and value attached to these affiliations. People are inherently motivated to foster and protect a positive social identity, often by drawing favorable distinctions between their own groups and others. SIT highlights several key cognitive mechanisms: Social Categorization, which organizes individuals into groups based on shared traits such as nationality or profession; Social Identification, where individuals embrace group norms and values as their own; Social Comparison, involving the evaluation of one's group against others, typically with an in-group bias; the dynamics between in-groups and out-groups, which fuels loyalty and favoritism; and Positive Distinctiveness, the drive to see one's group as uniquely superior. Giles and Johnson (1987) further underscore that social identity depends on mutual recognition within the group. Within this theoretical framework, the current study proposes that graduate students' use of English is closely tied to their alignment with particular, often prestigious, social groups, such as global academic or professional circles, where English proficiency is both expected and valued.

Complementing Social Identity Theory is the concept of Cultural Identity, which refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular culture or ethnic group, based on shared traditions, values, language, etc. Paulston (1986) emphasized that language functions as both a medium and an expression of cultural identity. Building on Hall's (1997) perspective, this study views cultural identity not as a fixed

artefact of the past but as an ongoing process of "being" and "becoming". This framework acknowledges that cultural identity is continually reshaped by historical legacies and contemporary influences, allowing for adaptation and integrating new cultural elements. It is hypothesized that the intensity of identification with one's cultural group will significantly affect patterns of acceptance or resistance toward a global language such as English.

By integrating these theoretical foundations, this study employs quantitative methods to analyze cultural identity and social identity's influences on graduate students' English language usage.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The study involved 137 graduate students from 13 higher education institutions in Surabaya, categorized into three groups. The first classification was by gender, including 89 female and 48 male participants. The second group was organized by age: 65 participants aged 21–25, 60 participants aged 26–30, 10 participants aged 31–35, and 2 participants over 35 years old. The third category considered the length of residence in Surabaya: 7 participants had lived there less than six months; 21 participants between six months and one year; 54 participants between one and two years; 29 participants between two and five years; and 26 participants for more than five years.

B. Data Collection and Analysis

This study utilized three measurement instruments: the English Language Usage Scales (ELUS-11) developed by Salamonson et al. (2020), the Feelings About Culture Scales (FACS) created by Maffini and Wong (2015), and the Social and Personal Identities Scales (SIPI) formulated by Nario-Redmond et al. (2004). Each scale was carefully adapted and contextualized to align with the graduate students' characteristics in Surabaya, Indonesia.

The data analysis was conducted using hierarchical multiple regression, a statistical method that systematically examines how predictor variables contribute to explaining variance in the dependent variable. By introducing variables sequentially, this method reveals the unique contribution each set of predictors makes to the overall model, enabling the tracking of how different factors progressively influence the outcome. This layered approach not only identifies the most significant predictors but also enhances understanding of the complex interactions among variables. Consequently, hierarchical multiple regression is particularly valuable for testing theoretical models where the influence of variables is hypothesized to build progressively.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Descriptive Overview of Participants and Key Variabels

This study involved 137 graduate students from various universities located in Surabaya. Participant demographics—age, gender, length of residence in Surabaya—were self-reported. These details contextualize their social and cultural backgrounds, shedding light on how demographic factors may shape their cultural and social identities and influence English use in academic and social settings.

- Gender: The sample comprised 65% female (n=89) and 35% male (n=48) participants. This distribution, with a higher female proportion, aligns with observed graduate enrollment trends in Surabaya, Indonesia;
- Age: The majority were young adults: 47.4% (n=65) aged 21-25 years, and 43.8% (n=60) aged 26-30 years. Few participants were in the 31-35 age group (7.3%, n=10) or above 35 years (1.5%, n=2).
- Length of Residence in Surabaya: 5.1% lived there less than six months (7 participants), 15.3% between 6 months and 1 year (21 participants), 39.4% for 1–2 years (54 participants), 21.2% for 2–5 years (29 participants), and 19% for more than five years (26 participants).

Table 1 Overview of Cultural Identity Data

Cultural Identity	
N	137
Mean	32.7
Median	34
Mode	35
Std. Deviation	4.34
Minimum	20
Maximum	40

Table 1 shows a mean cultural identity (CI) score of 32.7, reflecting generally strong cultural identification among participants. A median of 34 confirms that over half scored above this level. With a standard deviation of 4.34, scores cluster closely around the mean, though the range from 20 to 40 highlights some variation in individual perceptions of cultural identity.

Table 2 Overview of Social Identity Data

Social Identity	
N	137
Mean	20.8
Median	21
Mode	21
Std. Deviation	2.35

Minimum	7
Maximum	25

Table 2 presents social identity (SI) scores from 137 participants, with a mean of 20.8 out of 25, indicating generally high social identity levels. Both the median and mode are 21, suggesting a symmetrical distribution. A standard deviation of 2.35 reflects low variability, while scores range from 7 to 25, showing some diversity but with most participants clustered near the upper end.

Table 3 Overview of English Language Usage Data

English Language Usage	
N	137
Mean	19.7
Median	20
Mode	21
Std. Deviation	5.65
Minimum	9
Maximum	35

Table 3 summarizes English Language Use (ELU) among 137 participants. The mean score of 19.7 suggests a moderate level of English use across academic, social, and digital contexts. With a median of 20 and a mode of 21, most respondents demonstrate consistent, slightly above-average usage. However, a standard deviation of 5.65 and a range from 9 to 35 reveal significant variability, indicating diverse individual patterns of English language usage.

B. Assumptions Tests

This study utilized Jamovi 2.6.26 to conduct assumption tests alongside hierarchical multiple linear regression. The tests included normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. Meeting these assumptions confirms the validity of the regression model for testing the research hypothesis. The results are presented below.

Table 4 Normality Tests

	Statistic	p
Shapiro-Wilk	0.993	0.722
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.0470	0.922
Anderson-Darling	0.284	0.625

The normality test assesses whether sample data follow a normal distribution, a key assumption in parametric analyses. This study employed Shapiro-Wilk, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and Anderson-Darling tests via jamovi 2.6.26. A p-value above 0.05 indicates normality. Given the sample size (n < 2000), the Shapiro-Wilk test is prioritized, yielding an index of 0.993 and p = 0.722, confirming normal distribution for cultural identity, social identity, and English language use variables. These results support the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (p = 0.922) and Anderson-Darling (p = 0.625) tests. These findings validate the data's suitability for linear regression, ensuring accurate and reliable interpretation.

Table 5 Heterokedasticity

	Statistic	p
Breusch-Pagan	0.354	0.838
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	1.04	0.444
Harrison-McCabe	0.490	0.445

Heteroscedasticity occurs when residual variances are unequal, violating the homoscedasticity assumption essential for regression analysis. This study employed Breusch-Pagan, Goldfeld-Quandt, and Harrison-McCabe tests to detect heteroscedasticity. A p-value above 0.05 indicates homoscedasticity; below 0.05 suggests heteroscedasticity. As shown in Table 5, all tests yielded p-values greater than 0.05 (Breusch-Pagan = 0.838, Goldfeld-Quandt = 0.444, Harrison-McCabe = 0.445), confirming homoscedasticity. This ensures consistent residual variance, validating the regression model's reliability and accuracy in hypothesis testing.

Table 6 Multicollinearity Tests

	VIF	Tolerance
Cultural Identity	1.07	0.935
Social Identity	1.07	0.935

The multicollinearity test assesses the correlation among independent variables, which should be low to avoid confounding their effects on the dependent variable. Using Jamovi 2.6.26, this study applied tolerance (>0.1) and VIF (<10) criteria. Results show cultural and social identity variables have VIF = 1.07 and tolerance = 0.935, indicating no multicollinearity. This confirms

that both variables can be included in the regression model without distortion, ensuring each contributes uniquely to predicting English language use. Low VIF and high tolerance values support accurate, unbiased coefficient estimates and strengthen the model's validity.

C. Results

Pearson's correlation (r) assesses the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables. Its values range from -1 to 1, where 1 indicates a perfect positive correlation, -1 a perfect negative correlation, and 0 no correlation. The closer r is to ±1, the stronger the relationship; values near 0 indicate a weak relationship. Below are the results of the Pearson correlation test.

Table 7 Pearson's Correlation Tests

		CI	**SI**	**ELU**
CI	Pearson's r	–	–	–
	df	–	–	–
	p-value	–	–	–
SI	Pearson's r	0.254**	–	–
	df	135	–	–
	p-value	0.003	–	–
ELU	Pearson's r	-0.176*	0.124	–
	df	135	135	–
	p-value	0.040	0.148	–

*Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Pearson's Correlation was computed to examine initial linear associations between cultural identity (CI), Social Identity (SI), and English Language Usage (EL). A statistically significant, small negative correlation was identified between CI and ELU (r = -0.176, p = 0.040). The correlation between SI and ELU was non-significant (r = 0.124, p = 0.148). CI and SI demonstrated a significant positive correlation with each other (r = 0.254, p = 0.003).

Table 8 Model Coefficients 1

Predictor	**Estimate**	**SE**	**t**	**p**	**Stand. Est.**
Intercept	27.146	3.638	7.46	<0.001	–
CI	-0.229	0.110	-2.07	0.040	-0.176

➢ *Model 1: ELU Predicted by CI*

Cultural Identity, as the sole predictor, significantly accounted for variance in ELU (F(1, 135) = 4.30, p = 0.040), explaining 3.08% of the variance (R² = 0.0308). The standardized regression coefficient (β) for CI was -0.176 (p = 0.040), indicating stronger cultural identity significantly predicted lower English language usage.

Table 9 Model Coefficients 2

Predictor	**Estimate**	**SE**	**t**	**p**	**Stand. Est.**
Intercept	20.082	4.940	4.07	<0.001	–
CI	-0.288	0.113	-2.56	0.012	-0.221
SI	0.433	0.208	2.08	0.039	0.180

➢ *Model 2: ELU predicted by CI and SI*

Adding Social Identity in the second step significantly improved the model fit (F(2, 134) = 4.37, p = 0.014). The combined predictors explained 6.13% of ELU variance (R² = 0.0613; ΔR² = 0.0305, F-change(1, 134) = 4.34, p = 0.039). In this final model, CI remained a significant negative predictor (β = -0.221, p = 0.012), while SI emerged as a significant positive predictor (β = 0.180, p = 0.039). The Omnibus ANOVA tests (Table 4.17) further confirmed the unique significant contributions of both CI (F=6.55, p=0.012) and SI (F=4.34, p=0.039) to the model. These results demonstrate that cultural identity negatively predicts, and social identity positively predicts, English usage among Surabaya's graduate students.

D. Discussion

The findings highlight a significant relationship between identity and English language use among graduate students in Surabaya. This relationship is marked by two contrasting effects: cultural identity tends to reduce English usage, while social identity encourages it. These opposing

influences illustrate how individuals manage their language choices within a multilingual and global academic setting.

➤ *Cultural Identity as a Limiting Factor in English Usage*

The negative correlation between cultural identity and English language use (β = -0.221) suggests that a strong connection to one's heritage culture may decrease the frequency of English use. Participants with high cultural identity are often deeply rooted in local customs and native languages such as Bahasa Indonesia or Javanese. These languages serve as essential means of personal expression and community bonding. For these individuals, extensive English use may feel external to their cultural core or even threaten indigenous practices, leading to its restricted use in specific contexts rather than widespread adoption. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the importance of heritage languages in maintaining cultural continuity (Fishman, 1991; Choi, 2015). .

➤ *Social Identity as an Encouraging Factor in English Usage*

Conversely, social identity positively predicts English use (β = 0.180), emphasizing English's role as a tool for social integration and academic advancement. For graduate students, social identities such as "scholar," "researcher," or "global professional" are particularly important. Within these groups, English proficiency is often a requirement and a symbol of competence and belonging. Frequent English use thus serves as a way to affirm these identities and access related opportunities. This perspective aligns with Social Identity Theory, which suggests individuals adopt behaviors that reinforce their membership in valued social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

These findings illustrate the dual and occasionally conflicting influences of cultural and social identities on language use. They highlight the continuous negotiation graduate students undertake as they navigate the balance between honoring their heritage and meeting the expectations of a globalized academic context.

The contrasting effects of cultural identity (CI) and social identity (SI) point to an ongoing process of identity negotiation. This process can be understood through the concepts of Cultural Internalization—adopting global academic norms mediated by English—and Cultural Hybridity—the blending of local and global cultural elements to create multifaceted identities (Hall, 1997; Bhabha, 1994). Graduate students internalize English academic conventions (see Figure 4.4) while simultaneously developing hybrid identities (Figures 4.3 & 4.5) that enable them to navigate both local cultural contexts and global academic environments. This often involves strategic language choices, reflecting a nuanced management of their linguistic and cultural resources. The multilingual setting of Surabaya likely facilitates such hybrid identity formation.

The positive influence of social identity on English use observed in this study suggests that English serves as a tool for integration within academic and professional communities. It may promote inclusive behaviors, like adopting a lingua franca for broader communication.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Summary of Key Findings

This study examined the multifaceted relationship between cultural identity, social identity, and English language usage among graduate students in Surabaya, demonstrating statistically significant and meaningful findings. The analysis highlighted a dual influence of identity on language behavior: Cultural identity functioned as a significant negative predictor, indicating that students with a stronger connection to their cultural background tend to use English less frequently. In contrast, Social Identity served as a significant positive predictor, demonstrating that those who more strongly identify with academic and professional communities are more likely to engage regularly in English language usage. These findings show how students carefully balance their strong cultural backgrounds with the need to use English effectively in global academic and social settings. The study helps explain how different parts of an individual's identity influence how they use language in multilingual environments. It also emphasizes the ongoing challenge of holding on to cultural traditions while adapting to broader social communities.

Data obtained from graduate students in Surabaya offer critical insights into the ongoing negotiation between the preservation of cultural heritage and the linguistic competencies necessary for effective participation in global academic and social contexts. At the heart of this investigation lies the understanding that students function as active agents in constructing their identities and linguistic practices. For educational institutions, the urgent priority is clear: to develop learning environments that expand beyond basic language acquisition by actively acknowledging and supporting the diverse and evolving identity paths of students, thereby enabling them to become confident, culturally rooted, and globally connected scholars.

B. Research Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings:

- Sampling: The use of convenience and snowball sampling restricts the generalizability to the broader graduate student population in Surabaya, Indonesia;
- Cross-Sectional Design: The cross-sectional nature of the study allows for examining associations at one particular instance, which restricts any possibility of making causal claims or exploring the progressive patterns of identity and language usage;
- Self-Reported Data: Relying on participants' self-assessments may be subject to response biases, such as social desirability;
- Explained Variance: The regression model explains only a small fraction of the variation in English language use (R^2 = 0.0613), indicating that many other factors influence language use beyond cultural and social identity.

C. Directions for Future Research

Considering the findings and their limitations, numerous pathways for further research are identified:

- Longitudinal studies to examine how identity and English language usage evolve over time;

- Comparative studies across different universities, disciplines, or regions to identify contextual differences;
- Expanded models incorporating factors such as aptitude, socioeconomic status, institutional policies, and linguistic exposure for more profound insight.

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