

## The Relationship Between Language, Culture, and Student Identity

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### ABSTRACT

Bahasa memainkan peran strategis dalam membentuk identitas individu, khususnya dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi. Penggunaan bahasa Inggris di universitas tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai media komunikasi akademik tetapi juga sebagai faktor penting yang memengaruhi pembentukan identitas budaya dan akademik mahasiswa. Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti hubungan antara bahasa, budaya, dan identitas mahasiswa di Universitas Muhammadiyah Bone, dengan fokus khusus pada praktik penggunaan bahasa Inggris. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain analisis naratif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan delapan mahasiswa yang aktif menggunakan bahasa Inggris dalam lingkungan akademik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Inggris berkontribusi pada pembentukan identitas akademik mahasiswa sebagai individu yang berorientasi global, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri akademik, dan berfungsi sebagai platform untuk menegosiasikan identitas lokal, nilai-nilai Islam, dan tuntutan akademik global. Studi ini merekomendasikan agar pengajaran bahasa Inggris di pendidikan tinggi diarahkan untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran budaya dan memperkuat identitas mahasiswa.

*Language plays a strategic role in shaping individual identity, particularly within the context of higher education. The use of english in universities functions not only as a medium of academic communication but also as a significant factor influencing students' cultural and academic identity construction. This study aims to examine the relationship between language, culture, and student identity at universitas muhammadiyah bone, with a specific focus on english language practices. Employing a qualitative approach with a narrative analysis design, data were collected through in depth interviews with eight students who actively use english in academic settings. The findings reveal that english contributes to the formation of the students' academic identities as globally oriented individuals, enhances academis self confidences, and serves as a spce for negotiating local identity, islamic values, and global academic demands. This study recommens that english language instruction in higher education be oriented toward fostering cultural awareness and strengthening student identity.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental of human life that function not only as a tool for communication but also as a carrier of knowledge, values, and identity. In the context of higher education, language occupies a strategic position in shaping students' academic identities and facilitating acces to global knowledge networks.

Students' at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bone are situated within a distinctive academic environment that integrates islamic values, strong local cultural traditions, and the demands of educational globalization. Indonesian and local languages dominate everyday social interactions, while

english is primarily use in academic context such as lectures, presentations, academic texts, and scholarly references.

The presence of english in higher education is not merely associated with linguistic proficiency. Academic credibility, and global participation. At the same time, its use may generate identity tensions, particularly for students who navigate between local cultural roots, religious values, and global academic expectations.

Therefore, examining the relationship between language, cultural, and identity is essential to understanding how english language practices influence students' self perceptions and academic positioning at Univeritas Muhammdiyah Bone.

### ***Language and Identity***

Identity is not a fixed entity but a dynamic social construction. Hall (1996) conceptualized identity as a proces of becoming, shaped through representation, discourse, and social intraction. Language serves as a primary medium through which individuals express and negotiate their identities.

Norton (2013) argues that second language learning is closely intertwined with identity and power relations. Individuals learn a language not solely to acquire linguistic competence but also to gain acces to symbolic and material resources and to position themselves within particular social and academic communities.

### ***Language, Culture, and Higher Education***

Language and culture are inseparable. Bourdieu (1991) views language as a form of symbolic capital that can enhance in individual's social and academic status. In higher education context, english is often regarded as an essential resource that provides acces to global knowledge, academic mobility, and professional oppotunities.

However, the dominance of english may also pose challenges to local identity if not approached critically. In instutions grounded in religious and cultural values, such as Universitas Muhammadiyah Bone, the use of english requires a contextualized approach that respect institutional identity while enabling global academic engagement.

## **METHOD**

This study adopts a Qualitative Approach with a Narrative Analysis design, allowing the researcher to explore students' lived experiences and personal meanings related to english language use.

### ***Research Participants***

The participants consisted of eight students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Bone,selected purposively based on the following criteria:

1. Actively enrolled in courses related to english.
2. Regularly using english in academic activities .
3. Willing to participate voluntarily in the study.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Data were collected through semi structured in depth interviews conducted face to face. The interviews focused on students' experiences with english language use, emotional responses, challenges encountered, and reflections on identity and culture.

### ***Data Analysis Techniques***

Data analysis followed stages of transcription thematic coding, and narrative interpretation. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed member checking and peer debriefing.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***English as an Academic Identity Marker***

The findings indicate that english is perceived as a marker of academic competence. Students associate english proiciency with self confidence, academic legitimacy, and active parcitipation in academic discourse.

### ***Negotiating Global and Local Identities***

students do not view english as a threat to local culture or islamic identity. Instead, english is positioned as an academic tool that complements cultural identity. This reflects a hybrid identity in which global academic practices coexist with local and religious values.

### ***English as a Means of Self Development***

English language use also function as a means of personal development. Although students experience anxiety and fear of making mistakes, these challenges are interpreted as integral to the learning process and academic growth. This finding aligns with Norton's (2013) concept of investment in language learning.

This study offers several important implications:

1. Academic Implication, contributing to sociolinguistic and language education studies within the context of islamic based higher education instutions.
2. Practival Implication, supporting the development of english language intruction that emphasizes cultural awareness and identity formation at Universitas Muhammdiyah Bone.

### **CONCLUSSION**

The use of english at Universitas Muhammdiyah Bone plays a significant role in shaping students' academic identities. English function not only as a medium of academic communiacion but also as a space for identity negotiation between global academic values, local culture, and islmaic principles. Therefore, english language intraction should be design contextually to strengthen both linguistic competence and student identity.

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