

# "Keeping My Accent?" Indonesian students' attitude and self-identity when speaking English in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines Indonesian students' perceptions of their Indonesian-accented English (IAE) and how this accent reflects their linguistic identity while studying in Malaysia. Although English is widely used as a second language in Malaysia, Indonesian students often navigate a multilingual environment where accents serve as visible markers of identity and a potential source of judgment. The study aims to explore (1) students' attitudes towards their Indonesian accent when speaking English and (2) the extent to which they associate the accents with their cultural identity. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, using a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to 36 Indonesian students at University Sains Malaysia and supported by semi-structured online interviews with four participants. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and interview responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. Results show that most students view their Indonesian accent positively and do not consider it a marker of poor English. Many reject the idea that IAE diminishes their credibility and instead consider it an authentic part of their cultural background. A smaller group, however, expressed discomfort or a desire to adopt more internationally dominant accents. Overall, the results highlight a growing acceptance of linguistic diversity aligned with English as a Lingua Franca principles. The study suggested that accent awareness, identity-affirming pedagogies, and inclusive language policies are essential in international education settings. These insights contribute to ongoing discussions about accent perception, linguistic identity, and native-speaker ideology in Southeast Asian Contexts.

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## INTRODUCTION

English has become the widely used language for communication between people worldwide. English is also important for international communication and has a role in the global context (Crystal, 2003; Pan et al., 2021). Due to its communication importance, English nowadays has become a universal language (Deng, 2024; Liurda & Calvet-Terre, 2022). In other words, English offers better diversity in the fields of education, society, administration, and literature than a universal language (Kachru et al., 2008). In addition to becoming a lingua franca. English is also being used to communicate with people across the globe who speak different languages (Deng, 2024; Kirkpartick, 2007). Kachru et al (2008) added that the spreading of the English language in non-Western countries has become an additional or alternative language. As a result of the widespread use of English (Deng, 2024; Szimigiera, 2021), there are 1.5 billion English language learners around the globe. The booming of the English language has been expanding the number of speakers of a second language (L2) over first language (L1) speakers (Li, 2009; Mainake, 2021). Thus, due to globalization, English has merged with people from other language backgrounds, such as those who speak English as a second language, resulting in accent differences.

The English language has created a diverse range of English accents. There are 160 accents around the world (Fauzia & Poedjiastutie, 2025). Various accents exist, such as British English, American English, Irish English, Indian English, and Singaporean English (Kachru et al., 2008). These are examples of English accents all around the globe. Among those accents, there are L2 accents such as Singaporean English and Indian English (Kachru et al., 2008; Mainake, 2021). The accent of the L2 native language was seen as part of their identity (Dirham, 2022). It also portrays where one comes from (Dirham, 2022; Seidlhofer, 2001). EFL learners with deep accents should not be worried about their regional accents because accents allow the learners to express their identity and should not be modified (Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010). However, facts in the fields speak differently; Research by Nguyen and Wellman (2024) revealed that people who do not speak like L1 will be less likely to be hired by the company. To that end, even though English has a variety of accents, EFL speakers tend to be discriminated against by others who speak English as their first language, although the accent is associated with people's identity.

The World Englishes (WE) framework provides a broader lens for understanding such contexts. Kachru's theory mentioned that World Englishes is where every country produces a different English, or one with a different cultural background that has influenced the use of English. These days, English is widely used (Crystal, 2003;

Harsanti & Manara, 2021), and it is argued that English is no longer exclusive, where English is owned and used in the inner-circle countries' communities, but the global community owns English. Further, there is a paradigm called "Three Circles of English," which is the classification of different English speakers worldwide divided into three circles: (1) The Inner Circle, which refers to the L1 or countries where English is a first language, such as the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. (2) The Outer Circle is where English is used as a second language because in this country, English plays an important role for any stakeholder who can be called L2. Countries in this circle, such as Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, India, and Singapore. Lastly, the Expanding circles are where English as a Foreign Language or English is used in a limited context and taught in school, such as China, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and the USSR (Kachru et al., 2008). To that end, English can be widely used across the globe in different cultures and contexts. However, EFL learners are still eager to speak like a native. This could be called Native Speakerism ideology.

Native-Speakerism has become an issue among EFL learners and has become the primary goal, dominating the English language education fields. It is an ideology in which English-Native speakers are the superior models (Kirana, 2022). Other than that, this ideology also upholds narration where they represent Western culture (Holliday, 2014). Holliday (2014) further argues that the ELT industry constructs this ideology. This ideology, however, was putting an idea of linguistic imperialism in English Language Teaching. Phillipson stated that native-speakerism was promoted by American–British aid agencies in the 1960s with the agenda of spreading English as a global product (Holliday, 2014). In native-speakerism, Language perspective, culture, norms, lifestyle, and attitude are becoming the spotlight of it (Holliday, 2002). Furthermore, linguistic imperialism is for controlling the developing countries from the West in terms of formulating the L1 fallacy; it is considered ideal to teach English monolingually, and an English teacher should be a native speaker (Harsanti & Manara, 2021; Lowe & Pinner, 2016). While the literature clearly outlines these consequences, it often stops short of examining how native-speakerism is reproduced in everyday classroom interactions, institutional policies, or learners' own self-perceptions. As a result, the mechanism that sustains this ideology remains underexplored, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where English is taught widely but not used as a first language.

Native-speakerism ideology, as discussed by Harsanti and Manara (2021), Holliday (2005), Medgyes (2001), Phillipson (1992), and Rudolph (2019), reinforces the belief that ideal English language teaching should rely on monolingual approaches rooted in Western cultural norms. It promotes the idea that the ideal English teacher must come from Western countries and that effective teaching methods and learning materials should also be imported from the West. This ideology contributes to linguistic imperialism by positioning native speakers (NS) as superior to non-native

speakers (NNS). It further fosters cultural distrust toward NNS, portraying them as less capable of teaching within Western contexts or making meaningful academic contributions. Additionally, native-speakerism perpetuates identity-based discrimination, including racialized assumptions that ideal native speakers are white. These beliefs often manifest in unequal employment practices, where NS candidates are prioritized during recruitment and may receive more favorable treatment and incentives compared to NNS teachers. With the increasing use of English globally, English has become more valuable in Indonesia (Syam et al., 2024). As a Foreign Language in Indonesia, students in primary and secondary school have been introduced to English (Mardijono, 2003). Further, Mardijono (2003) argued that English in Indonesia is often modelled with British or American accents; However, English in Indonesia is still commonly modelled on British or American accents, even though Indonesian-accented English naturally reflects the country's rich linguistic landscape, shaped by regional languages, local identities, and diverse sociolinguistic experiences. Although studies acknowledge this diversity, far fewer investigate how Indonesian learners feel about their accent or how they believe others perceive it. This gap limits our understanding of Indonesian English now only as a structural variety but also as a social identity resource.

Research on language attitude adds another dimension to the discussion. Language attitude is a fundamental term for attitudes towards language, dialect, and language learning (Baker, 1992; Galloway & Rose, 2015) which is a complex construct that can be influential at the public policy level, concerning whether or not a variety receives institutional support (Bradac et al., 1994; Galloway). Additionally, exploring language attitudes can assist language learners in addressing their needs and recognizing any stereotypes and expectations they may have regarding a particular language. (Fang, 2019). Kachru et al., (2008) further argue that the attitude is in myriad ways, where it reflects the evaluation of an object on a dimension ranging from positive to negative. Examining language attitude involves several aspects, such as social processes, contact with language and cultures, exposure to the language of others or familiarity, and specific ideologies and preferences. Other than language attitude, language and identity are crucial things.

Identities are fundamentally involved in attitudes toward ELF, which is not surprising. Joseph (2004) and Nelson (2012) pointed out that the concept of language is at the very heart of what it is and how it operates, how and why it was invented and developed, how it is taught and used every day, by every person, and every time it is used. Additionally, Norton (1997) and Sung (2014) argued that an individual's identity is how they understand their relationship to the world and how those relationships are constructed over time and space. This includes understanding what they can achieve in the future and how to do so. Moreover, Edwards (2009) and Sung (2014) also point out that identity is about understanding self-perception or self-definition by groups

or individuals. In addition, (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Sung, 2014), it has been suggested that preserving L2 speakers' distinct accents contributes to the development of a sense of self-identity and pride in their varieties of English.

Recent studies have shown that speaking with a non-L1 English accent makes one feel less belonging and creates communication problems (Gluszek, 2010). A few Indonesian students pursuing their degrees in the United States mentioned that they want to have a native-like English accent (Mainake, 2021). That happens because a foreign accent could affect one when entering the education field and the labour market (Dollmann et al., 2024). Research conducted by Munro and Derwing (2020) indicates that in the context of a classroom, to achieve a native-like accent as a goal, students are expected to reduce their accent. However, an accent does not always bring disadvantages; therefore, one wants to speak like a native speaker. Students who keep their accents in daily life communication claim that they have no problem, and that speaking native-like is not important as long as their speech can be understood by others (Dharma & Rudianto, 2009). The same case also happened in China English, where students in China have a positive attitude towards China English (Pan et al., 2021). In addition, research in the Indonesian EFL context has shown that willingness to communicate in English is strongly influenced by both internal factors, such as self confidence, vocabulary mastery, and intrinsic motivation, and external factors, such as teacher support and the social environment (Solikah et al., 2025). Several studies have been conducted on accent perceptions of others in English as a second or foreign language; however, few studies have explored how Indonesian students in Malaysia perceive their accents when speaking English.

Indonesia is listed as one of the top 5 sending countries for international students in Malaysia (Hendriana et al., 2019; Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia). In Malaysia, students tend to speak in English because of the language barrier between Malay and Indonesian, and the lectures are also delivered in English. Despite the above reasons, Malaysia is a country where English is a second language. Code-switching is used in conversation. Malaysia also has its accent (Kachru et al., 2008). This is different compared to Indonesia, where English is a foreign language; it makes other listeners familiar with Indonesian speech variety (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Hence, based on Kachru et al., (2008) theory, Indonesia, and Malaysia are in different circles of language use; therefore, this research will investigate Indonesian student' attitudes toward their accent in speaking English and whether or not Indonesians still use Indonesian-Accented English (IAE) because they are proud of their identity. The present study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Indonesian students perceive their accents when speaking English?
2. What are Indonesian students' attitudes toward their Indonesian-accented English?

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This study aims to explore how Indonesian students perceive their accents and attitudes when speaking English with an Indonesian accent, particularly in a Malaysian university. To get this, the study relies exclusively on a descriptive qualitative research design, which is well-suited for capturing participants' personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes in their natural context. As Sandelowski (2000) stated, descriptive qualitative research seeks to provide a comprehensive summary of a phenomenon in everyday language. Similarly, Karen (2017) emphasized that descriptive qualitative research presents findings in a factual language. Following this approach, the research aims to describe Indonesian students' perceptions without imposing complex theoretical frameworks. Considering the study's aim of documenting personal and cultural reflections on language use and identity, it emphasizes participants' meanings and explanations.

A total of 36 Indonesian students enrolled at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) were selected through probability-proportional-to-size cluster sampling to represent Indonesian students within a large and internationalized academic environment. All of the students completed the questionnaire, and four students were selected for semi-structured online interviews based on the diversity of their responses. The study drew on two types of data: primary data from a structured questionnaire and secondary data from follow-up interviews. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' attitudes toward Indonesian-accented English. Adapted from Robinson-(Jones et al., 2024) the questionnaire used a Likert scale to determine the level of agreement with various statements related to accent perception and identity. Additionally, secondary data was collected through semi-structured online interviews with a select group of participants. In addition to providing a deeper understanding of the reasons for questionnaire responses, these interviews clarified recurring themes and differences in perception among individuals. By combining questionnaire and interview data, the findings can be triangulated, making them more trustworthy and in-depth in understanding how Indonesian students make sense of their English accents within the Malaysian academic context.

### Participants

Thirty-six Indonesian students who are presently enrolled in Malaysian schools participated in this study. According to Education Malaysia Global Services (2024), there are roughly 11,000 Indonesian students enrolled in Malaysian higher education institutions. As a result, the researchers used a cluster sample technique called Probability-Proportional-to-Size Cluster sample (PPS-CS). Large-scale data collecting is thought to benefit from this strategy, particularly in situations where logistically

complex individual-level random sampling is involved. Many people agree that PPS-CS is a practical and statistically sound technique for precisely estimating population parameters, mainly when clusters (such as regions or universities) differ in size (Kiran et al., 2021). Cluster sampling was selected because it minimizes time and expense while preserving a respectable level of generalizability by enabling researchers to gather data effectively from a small sample that represents a broader population. Because Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang is an APEX university, a designation given to elite Malaysian universities renowned for internationalization and global engagement, it was chosen as the cluster for this study. USM is one of the most accessible universities for academic research involving international student populations and is home to a significant number of Indonesian students.

Thirty-six students from this cluster completed and returned the questionnaire, thereby participating in the study. There were 17 men and 19 women among them. This sample offers important insight into the attitudes and opinions within a highly internationalized academic environment, even though it might not entirely reflect the demographic diversity of Indonesian students across all Malaysian universities. Four participants have been selected to be interviewed based on their answers to the questionnaire. There are three women and one man as interviewees.

## **Instruments and data collections**

### **Questionnaire**

For this research, the researchers adopted an online questionnaire from Robinson-Jones et al. (2024). It consisted of two sections and 11 items in total. Respondents had to rate the item on a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = strongly agree). Section 1 consisted of six items that focused on attitudes towards Indonesian-accented English, and Section 2 consisted of five items that focused on the identity of standard English accents. Using Google Forms, the questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp to Indonesian students at USM in the fourth week of October. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in this study, and all personal information was treated anonymously and confidentially. Quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed in IBM SPSS version 25.

### **Interview guide**

This study also included a semi-structured interview guide to supplement the questionnaire and increase the reliability of the findings. This strategy was selected because it permits open-ended answers while maintaining a uniform framework for all participants. The flexibility to delve deeper into participants' ideas is provided by semi-structured interviews, particularly when elaboration or clarification is required based on prior questionnaire replies. Three primary questions made up the interview protocol, each of which was intended to delve into important topics pertaining to the

participants' opinions about Indonesian-accented English, their sense of linguistic identity, and their individual thoughts on utilizing English in an academic setting in Malaysia. In addition to being in line with the study's goals, these questions also acted as a means of validating the data by elucidating or clarifying any patterns that showed up in the questionnaire answers.

An expert in applied linguistics examined and verified the questions before the interviews to make sure they were pertinent, understandable, and in line with the objectives of the study. This stage made it easier to guarantee that the interview questions were suitable and that the information gathered would be reliable and significant. The study was able to triangulate the data by comparing insights from both quantitative and qualitative sources, which increased the findings' credibility. This was accomplished by adding interview replies.

### **Data collections**

Data collection was carried out through several stages. First, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) was selected as the research cluster using a Probability-Proportional-to-Size Clustering Sampling (PPS-CS) approach because of its large population of Indonesian students and its internationalized academic environment. Recruitment information describing the study objectives and participation requirements was shared through Indonesian student WhatsApp groups, and only those who were Indonesian nationals and currently enrolled at USM were invited to participate. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire, adapted from Robinson-Jones et al. (2024), was finalised, and the semi-structured interview guide was reviewed by an applied-linguistics expert to ensure clarity and content relevance. The questionnaire, formatted in Google Forms, was disseminated during the fourth week of October and included an online informed-consent agreement and an assurance of anonymity. Based on the result, four students were purposively selected for follow-up interviews and conducted individually via WhatsApp to obtain additional consents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online, recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim before being fully anonymized. All the data were stored on protected devices, and both datasets were triangulated to enhance credibility, with questionnaire findings providing breadth and interview insights.

### **Data analysis**

#### **Quantitative data analysis**

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to examine the questionnaire data that was gathered from 36 Indonesian students at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). A 5-point Likert scale was used to collect the responses, and participants were asked to rate their agreement with statements about identity and accent perception. IBM SPSS Statistics was used to process and tabulate data (version 25). The data was compiled, and trends were found using metrics like frequency, percentage, and mean scores.

This made it possible for the researchers to evaluate the participants' overall opinions regarding their Indonesian accent when speaking English. This analysis's descriptive character fits with the goal of the study, which is to give a general picture of perceptions rather than test theories.

### Qualitative data analysis

A qualitative data analysis was conducted by using (Miles and Huberman., 2014) data analysis: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.

1. Data Condensation. In this stage, the researchers select, simplify, focus, and organize the written data by summarizing it, coding, and creating categories to make the data stronger. So, the conclusion can be made and verified.

2. Data Display. In this stage, the data would be displayed as organized information with a table or a brief description / narratively explained by the researchers, which makes it easier to analyze further. The data display is designed to gather the information to become more organized and accessible so that it can be justified, draw a conclusion, and jump to the next stage.

3. Drawing a Conclusion. The third stage of qualitative data analysis is drawing a conclusion. In this stage, the researchers describe the data from the very first stage by drawing an explanation, patterns, causal flows, and percentages. This stage can also be verified as the analyst proceeds by note-taking and elaborating an argument.

## RESULTS

### Indonesian students' attitudes towards Indonesian-accented English

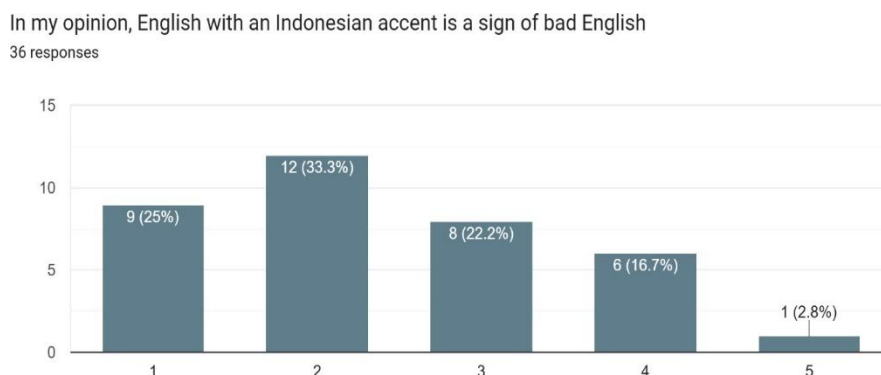
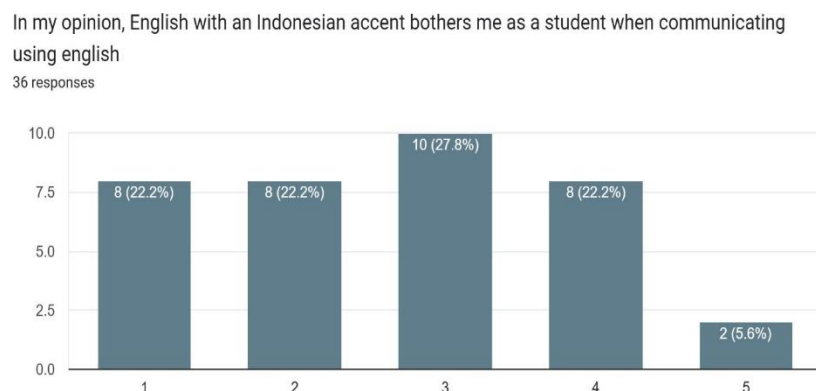


Figure 1. Perception of Indonesian accent as bad English

This suggests a shift in perception among students who are increasingly accepting their accents as a legitimate form of English. It reflects a broader trend in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) research, where intelligibility is considered more important than nativeness. By recognizing their accent as valid, students are aligning with global discussions around linguistic diversity and decolonizing language education. In the first statement, the researchers questioned whether an Indonesian accent is a sign of

bad English. Based on the questionnaire, it shows that the students mainly disagree if the Indonesian accent is bad English, with, nine students (25%) strongly disagreeing, 12 students (33.3%) disagreeing, eight students (22.2%) neutral, six students (16.7%) agree, and one student (2.8%) strongly agree.

Based on the result, it showed that most students do not think that an Indonesian accent is bad English, even though a minority of students still perceive that Indonesian-accented English is poor English, as according to some studies, students' attitudes toward Indonesian-accented English are less optimistic (Latifa, 2021). Another study by Alimin Adi and J., (2019) found that EFL students had a lower level of positivity toward their own English accents, and this perception might have been caused by low linguistic awareness, excessive exposure to the Internet (YouTube, International news). However, most of the students' disagreement with this view highlights a shift in the perception of accents, where the Focus is on the ability to communicate effectively rather than conforming to a specific accent. This is supported by a study that stated that Indonesian students view their accent favorably, considering it to be clever, polite, and pleasant (Khazanah, 2023). Similarly, Syahri et al., (2024) found that students appreciated the benefits of understanding diverse accents and expressed positive perceptions of Javanese English accents. So, it can be concluded that the majority of students in this study do not view the Indonesian accent as a sign of bad English, reflecting a broader positive attitude toward their linguistic identity. While a minority may still feel the need to adopt a more globally recognized accent, the overall findings indicate that Indonesian students are confident in their English proficiency and view their accent as a natural and acceptable part of their communication.



**Figure 2.** Discomfort with using the Indonesian accent

This discomfort may stem from societal expectations or perceived norms about how English 'should' sound. Educational and media portrayals often favor American or British accents, leading students to question the legitimacy of their accent. Encouraging greater awareness and acceptance of different English varieties in the classroom could help alleviate such insecurities.

In the second statement, the researchers asked the participants whether, as a student, communicating using an Indonesian accent bothers them or not. Based on the questionnaire, the result shows that students tend to be neutral or neither agree nor disagree with the statement given, with, eight students (22.2%) strongly disagreeing, eight students (22.2%) disagreeing, 10 students (27.8%) neutral, eight students (22.2%) agree, and two students (5.6%) strongly agree. The probability of Indonesian-accented English bothers students because of the fact that research on how listeners respond to Asian-accented English reveals that speakers are viewed as less powerful, less intimidating, and worse communicators than speakers of standard American English. As revealed by a meta-analysis of personnel selection studies by Schulte et al. (2024), non-standard speakers were rated as less competent, warm, and hireable than standard speakers. Similarly, in a study of L2 English learners, it was found that they exhibited accent stereotyping towards their peers, rating them more harshly than native speakers (Lan et al., 2023). The results of the second statement show that most students feel neutral about communicating with an Indonesian accent, meaning they neither agree nor disagree with the idea that it bothers them. A few students disagreed, while others agreed, but overall, the majority were indifferent. This could be because some research suggests that Asian-accented English may be perceived as less powerful or more complex to understand, which can make listeners focus more and feel uncomfortable. However, this does not seem to bother most of the students in this study significantly.

In my opinion, English with an Indonesian accent makes me as a student uncomfortable when communicating using it  
36 responses

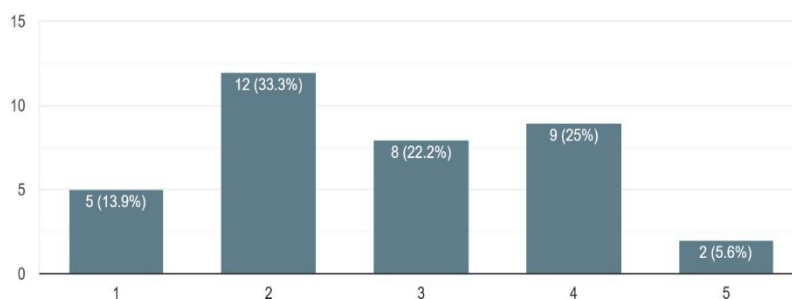
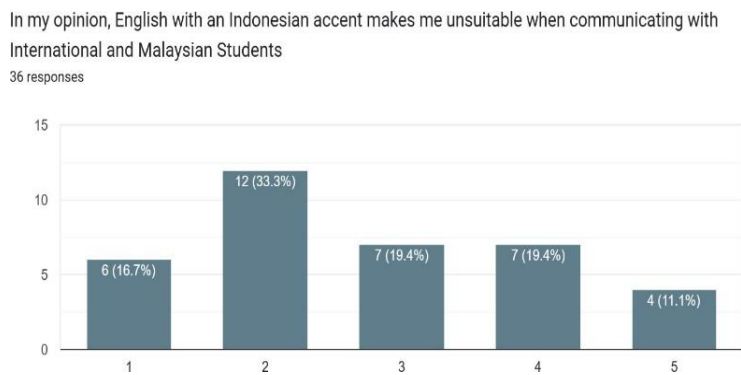


Figure 3. Uncomfortable feelings while speaking with an accent

Students' discomfort also reveals how deeply personal and psychological language identity can be. Feelings of inadequacy or embarrassment tied to an accent can hinder participation and confidence, even in environments that are supposedly inclusive. Addressing linguistic awareness in language education can empower students to take pride in their accents rather than feel burdened by them.

In the third statement, the researchers asked the participants whether when communicating with an Indonesian accent makes the students uncomfortable, and it shows that the students mainly disagree with the statement given, with, five students (13.9%) strongly disagree, 12 students (33.35%) disagree, eight students

(22.2%) neutral, nine students (25%) agree, and two students (strongly agree). It can be shown that even the majority of students did not agree with the statement given; however, some students still think that communicating with Indonesian-accented English makes them uncomfortable. This is probably because students have low linguistic awareness. There is a tendency among Indonesian EFL students to feel less positive about their English accent, possibly due to their limited linguistic awareness. (Alimin & J., 2019). To that end, most students disagreed with this, but some still felt uncomfortable. This discomfort might be due to a lack of awareness about language and accents. Some Indonesian EFL students may feel less confident about their accent because they have low linguistic awareness.



**Figure 4.** Suitability of the accent in cross-cultural communication

These findings indicate that most students do not perceive their accent as a barrier to communication. This is encouraging, especially in a multicultural context like Malaysia. However, the concern about listener confusion highlights the need for intercultural communication training that emphasizes understanding and tolerance of diverse English accents. In the fourth statement, the researchers asked students whether communicating with international and Malaysian students makes them unsuitable or not. It shows that students mainly disagree with the statement, with six students (16.7%) strongly disagreeing, 12 students (33.3%) agreeing, seven students (19.4%) neutral, seven students (19.4%) agreeing, and four students (11.1%) strongly agree. Hence, based on the result, most Indonesian students feel comfortable with the use of an Indonesian accent when communicating. Some students think that using Indonesian Accented English is unsuitable, probably because it can potentially confuse listeners (Khazanah, 2023). However, it could even cause listeners to communicate with International and Malaysian students.

In my opinion, having English with an Indonesian accent has a negative impact on my credibility as a student  
36 responses

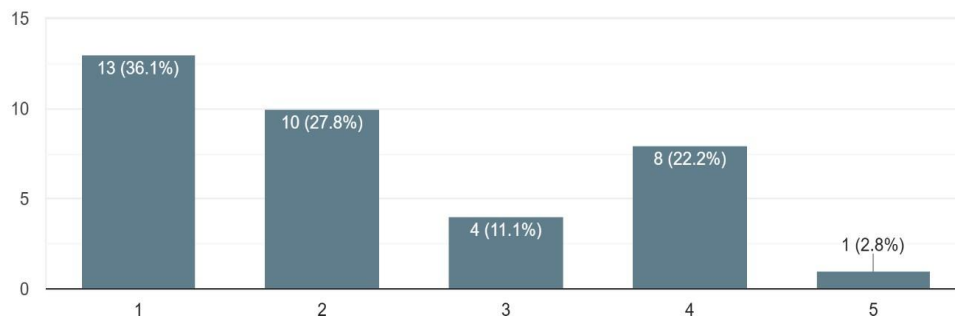


Figure 5. Impact on credibility

The results from the fifth question indicate that most students do not believe that speaking with an Indonesian accent negatively impacts their credibility. A large portion of students (36.1%) strongly disagreed with the statement, suggesting that they feel their accent does not affect how others view their trustworthiness or professionalism. This is consistent with the idea that accents, while distinct, should not define a person's ability or credibility in communication. However, a smaller portion of students (22.2%) agreed that their accent could negatively impact their credibility, which may reflect concerns about how accents from non-native English speakers are perceived in professional or academic settings. As a result of their accents, non-native speakers are often subjected to discrimination and prejudice, which hinders their participation in academic settings (Tan et al., 2021). Overall, most students in the study seem confident that their Indonesian accent does not diminish their credibility, which may be an indication of increasing acceptance of linguistic diversity and a shift away from the stereotype that only native accents are credible or authoritative.

### How do Indonesian students perceive their accent when speaking English

I am proud of my Indonesian accent English, because it reflects my identity as an Indonesian citizen  
36 responses

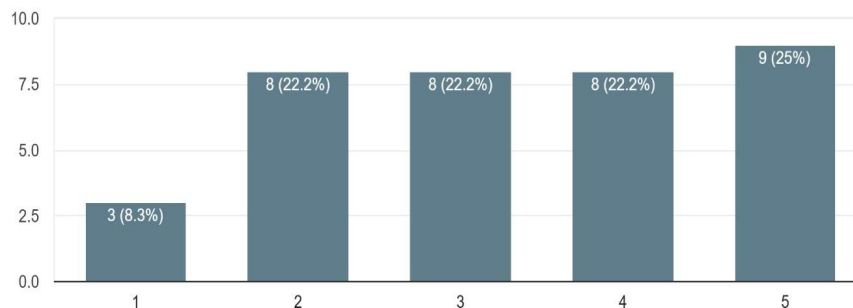
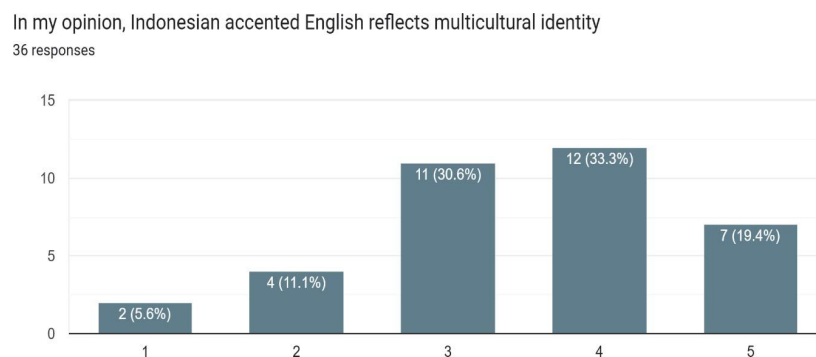


Figure 6. Pride in the Indonesian accent as cultural identity

This sense of pride reflects a growing awareness among students of the importance of linguistic identity. In a globalized world, being able to speak English while retaining one's national identity through an accent can be seen as a strength rather than a weakness. Such attitudes support movements toward linguistic justice and the decolonization of English language learning.

The result from the sixth question shows that students are most likely to agree with the statement given, with three students (8.3%) strongly disagreeing, eight students (22.2%) disagreeing, eight students (22.2%) neutral, eight students (22.2%) agreeing, and 9 (25%) strongly agree. Hence, the result shows that Indonesian students are proud of using the Indonesian accent because it reflects Indonesian identity. Moreover, there are some Indonesians who regard English positively when it comes to their national, religious, and ethnic identities, suggesting that they are keen on incorporating local cultures into their use of English (Yuwita & Ambarwati, 2023). All in all, most Indonesian students are proud of their Indonesian accent because it reflects their identity. Additionally, some students view their accent as a way to express their national, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, showing that they value incorporating local cultures into their use of English.



**Figure 7:** Reflection of multicultural identity

The association of Indonesian-accented English with multiculturalism underscores the complexity of modern identities. As students engage with peers from diverse backgrounds, their accents become not just national markers but symbols of intersectional identity. This reinforces the idea that language learning is not only about acquiring communication skills but also about navigating and affirming one's place in a global community.

Students were also asked if the Indonesian accent reflects a multicultural identity. Most students agreed (33.3%) or strongly agreed (19.4%), suggesting a recognition that their accent is not only national but also part of a broader, diverse linguistic identity. In terms of linguistic diversity and multicultural communication, Indonesian students demonstrate positive attitudes (Raja et al., 2022).

## Interview findings

The information gathered from the interview is utilised to support and elucidate the findings from the participants' questionnaire responses. The interview was conducted to select our participants.

1. The first questions of the interview were used to obtain data about their opinion about whether having Indonesian-accented English was bad or not. Based on the answers given by the respondents, the majority of the students feel that speaking or having an Indonesian accent is fine. One of the participants said that:

*"I think having an Indonesian accent when speaking English is perfectly natural. An accent reflects one's linguistic background and is not necessarily a sign of bad English. As long as the message is communicated, the accent should not matter." - DS*

However, one of the students feels that having an Indonesian accent is not a sign of having good English, stating that:

*"For me, an Indonesian accent is ok, but speaking of truth, I prefer to speak with an American accent, it makes my confidence level up." - SA*

The students believe that having an Indonesian accent while speaking English is natural and does not indicate poor English, as long as the message is clear. However, some students feel that an Indonesian accent does not reflect good English and prefer speaking with an American accent to boost their confidence.

The majority of participants expressed a neutral to positive view of speaking English with an Indonesian accent. Most participants believed that having an Indonesian accent is a natural outcome of their linguistic background and does not reduce their ability to communicate effectively. One respondent emphasized that as long as the message is clear, the accent itself should not be a concern. This aligns with the broader idea that accents are not inherently linked to proficiency in a language but rather reflect cultural and regional diversity. However, a contrasting viewpoint emerged from a participant who preferred an American accent, suggesting that certain accents are perceived as more prestigious or "correct" in some contexts, especially about confidence and self-image.

2. The second interview question was used to obtain data on whether they are proud of their Indonesian accent or not. The result shows that most students are proud of their Indonesian accent because it shows the uniqueness of the individual, as stated.

*"Yes, because each country has its own accent, even though it is not as popular as the American or British accent among students. It makes us unique."  
-HA*

Meanwhile, one of the students says that having an Indonesian accent is not that proud, stating that :

*"I will not say I am proud of it because I think it is always better to improve."*  
-SA

The students believe that every country has its own accent, which makes them unique, even if it is less popular than American or British accents. However, one student feels that having an Indonesian accent is not something to be proud of, as they believe it is better to improve. Moreover, when asked about their pride in their Indonesian accent, most students expressed a sense of pride, emphasizing the uniqueness of their accent as a reflection of their cultural heritage. As one participant noted, every country has its own accent, and although the Indonesian accent may not be as globally recognized as the American or British accents, it still contributes to their identity. This viewpoint highlights the value placed on cultural diversity and individual uniqueness. However, one student noted that they did not feel particularly proud of the Indonesian accent, as they considered it a work in progress, and felt that improving their accent was a way to enhance their English proficiency. This sentiment suggests that while students recognize the cultural value of their accent, they also feel the pressure to conform to global standards of English proficiency, which may be influenced by the perceived superiority of other accents.

3. The third question was used to obtain the data on whether having an Indonesian accent reflects their identity as Indonesian students or not. Most of the students agreed that having an Indonesian accent reflects the identity, stating that:

*"Yes, communicating with an Indonesian accent reflects my Indonesian identity, especially as a student. It demonstrates my cultural background and highlights my multilingual abilities."* -RK

Other students also support the questions, saying that :

*"Yes, because there are many students from other countries as well. But, because of Indonesian accented English, people can identify my nationality easily".* -DS

The third question addressed whether the Indonesian accent reflects their identity as Indonesian students. The consensus among most respondents was that their Indonesian accent does indeed serve as an important marker of their national and cultural identity. They felt that their accent made them readily identifiable as Indonesians, particularly in a multicultural environment like Malaysia, where students from various countries gather. The ability to distinguish national origins through accents is a significant aspect of identity formation in a globalized world. One participant specifically highlighted that their accent not only indicated their nationality but also underscored their multilingual abilities, which can be a source of pride. This suggests that while students may sometimes feel the pressure to adopt

other, more "prestigious" accents, they still value their Indonesian accent as an important aspect of their self-expression and cultural belonging.

In conclusion, the interviews reveal that Indonesian students hold mixed yet generally positive views of their Indonesian-accented English. While many express pride in their accent as a symbol of their cultural identity, others aspire to improve their accent to meet specific social or professional expectations. This duality reflects the broader tension between cultural pride and the desire for global acceptance, highlighting the complex relationship between language, identity, and social perception in an increasingly globalized world.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Indonesian students in Malaysia view their linguistic identity and their attitudes toward their Indonesian-accented English (IAE). The results show nuanced and perhaps conflicting perspectives. Some participants show discomfort, worry about how others see them, or a wish to pronounce words more naturally, while many participants take great pride in their Indonesian accent and link it to their cultural identity. Applied linguistics discussions concerning identity, intelligibility, and the persistence of native-speaker beliefs in English language instruction are reflected in these findings.

First, students' attitude towards Indonesian-accented English. The findings above show that the majority of students positively interpret their accent, and all this also impacts students' sensitivity to IAE as a usable accent and a type of accent. This is similar to the findings of Fransisca and Subekti (2022) stated that students have positive attitudes towards their accents and take pride in their local accents. Similarly, a study by Robinson-Jones et al (2024) found that students with Dutch-English accents have a positive attitude towards their accents. However, despite this, some students still consider their accent to impact their credibility, especially in professional settings. Findings show that, while students' express pride in using IAE, they also need to adapt by using variations of English to meet the "standard" English. Some students are uncomfortable using English but still retain an English accent when interacting with speakers from other countries, fearing misunderstandings due to their accent being quite different from others. This is related to native-speakerism, an ideology that places the English of the inner circle as the fundamental and top hierarchy of correct speech (Harsanti & Manara, 2021; Holliday, 2006).

Second, accent as a marker of identity. The results of this study suggest that most Indonesian students view their accent as a reflection of their nationality and culture. Some students stated that their accent marks them as Indonesian, and it is unique. The findings of this study have similarities with research by Khazanah (2023), which shows that Indonesians most likely see their accent as more positive, which is driven by the cultural and nationality realization and value that using IAE is to express politeness. Similarly, research by Almubayei and Taqi (2022) found that national pride

was expressed through the maintenance of a Kuwaiti-accented variety of English, which speakers described as simple, humble, and representative of their cultural background.

From an EFL perspective, these findings reflect a growing shift in how accents are viewed. The concern more likely is not about sounding like a native, but more like being understated and staying authentic. This is particularly relevant in a multilingual setting such as Malaysia, where English is widely spoken as a second language and there are several regional Englishes, including Malaysian English, Chinese English, and Tamil English, all of which coexist with international variants. Similarly, in this instance, the Indo-English accent is one of the accepted varieties of English rather than a distinct entity. Therefore, accents become not just a phonological feature but a marker of identity, inclusion, and cultural belonging.

Thus, this study has consequences for students who use English as well as for the teaching of the English language. Understanding, clarity, and confidence in speaking should be given more importance than aiming for an inner circle-like style of English. Additionally, by providing a Southeast Asian perspective that is frequently under-discussed globally due to the primary focus on students studying in the U.S. or the UK, this research adds to the expanding body of research on language, identity, and EFL. This study demonstrates how regional multilingual settings also experience comparable identity tensions.

Although this study offers valuable insight into Indonesian students' perceptions of their Indonesian-accented English in a Malaysian context, several limitations should be acknowledged. The research was conducted with a relatively small sample from a single Malaysian university, which may not fully represent the broader Indonesian student population across Malaysia. The reliance on self-report questionnaire data and online interviews may also have influenced how openly participants described their attitudes, particularly regarding linguistic insecurity or identity. Furthermore, this study focused on perceptions rather than the phonological features of Indonesian-accented English, which prevented a more detailed analysis of intelligibility in a real communication context. Future research should consider expanding the sample, incorporating mixed methods, and including lecturers or international students. Investigating the phonological characteristics and intelligibility of Indonesian-accented English in authentic interactional settings could also strengthen the understanding of how accent, identity, and communication intersect in transnational academic environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study has explored the This study examined how Indonesian students in Malaysia perceive their Indonesian-accented English (IAE), focusing on their linguistic identity and confidence when communicating in an international academic setting. The findings show that although a small number of students feel uneasy about their accent or aspire to sound more native-like, most participants value IAE as an authentic representation of their cultural background and national identity. These perspectives align with the goals of the study and highlight the continuing relevance of accent, identity, and intelligibility in multilingual environments. The results suggest important implications for the field. Students' preference for intelligibility and authenticity over native-speaker norms reinforces current discussions in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). This perspective can inform language teaching practices by encouraging educators and institutions to recognize diverse English accents as legitimate and meaningful. Practically, the findings can support more inclusive classroom approaches, raise awareness about linguistic bias, and promote identity-affirming communication strategies for internal students.

However, this study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single Malaysian university, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research could include multiple institutions, larger participant groups, or comparative studies across different countries to better understand how Indonesian-accented English is negotiated in various transnational contexts. Overall, this research contributes to ongoing discussions about accent acceptances, linguistic identity, and the lived experiences of international students. By highlighting Indonesian students' positive orientation toward their accent, the study emphasizes the importance of recognizing diverse Englishes in global education and supports continued efforts towards linguistic inclusivity.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## AUTHOR (S) CONTRIBUTION

*Ikhwanudin, A.I.:* Conceptualization, methodology, writing original draft, securing funding. *Suharyati, N.:* Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), writing, review (lead). *Cahyono, B. Y.:* Guidance on the article organization; overall content confirmation, and review for revision. *Khoiri, N.E.:* Overall review for revision, content confirmation

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