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Language Use, Language Attitude, and Identity: Perceptions of High School Students Attending an International School in Jakarta

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of high school students who attend an international school in Jakarta towards language use, language attitude, and identity. One hundred sixty-five students aged between 15-18 years old participated in this study. They were divided into three categories based on their nationalities, namely (1) Indonesian students who were born and raised in Indonesia, (2) Indonesian students who were born and raised outside Indonesia, and (3) non-Indonesian students (expatriates) who were studying in Indonesia. The data were collected using a survey and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that the majority of the students in the first and second categories were more comfortable with both oral and written English rather than their first language. However, for the expatriates in the third group, they could express themselves better when they used their first language. Generally, their attitude towards their home language was quite positive. The need to speak their first language (e.g., Korean, Hindi) was a gateway to connect with friends and relatives who did not speak English. As for the students' identity, this study reveals that although the students were more fluent in English, they felt that they were strongly connected to their country of birth. This study draws out the pedagogical implication that the use of English as a medium of instruction can be quite critical, especially for Indonesian students, as it may have an impact on the loss of their home language.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Patterns of language use, language attitude, and identity have been investigated quite a lot by scholars from different nations. The studies which mostly involve immigrant subjects generally suggest that language use plays a significant role in language attitude and the formation of the speakers' identity (Bichani, 2015; Kroon & Kurvers, 2020; Torres & Pablo, 2018). Some other studies demonstrate that the superiority of a more dominant language over a less prestigious language may contribute to the attitude of the speakers towards their national identity (among others, Basuningtyas, 2014; Urip, 2015).

In this globalized community, the increasing use of English as a means of international communication has had an impact on the growing number of educational institutions in non-English speaking countries that offer subjects taught in English (Dearden, 2014). Many parents realizing the importance of English as a global language prefer to send their children to those schools with the intention that they will be able to speak fluent English. These children being trained every day at school with English as the medium of instruction get used to speaking and writing in English and tend to shift their home language (cf. Kurniasari & Mbato, 2018; Urip, 2015). This situation has brought an issue of whether language use may influence speakers towards their heritage language and English as a global language as well as their identity. This rapidly growing phenomenon of offering English for Medium of Instruction (EMI) (Dearden, 2014) at private schools has also hit Indonesia, a non-English speaking country that is known for its multilingualism and multiculturalism. The issue of day-to-day language use is related to the speaker's attitude and identity, encouraging the authors to highlight how high school students in a private international high school in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, perceive language use, language attitude, and identity. In this school, the majority of the students are Indonesians. Many of them were born and raised in Indonesia and some were born and raised outside Indonesia. The rest are expatriates from different nationalities.

This study differs from previous related studies (e.g., Basuningtyas, 2014; Kroon & Kurvers, 2020; Urip, 2015) in the sense that it involves three different categories of students based on their nationalities and countries of birth: (1) students who were born in Indonesia, have both Indonesian parents, were raised in Indonesia and are studying in Indonesia, (2) students who were born outside Indonesia, have both Indonesian parents, were raised outside Indonesia during their early childhood years and are studying in Indonesia, and (3) students who were born outside Indonesia, have non-Indonesian parents, were raised in Indonesia and are studying in Indonesia since their parents are working in Indonesia. As the students speak predominantly in English even though the language is not widely spoken in the country, our aim to conduct this study is to know how the students in each group perceive language use, language attitude, and identity. This study is especially important as it highlights the role of language use in the formation of the student's identities.

Based on a survey and interview with the students in each respective category, this paper attempts to answer the research question: How do the students perceive their

language use, language attitude, and identity? The answer to the research question was divided in terms of the three categories of the students mentioned previously.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The interaction between language and identity is multi-faceted (Edwards, 2009) as it can be discussed from different points of view. From the sociolinguistic perspective, for example, the interaction can be seen from the societal factors of the speakers and their linguistic behaviour (Shahrebabaki, 2018). From the socio-constructivist view, the interaction can be seen as “a process of construction” (Fina, 2012, p. 1), in the sense that identity is constructed as a response to the necessity of social interactions and social norms (Block, 2013; Shahrebabaki, 2018). Viewed from the psychological aspect, the interaction between language and identity may vary based on different social environments and contexts such as age, gender, ethnicity, race, etc. (Jaspal, 2009).

In this present context, the issue of language and identity can be seen from the perspective of applied linguistics, in which language use may play an important part in the formation of one’s identity (Edwards, 2009). As stated by Shahrebabaki (2018, p. 218), “language is a pillar of identity undertaking”, which means that the way someone talks reflects the identity of a speech community. Identity is thus defined as “an individual’s own subjective sense of self, to personal classification ‘markers’ that appear as important, both to oneself and to others” (Edwards, 2009, p. 16). For example, the use of a lexical item, accent, or dialect may partially mark the identity of the speaker.

A number of studies on language and identity have focused on how immigrants use their language and how they perceive their attitude and identity. Bichani (2015) for example, revealed in her study with Arabic immigrants in the UK that the subjects’ attitudes towards the heritage language, namely Standard Fusha and colloquial Arabic, were generally positive. The main reasons for meriting Arabic were its religious significance and functions, its role as a lingua franca throughout the Arabic world, and its prestige as the language of literature and Arabic culture. Interestingly, despite their strong attitude towards their heritage language, there is a tendency that Arabic children were more dominant in English and used English with their siblings and peers both at home and at school.

In a more recent study, Torres and Pablo (2018) examined the process of identity formation of return migrants who lived in the United States and are currently studying Bachelor of Arts in TESOL in Mexico. Through narrative inquiry using autobiographies and semi-structured interviews, the study focused on how language might influence the way in which individuals perceive themselves. The findings revealed that language learning as a variable of identity construction showed that individuals who underwent the process of migration and transnationalism were highly influenced by their life experiences when it comes to second language learning. Hence, heritage language maintenance plays a significant role in the individual’s construction of identity. In other words, the use of their mother tongue at home helped to preserve the formation of their Mexican identity. In this case, the unconscious language behaviour of traditional extended families in the US created a positive attitude towards the culture of origin and thus favour the possibilities of self-identification with their ethnic group.

A very recent study by Kroon and Kurvers (2020) about language practices, language attitudes, and identity belongings of East Timorese diaspora in the Netherlands shows how the first and second generations of the East Timorese have shifted to Dutch. Although Dutch was used as day-to-day language practice, the study reported that the participants did not lose their home languages (Tetum and Indonesian) because they arrived in the Netherlands when they were adults (range of age of the respondents is between 21-43). The study also reported that all respondents received their education when East Timor was incorporated as a province in Indonesia. Tetum, in particular, is a language that plays a great role when they want to show their East Timorese identity.

In many Asian countries including Indonesia, the emergence of English as a global language has bolstered the use of English in many different domains. In fact, English is not just a language used in business, science, or entertainment, but also for pedagogical purposes. In Indonesia, for example, especially in many big cities, many private educational institutions – starting from playgroup to higher institution – have offered programs in which English is used as the medium of instruction. Students in these schools are very fluent in English but not in their home language.

The above situation was explored by Urip (2015), who focused on eight Indonesian children from three families living in the capital city of Jakarta, aged between four and seventeen years old and predominantly using English both at home and school. Although the eight children were born and raised in Jakarta, their competence in speaking Indonesian was very limited. Apparently, the parents of the eight subjects observed in Urip's study deliberately chose English as the home language that had to be used in daily communication due to the reason that they thought English was more important than Indonesian. Although the study did not focus on the students' identity, it can be implied that the children have lost the chance to acquire the language of their home country, which may actually question how they perceive their national identity. A similar case was also discussed by Basuningtyas (2014), who reported that three children aged between 5 to 17 years old from a Javanese family background were not fluent in Indonesian. The second child, especially, refused to speak in Indonesian because he was more comfortable in English.

The issue discussed by Basuningtyas (2014) and Urip (2015) in their studies has previously been observed by Onishi (2010), a reporter for *The New York Times*, who interviewed an Indonesian parent who happened to be at a mall in Jakarta with her three children. These children were talking with each other in fluent English. Sadly, although the children were born and raised in Indonesia, they struggled in their home country's language. In the interview, the mother said, "They know they're Indonesian. They love Indonesia. They just can't speak *Bahasa Indonesia*. It's tragic".

With regards to the increasing number of children who have acquired English as a foreign language at their young age, it would be interesting to find out the students' attitude towards the languages that exist in their linguistic repertoire as well as how they perceive their identity. In this study, the term 'first language' is used for the language that has been exposed to the students since birth. Although English does not have the official status of a second language in Indonesia, the term 'second language' is used instead of 'foreign language' to refer to the language learned by the non-native speakers of English after they acquire their first language.

3. METHODS

3.1 Participants

One hundred sixty-five (165) students participated in the study. They are Grade 11 and 12 students whose age range is 15 to 18 years old. These students are studying at a private school in South Jakarta with an International Baccalaureate curriculum. In this school, English is primarily used as a medium of instruction for different subject disciplines except for *Bahasa Indonesia* 'Indonesian'. The participants of this study hailed from three different categories. For the sake of the respondents' privacy, we shall use the students' initials rather than their real names. To visualize clearly the different categories of the participants, Table 1 is presented below.

Table 1. Categories of the participants.

Category	Descriptions			
	Country of birth	Parents' nationality	The country where the students were raised	Number of students
1	Indonesia	Indonesian	Indonesia	139
2	Outside Indonesia	Indonesian	Outside Indonesia (during early childhood years)	8
3	Outside Indonesia	Non-Indonesian	Outside Indonesia (during early childhood years)	18

3.2 Instruments, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

This study started with a survey questionnaire that was piloted with five students to validate the questions. The initial survey questionnaire was revised and distributed to Grade 11 and 12 respondents. The revision was done due to some unclear items to the students. The questionnaire designed for the study was composed of three sections. Section A was focused on collecting data on the demographic information of the participants such as their age, gender, and ethnic background. Section B was designed to gather data on language background and use, while Section C was about language attitude and identity. Informed consent was signed by the participants before the survey was conducted. After the survey, a structured interview from each category was conducted to validate and clarify the information written in the survey. The interviews were administered three to four weeks after the survey data were tallied. They were conducted in the English language. They were recorded and then transcribed to inform the arguments of the study.

In analysing the data, the survey questionnaire was used to find out the different categories that the students belong in the study. The in-depth interview was meant to support the sociolinguistic trajectories of the students where languages were utilized to reflect the students' attitudes towards the languages they speak as well as their identities.

4. RESULTS

This section addresses the answer to the research question: How do the students perceive their language use, language attitude, and identity? Each sub-section represents each category of the students:

Category 1: Students who were born in Indonesia, have both Indonesian parents, were raised in Indonesia, and are studying in Indonesia.

Category 2: Students who were born outside Indonesia, have both Indonesian parents, were raised outside Indonesia during their early childhood years, and are now studying in Indonesia.

Category 3: Students who were born outside Indonesia, have non-Indonesian parents, were raised outside Indonesia, and are studying in Indonesia.

The analysis of each category is divided into two sub-sections: (a) language use, and (b) language attitude and identity.

4.1 Category 1

There are 139 (84%) out of 165 students who belong to this category. These students mentioned that both parents are Indonesian citizens who were born and raised in the same or different ethnic groups such as Javanese, Chinese Indonesians, Chinese Manadonese, Javanese Manadonese, and Batak to name a few. In their early childhood years (before going to formal school), all the respondents were taught by their parents how to speak Indonesian and they expressed their fluency in speaking the said language. This can be further demonstrated in their language use and language attitude and identity in the discussions below.

4.1.1 Language use

The respondents of the study stated that the persons who raised them when they were children were mainly their parents and very occasionally their grandparents. This suggests that although the language is claimed to be automatically learned in the process of growing, the role of the parents is significant in the early development of the children. Their daily interaction coupled with the surrounding family members helps them to practice talking on a regular basis.

The respondents shared that their parents, being Indonesians, are very fluent speakers of the Indonesian language. This is the language that the respondents grew up with. However, over time, their use of the first language demonstrates language preference due to formal education in school. For instance, ASH mentioned that:

ASH: "I was raised with my first language but because I go to an international school and have been all my life, I am now more fluent in English, although I am also fluent with my first language".

On the other hand, AND stated that:

AND: "My parents raised me speaking Bahasa Indonesia; however, over time, I learn English starting at the age of six. Especially now, my main language is English since this is the language that I use from the day-to-day basis in comparison to Bahasa Indonesia."

As regards their ability to express themselves in written forms, it shows that they follow the same pattern as their ability to speak their first language despite different journeys in their academic lives. ASH claimed that:

ASH: "I'm much better in my second language although I'm also pretty fluent in writing my first language".

On the other hand, NIC mentioned that:

NIC: "I can write both of them well. Technically in primary school, I wrote more in Bahasa Indonesia because of the school requirements. But in middle school, I was able to write fluently in both languages at an equal level".

This evidence suggests that the language use changes as the grade level of the students go higher. The more they have daily English interactions and discussions with classmates and teachers or with their school environment, the more they become adept in speaking and writing the second language, English.

It cannot be denied that the student's language use also shows some significant development and changes in terms of speaking and writing preferences in different locations such as at home, at school, and outside with friends. According to the respondents, they speak both languages at home. However, ASH pointed out that she prefers to speak Indonesian to her parents and grandparents but English to her brother. ASH's preference to speak English not only to her brother but also to her friends from international schools is put forth because of the development of her wider range of vocabulary. In a different vein, it can be construed that even the younger brother of ASH who is also studying in the same international school has speaking preferences (English) like her. At school, on the other hand, they mentioned that it is mostly English. Interestingly, NIC stated that although she mostly speaks English, at times she has to be flexible in the sense that she has to adjust to the interlocutor's language background. In reference to the outside school with friends, they learn to adjust and exercise flexibility. For instance, AND claimed that:

AND: "It depends on which community I'm in. If I'm in my school community, I speak English, however, if it is outside the school environment, I usually speak Bahasa Indonesia".

The same thought was mentioned by NIC who stated that:

NIC: "It depends on whom I am socializing with. If they come from a national school, I would greet them in Bahasa Indonesia. If they come from an international school, I change the language and see which one they are more comfortable with and I adjust it myself. I guess I learn to be flexible".

The respondents also show preferences in writing in English. ASH prefers to write in English in all locations (at home, at school, outside the school with friends). On the other hand, NIC and AND mentioned that even though they prefer to write in English, they tend to adjust depending on how the scenario calls for. NIC stated:

NIC: "It depends upon the requirements. If it is related to family legal documents like Kartu Keluarga (family card), I write in Bahasa Indonesia since I live in Indonesia. Basically, this is not a preference, but again I learned to be flexible".

Apparently, AND revealed that he does the same especially when he is filling out feedback forms from the restaurants. It can be interpreted that the language use of the respondents is their vehicle to adapt to their environment for them to meet their purpose. Thus, interacting with various people in different locations, they exercise flexibility to consider the people around them.

4.1.2 Language attitude and identity

Some students in this group are trilingual. That is why they were comfortably adaptable to the situation they were facing. NIC, for example, stated that:

NIC: *“Some family members are not quite fluent in Indonesian because most of them come from Cungkuo¹ so they speak Chinese with a mixture of English. Thus, I communicate with them with the language they are most comfortable to use”.*

NIC’s statement can be construed that she is disposed to shift her language from Indonesian to English or vice versa to ensure clear communication between herself and family members who are not primarily from Jakarta.

The respondents’ attitudes and identities are tested and proven in their daily interactions with the people around them. Although they currently considered themselves more fluent and confident to speak their second language than their first language, they all recognize the importance of both languages in their lives. AND stated:

AND: *“Being bilingual is a plus factor because of many ways to connect with someone else”.*

Moreover, ASH claimed:

ASH: *“It is a privilege to communicate in both languages”.*

NIC added that in the business world, multilingualism is a great advantage. For instance:

NIC: *“I am learning Chinese to improve my circle of socialization since I’m going to major in business one day. Learning Mandarin just like one of my family members who own a brand name, he has to speak in Mandarin with his clients or business partner since the latter can only speak Mandarin and Bahasa Indonesia”.*

This suggests that knowing two or more languages is an advantage in today’s world as it becomes a ticket to establish rapport and better understanding between and among people. Furthermore, the linguistic data of NIC shows that being trilingual expresses her ambition and success in her future career to be fulfilled in an intercultural environment not only in her diverse home country but also abroad. The borderless communications travels and education are viewed to bring interconnectedness and a happier future. It is noteworthy to mention that despite the multiple languages that the respondents are learning, the first language is not thrown out of the window as claimed by AND. He stated that:

AND: *“It depends on the context with whom you are speaking with, where you are or what you are trying to do with your language”.*

ASH further added that:

¹ *Cungkuo* is a euphemized Hokkien word for ‘Chinese’. Uttering the word Chinese or *Cina* may be considered rude towards the interlocutor (according to NIC, one of the participants in this study, who happened to be an Indonesian from a Chinese descendant).

ASH: *“The first language is still very important because I live in Indonesia and I should know my own country’s language. It helps communication in the workplace since I will work here”.*

This implies that the respondents are very much aware of their language attitude and identity. They find pride in their first language not only because they are Indonesians but also because it represents who they are as a person and who they are directly interacting and socializing within their home-grown environment.

Given the various responses of the students, it can be said that the language they learn at home is formative of their identity. However, over time, language learning becomes instrumental in recognizing one’s identity as reflected in their social interactions, academic contexts, and ethnicity.

4.2 Category 2

Eight or five percent out of the 165 students belong to this category. These students were born outside Indonesia and spent their early childhood years in their country of birth (e.g., Singapore, USA, and Australia) before moving back to Jakarta to continue their education. Since both parents are Indonesians, they were taught how to speak and interact in the Indonesian language, the language both parents and child are most comfortable to converse with at home. However, in the external surroundings such as schools, the students learn to speak and write in the English language; they interact and make connections with friends, classmates, and teachers in English. The discussion below illustrates the language use and language attitude and identity of the respondents.

4.2.1 Language use

The language use of the respondents in this category is interesting based on their family orientation. For instance, DAN (born in Singapore) claimed that his first language is English although his mother speaks to him in Indonesian on a regular basis. He claimed that he understood the message conveyed by his mother, but he prefers to respond in English. He stated:

DAN: *“I don’t think I am very fluent in Bahasa Indonesia. My level of speaking is still very elementary and I feel confused with a lot of vocabulary words”.*

It can be construed that the use of language is dictated by the attitude of the child to respond immediately to the conversation. Having to think of the diction and word choices delay his interaction with his mother; thus, he opted to use the language he is most comfortable with, in this respect the English language. In addition, the immediate environment may serve as a contributing factor for DAN to speak English since his classmates are Singaporeans and other immigrants. English as the universal language assists him to connect and interact well with his immediate surroundings to belong and be understood.

Similar to DAN, LOR (born in Australia) was raised by his mother. However, his mother taught him to embrace both languages, English and Indonesian. When asked about his language use, he quantified it through percentage such as:

LOR: *“I think 60% of the first language (English) and 40% of the second language (Bahasa Indonesia)”.*

LOR further stated that this language use varies depending on his interlocutors. For instance:

LOR: "When communicating with my family members, it's a mix. It's 50 - 50 with Indonesian and English because my family members are most comfortable to speak Bahasa Indonesia".

This suggests that LOR puts equal importance on both languages to ensure social compatibility with other members of the group.

According to TIM (born in the USA), both his parents were prime movers for his language use. He stated:

TIM: "I would say there was a mix of it. They made an Indonesian framework and they delivered the conversation in Indonesian which I have to understand".

This suggests that the parents trained TIM to learn both languages, to embrace the heritage language which is Indonesian, and to study English since he resided in a country where English is the native language of the community and a medium of instruction in school. Although TIM learned both languages simultaneously, he claimed that he is more confident in using English rather than Indonesian. He justified that the use of the Indonesian language is for survival purposes now that he is living in Indonesia and for necessity aspects due to an unavoidable interaction with his grandparents who can hardly speak English. He stated:

TIM: "If someone such as my grandparents who don't really know English, I'll speak in Bahasa Indonesia, my second language. It's a matter of necessity".

This situation, which is called 'bilinguality' by Hamers and Blanc (1995), enables TIM to make an option for an appropriate linguistic code.

The immediate environment of the three respondents was a catalyst to use English. Although it can be inferred that despite the students' difficulties to learn the Indonesian language, they tried their best to survive, to belong, and to stay connected with their extended family members. This supports the claim of Torres and Pablo (2018) that individuals who go through the process of migration are highly influenced by their life experiences when it comes to second language learning or heritage language maintenance.

4.2.2 Language attitude and identity

The participants seemed content with the effects of using English for their daily communication. They were aware that English, as an international and universal language, broadens their worldview and transcends their cultural boundaries and ways of thinking of other people. However, it cannot be denied that the participants in this study also recognized the importance of their second language (Indonesian) which was demonstrated in the responses of the students. For instance, TIM stated:

TIM: It is a way to simulate with the Indonesian culture and to interact with my grandparents".

Similarly, LOR claimed that:

LOR: "It is important to learn about Indonesian culture as a whole".

This implies that Indonesian, the mother tongue of their parents, builds a strong connection with their extended families. It demonstrates appreciation to keep the second language alive for certain purposes and contexts that sustain their cultural diversity and ethnicity.

Language seems to be a more pervasive indication to shape and expand an individual's cultural literacy and awareness of his/her identity. This was evident in LOR's statement that:

LOR: "Cultural identity is tantamount to understanding the roots as a whole".

On the other hand, DAN mentioned that:

DAN: "I would still think that Bahasa Indonesia is important as it helps to show that I am an Indonesian".

Pragmatically speaking, this shows that the students construct their identity by embracing who they are as citizens of their birth country. They recognized the significance of their lineage since they share the same ethos and beliefs.

4.3 Category 3

There are 18 (11%) out of 165 students who belong to category three. These students are non-Indonesians who are enrolled in an international school in Jakarta since their parents are working in Indonesia. They mentioned that their parents are mainly the people who raise and teach them how to speak their first language (language from their respective country) or English to survive in a foreign land. Significantly, the mothers have a strong role in the language usage of their children. This can be further discussed in the language use and language attitude and identity below.

4.3.1 Language use

COR, a Korean student, mentioned that:

COR: "My parents for sure. But it's more to my mother. She raised me when I was young since my father had to work most of the time. Although my mom works, she manages to care for me and my sister, and that's how she raised me when I was young".

This happens to be a similar experience with SAN, an Indian student who stated:

SAN: "Both my parents were there for me, but I used to cling to my mom a lot more than my dad".

KIM (Korean) had the same episodes during his younger years and he added that:

KIM: "Although my dad was working, he was able to catch up and talked to me every night. My mom was a housewife so she is always beside me asking what was going on in my life".

This implies that the mother figure is crucial in the formative years since they have a big role in the language use of their children.

The respondents have different opinions in speaking their first language. According to KIM:

KIM: "I speak very fluent Korean since I was raised in Korea until Grade 3. I am able to talk and express my feelings in my first language".

This suggests that KIM's foundation in school and his immediate environment when he was younger fosters his language use. On the other hand, SER has a different view of her first language (Korean). She claimed:

SER: "I am able to speak in my daily conversation, but I probably don't have the ability to speak in a formal presentation".

Although SER's first language is pretty much a part of her linguistic repertoire, it becomes a language used for informal discussions and interactions with family members and Korean friends. The Korean language is spoken automatically without thinking about the grammar structure and diction in a casual conversation. It can be further implied that the strong position of English as a second language is influenced by the school environment since she is studying in an international school where English becomes the language of instructions and daily interactions with the teachers and classmates.

Seemingly, KIM seems to maintain his speaking and writing skills in his first language (Korean). This is due to the fact that he is studying Korean in school and he mentioned that:

KIM: "I learn Korean literature so I still practice writing poetry and essays. Thus, I am confident to write with my first language".

With formal instructions in school, the students can sustain their writing and speaking skills both in their first and second language. However, if they do not study the language in school, the skills gradually deteriorate. This is confirmed by SAN who mentioned:

SAN: "I used to take a Hindi lesson when I was a kid, but now I stop. I still remember how to write and read. I know how to speak Hindi but I can only phrase small sentences because I get mixed up. I am trying to learn more about it now, so when I grow up, I can communicate more with my family".

This validates Vygotsky's (1962) claim that "the child's strong points in a foreign language are his weak points in his native language and vice versa" (p. 207). Knowledge and use of other languages have been linked to personal benefits and objectives such as missing the beauty of literature in one's first language or simply communicating with people who may not speak the second language.

4.3.2 Language attitude and identity

The respondents expressed the need to be flexible with whomever they are interacting with. For instance, SER and KIM claimed that they are more comfortable speaking Korean with family members because they have limited knowledge of English. However, with school friends, they prefer English and with Korean friends, they prefer Korean. This suggests that language attitudes between the first category

and third category have no difference despite their background, nationality, and family orientations. Respondents tend to shift their language use and attitude to accommodate the people they are interacting with. This becomes their way to sustain good communication between interlocutors.

‘To be proud’ is the most common phrase that the respondents uttered when they were asked about their feelings to be bilinguals. For instance, SER stated:

SER: *“I feel proud to be a bilingual since I can translate to my parents about English or translate Korean to my English friends. It shapes me on how I write and I see differences in culture”.*

Additionally, KIM said:

KIM: *“I feel very proud because, in Korea, kids also learn English but they don’t have a chance to talk with other people in English as much as I do. So, I believe by living in another country and being bilingual, I feel very confident with my skills in talking and chatting with other people”.*

On the other hand, even though SAN is also proud of being a bilingual person, she expressed mixed emotions. She uttered:

SAN: *“I am proud of my country and I know it may be sad trying hard to at least read and write. I think it’s a good opportunity because I can actually speak more than two languages such as Spanish, Mandarin, and Bahasa Indonesia. I really like my language, like my second language Hindi since it is a part of my culture and who I am”.*

This suggests that being a multilingual person reinforces one’s social skills to become a global citizen who sees the world as a window to deepen his/ her intercultural skills.

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, the respondents are faced to learn not only their first language but also their second language in order not to be left behind in school, in a social environment, and in the country where they are currently residing. When they were asked about the significance of their first language in comparison with their second language, they all shared the same views that the first language is still important despite the fact they are becoming fluent with their second. For instance:

SER: *“I grew up in a traditional Korean family with norms. It’s important that I speak Korean with my family to protect my nationality and identity. This helps shape who I am”.*

KIM: *“All my family members speak Korean and I believe in language there is culture. If I think that my first language is not important that means my culture is not important”.*

SAN: *“Other people may not be able to communicate with me and that specific language, so it’s good to know more than one language to have proper conversations without having language barriers in-between”.*

COR: *“I want to go to other foreign countries and for sure we have to speak English. If I don’t know, it is a disadvantage”.*

The Korean students highlighted the value of their nationality and first language. This suggests that the strong connection of the respondents towards their citizenship (Koreans) is an embodiment of whom they become. On a different note, even though SAN and COR mentioned the significance of their first language (English), they have

a different view about it. They claimed that the first language is needed to circumvent the language barriers around the world. As foreign students studying in a different country, they expressed the significance of their first language to establish effective communication with other individuals. Drawing from the language attitude and identity of the respondents, it can be deduced that the first language is much valued. However, every individual views it in a different way depending on their immediate family backgrounds and personal experiences.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have shown that although the students predominantly speak English in their daily activities, they still want to preserve their nationality and their homeland language as a source of identity. As noted by [Osler and Starkey \(2003\)](#), citizenship requires a sense of belonging and that is why one's identity will affect one's sense of status and self-respect ([Kymlica, 2001](#)). In the context of this study, the ability to speak in their homeland language will form a strong connection among family members and friends who are not fluent in English. This indicates that they have a positive attitude towards the language of their homeland.

However, in terms of linguistic competence, there is a slight difference that can be observed among the three groups of students. The students from the first category, who are all Indonesians, exhibit more linguistic adaptability to speak and write depending on their interlocutors at a given time and space. At school, they will use English when they interact with their teachers and peers, but outside school, they may use either English or Indonesian. This makes sense as the students were born and raised in Indonesia. They hear Indonesian spoken every day in their community and they may use it at home as a means of communication with their family members.

The students from the second category, in contrast, who are also Indonesian citizens yet were born and raised overseas, demonstrate better use of English than Indonesian. This makes sense because they were raised in countries where the Indonesian language is not used as a means of communication in their early lives. Many studies claim that age patterns may strongly contribute to the acquisition of a second language (among others, [Lenneberg, 1967](#); [Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978](#)). The students in this group were exposed to Indonesian in their puberty age (after 12 years old). As for the students from the third category, who are all non-Indonesians, they tend to maintain their first language because they come to Indonesia with their parents who are working in the country.

Of the three groups of students discussed in this study, we can say that from the point of view of national identity, the students from the third category belong to the minority (cf. [Nguyen & Hamid 2016](#)). Being in a foreign country where their home language is not used, the students are able to express themselves in their first language outside the school. In this case, the possibility of maintaining their first language is greater. This situation differs from that in the second category. The students belonging to the second category, despite the fact that they are Indonesians, have to learn Indonesian as a second language. As for the students in the first category, there is a possibility that their first language competence may decrease as English is continuously used in the education domain. This condition, which has been observed by [Onishi \(2010\)](#), commonly happens among children who have acquired English at a very young age.

This study reflects a phenomenon that may happen to students who have to use English at school but they live in a country where English is not used as a lingua franca. Unlike previous studies about language use, language attitude, and identity with immigrant students as the subjects of the study (e.g., Bichani 2015; Kroon & Kurvers 2020; Nguyen & Hamid 2016; Torres & Pablo 2018), this study took place in a setting where many of the respondents are locals.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the students' language use mostly depends on certain domains such as in the school when they talk to their teachers or classmates or outside the school when they talk to their family members. They would normally switch from their first language to second language or vice versa depending on their interlocutors to sustain their conversation, socialization, and belongingness.

In terms of language attitude, it seems that the students' cultural background shapes a positive attitude towards the language of their home country. Their attitude towards English is also positive, as it is consistently used in the education domain and thus considered very important. In general, the respondents in this study perceive that there is a strong connection between their nationality and the language spoken in their country of birth.

This study has been limited to a small-scale application for teenaged students in an international school in Jakarta. However, it may explain that these students – especially those from the first category – may perform better in English rather than in Indonesian. Although this study reveals that the students connect their identity with their country of birth, in terms of language use they may not be very fluent speakers of their national language. It is perhaps high time for educational institutions to pay attention to this phenomenon. As the interaction between language and identity is quite complex and multifaceted (Edwards, 2009), further research may be dedicated to the relation between language use and identity which involve participants of different age groups, socio-economic stratifications, and educational attainment.

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