

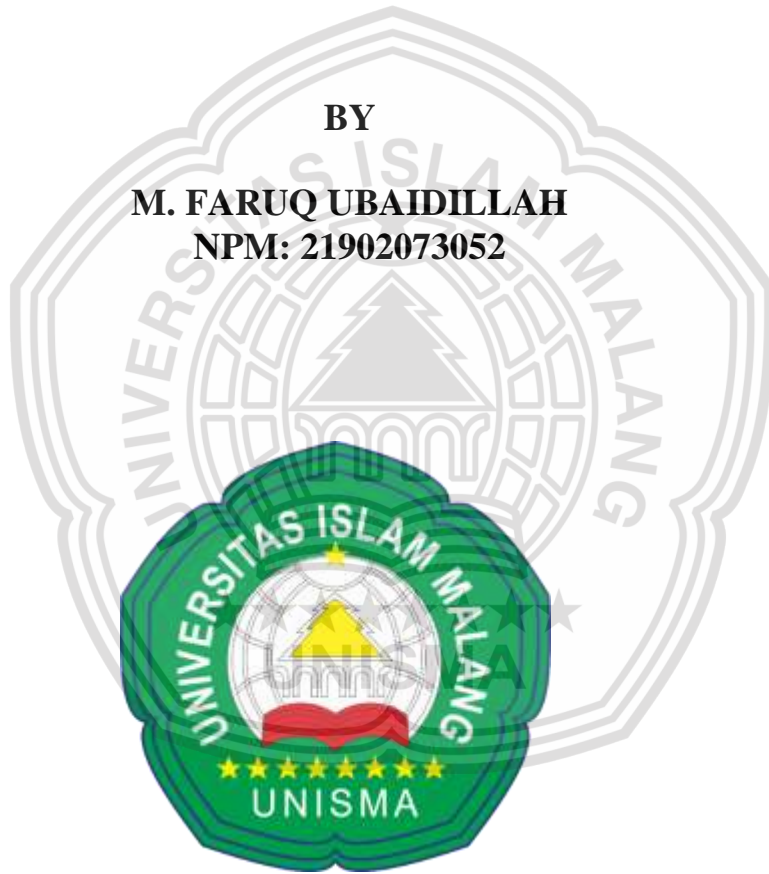


**IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND CLASSROOM  
PARTICIPATION OF AN INDONESIAN GRADUATE  
STUDENT IN AN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY**

**THESIS**

**BY**

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**UNIVERSITY OF ISLAM MALANG  
GRADUATE PROGRAM  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM  
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**THESIS**  
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***Magister in English Language Education***

★ ★ ★ **BY** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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## ABSTRACT

Ubaidillah, M. F. (2021). Identity Construction and Classroom Participation of an Indonesian Graduate Student in an Australian University. Thesis, English Language Education Study Program, Postgraduate Program, University of Islam Malang. Advisor: Prof. Dra. Hj. Utami Widiati, M.A., Ph.D.

**Keywords:** identity construction, classroom participation, community of practice, L2 learning, English-medium university

Second language (L2) learning has so far been considered as a room for L2 language learners to construct their identity and participate in the class through classroom participation with senior colleagues. While research on this area is extensively focused on international graduate students who speak English as a second language and study in the English-medium universities of non-English speaking countries (e.g., Hong Kong, China, Taiwan), there is a paucity of research unpacking how English as foreign language students pursuing degrees in the English-medium universities in English-speaking countries construct their identity through classroom participation.

This narrative study explores identity construction and classroom participation of an Indonesian female student who attended a Master's program in TESOL in an Australian university. Grounded from identity and investment frameworks (Norton, 2000) and situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the study specifically probes into the changing identity construction across time shaped by the participant's involvement in the community of practice. Data analysis followed Polkinghorne's (1995) categorical procedure and Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three-dimensional space of narrative inquiry.

The findings portray a gradual and complex identity construction mediated by the participant's agentic classroom participation. It was also found that the participant's identity evolved across time together with a movement from peripheral to full participation. Findings from this study provide theory-generating perspectives for EFL teachers in Indonesia who wish to pursue their degrees abroad in terms of 1) viewing L2 learning as a social practice by involving in an active engagement with senior colleagues in the classroom, 2) understanding the presence of other varieties of English particularly from Inner Circle prior to enrolling in the university, 3) formulating learning investment and agency, 4) noticing unequal classroom

relations, and 5) enacting a movement of engagement from periphery to full participation in the classroom.

### ABSTRAK

Ubaidillah, M.F. (2021). Konstruksi Identitas dan Partisipasi Kelas Mahasiswa Pascasarjana Indonesia di Universitas Australia. Tesis, Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Program Pascasarjana, Universitas Islam Malang. Pembimbing: Prof. Dra. Hj. Utami Widiati, M.A., Ph.D.

**Kata kunci:** konstruksi identitas, partisipasi kelas, komunitas praktik, pembelajaran L2, universitas menengah bahasa Inggris

Pembelajaran bahasa kedua (L2) sejauh ini dianggap sebagai ruang bagi pembelajar bahasa L2 untuk membangun identitas mereka dan berpartisipasi di kelas melalui partisipasi kelas dengan rekan-rekan senior. Sementara penelitian di bidang ini secara ekstensif difokuskan pada mahasiswa pascasarjana internasional yang berbicara bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua dan belajar di universitas-universitas berbahasa Inggris di negara-negara yang tidak berbahasa Inggris (misalnya, Hong Kong, Cina, Taiwan), ada kekurangan penelitian membongkar bagaimana bahasa Inggris sebagai siswa bahasa asing yang mengejar gelar di universitas menengah bahasa Inggris di negara-negara berbahasa Inggris membangun identitas mereka melalui partisipasi kelas.

Studi naratif ini mengeksplorasi konstruksi identitas dan partisipasi kelas seorang mahasiswi Indonesia yang mengikuti program Master di TESOL di sebuah universitas Australia. Didasarkan dari kerangka identitas dan investasi (Norton, 2000) dan teori pembelajaran terletak (Lave & Wenger, 1991), penelitian ini secara khusus menyelidiki konstruksi identitas yang berubah sepanjang waktu yang dibentuk oleh keterlibatan peserta dalam komunitas praktik. Analisis data mengikuti prosedur kategoris Polkinghorne (1995) dan ruang penyelidikan naratif tiga dimensi Connelly and Clandinin (2006).

Temuan menggambarkan konstruksi identitas bertahap dan kompleks yang dimediasi oleh partisipasi kelas agentif peserta. Ditemukan juga bahwa identitas peserta berkembang sepanjang waktu bersama dengan gerakan dari periferal ke partisipasi penuh. Temuan dari penelitian ini memberikan perspektif yang menghasilkan teori bagi guru EFL di Indonesia yang ingin mengejar gelar mereka di luar negeri dalam hal 1) memandang pembelajaran L2 sebagai praktik sosial dengan terlibat dalam keterlibatan aktif dengan rekan senior di kelas, 2) memahami kehadiran varietas bahasa Inggris lainnya terutama dari Inner Circle sebelum mendaftar di universitas, 3) merumuskan investasi pembelajaran dan agensi, 4) memperhatikan hubungan kelas yang tidak setara, dan 5) memberlakukan gerakan keterlibatan dari pinggiran ke partisipasi penuh di kelas.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of the key terms.

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

“Identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language” (Duff & Uchida, 1997, p. 452).

“Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).

“Second language learning as participation and the re(construction) of the selves” (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 1)

The above quotes are illustrative of the present study that see second language learning from learners’ participation, identity formation, and lived experiences. Empirically speaking, in the last decades, second language (L2) learning theories have shifted from a structuralist perspective to poststructuralist lens, leading to a view that second language learning is a form of participation and construction of a self rather than seeing it as a form of linguistic-descriptive memorization (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). This case is true in a context of higher education in English-speaking countries, where international students participate and negotiate their identities in the university classroom activities (Lan, 2018; Morita, 2004; Sung, 2017). With this in mind, it is of importance to explore the identity construction and classroom participation of international students studying in the English-medium universities.

More importantly, classroom has been considered as a space for struggle enacted by learners. Their efforts of wanting to belong into classroom membership is viewed within the notion of investment (Norton, 2013) as it is influenced by power relations experienced by the learners. Meanwhile, identity is related to this investment (Norton, 2010). In this context, recent research portrays how EFL learners invested and constructed their identity in learning within a given classroom context. The interrelationship between identity and investment existed within learning enactment which is seen as dynamic, complex, situated, fluctuated, and negotiable (Teng, 2019a).

Empirical studies have attempted to document students' lived experiences in classroom participation and their identity construction situated in the English-medium universities. In the newly internationalized university in Taiwan, for example, Lin (2018) interviewed 82 graduate students (Taiwanese and international students) with regard to their bidirectional class interactions in the English-medium university and portrayed that the participants enacted diverse classroom participation styles, attributing their dissimilar class participation to divergent cultures and linguistic abilities vis-à-vis English language. The study contributes to the existing literature that exclusively explores Asian graduate students' unidirectional experiences in English-medium universities in English-speaking contexts. The findings suggest teachers construe learners' local cultures and linguistic abilities as it can raise "positive sense of identity" in learner's learning enactment (Teng, 2019b) and respect learners' varied variables of L2 investment (Sung, 2020).

In an earlier study, Sung (2017) narrated a female undergraduate students' L2 experiences in the English-medium university in Hong Kong using situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger 1991) and identity and investment frameworks (Norton, 2000). On negotiating classroom participation and constructing identity, the student participant encountered multi-layered processes which allowed for identity, competence, and membership involvement during the class. Central to these findings is the fact that classroom participation and identity construction are mediated by context-specific challenges which gradually enhanced the participant's passive to active classroom participation.

In the previous studies (see Lin, 2018; Sung, 2017; Teng, 2019a), it is true that international graduate students' classroom participation and identity construction in the English-medium universities have been the research focus. However, the investigation is situated within the context of non-English speaking countries, thus neglecting the experiences of Asian graduate students as Non-Native English Speakers (NNESs) who live and study in English speaking countries. Assuredly, it has become apparent that these students struggle and negotiate their identities in the university classroom amidst the so-called status of native speakerism (Holliday, 2006). The challenges of classroom participation and identity construction in western universities may be prevalent since dichotomy between native and non-native English speakers is consistently held (Kobayashi, 2020).

Further, the previous studies on classroom participation and identity construction primarily recruited participations from Hong Kong, China, and

Taiwan who speak English as a second language. Apparently, researching participants from Indonesia who pursue degrees in the western English-medium universities is worth-doing, given the fact they are multilingual speakers (Zein, 2019), use English as a foreign language in their home countries (Dardjowidjojo, 2000), and thus bring their multilingual English identities into classroom practices (Zacharias, 2012). Therefore, their lived experiences may be enlightening in terms of identity development in pre-, whilst-, and post-study as well as classroom participation with colleagues.

This study is situated within the lived experiences of an Indonesian graduate student studying in a master's program in TESOL in an Australian university, Andin (pseudonym). I desire to see how Andin constructs her identity as an international graduate student in the university classroom participation and how her identity changes over time. To enact such purposes, this study lies within a poststructuralist view of language learning using identity and investment frameworks (Norton, 2000) and situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that see identity as struggle, multiple, and changing over time (Norton, 2013). Narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006) is also used to document participant's personal stories.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The present study addresses two research questions:

1.2.1 How does the EFL graduate student construct her identity as an international graduate student during the classroom participation?



1.2.2 How does the EFL graduate student's identity change over time during classroom participation?

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study shed light on the importance of identity-informed pedagogy for EFL teachers in Indonesia who wish to pursue their degrees in the overseas universities. Some strategies in participating actively in the community of practice are discussed in this study based on the research findings. Thus, the EFL teachers can prepare themselves effectively prior to coming to English speaking countries to pursue the study.

### 1.4 Definition of the Key Terms

#### 1.4.1 Identity construction

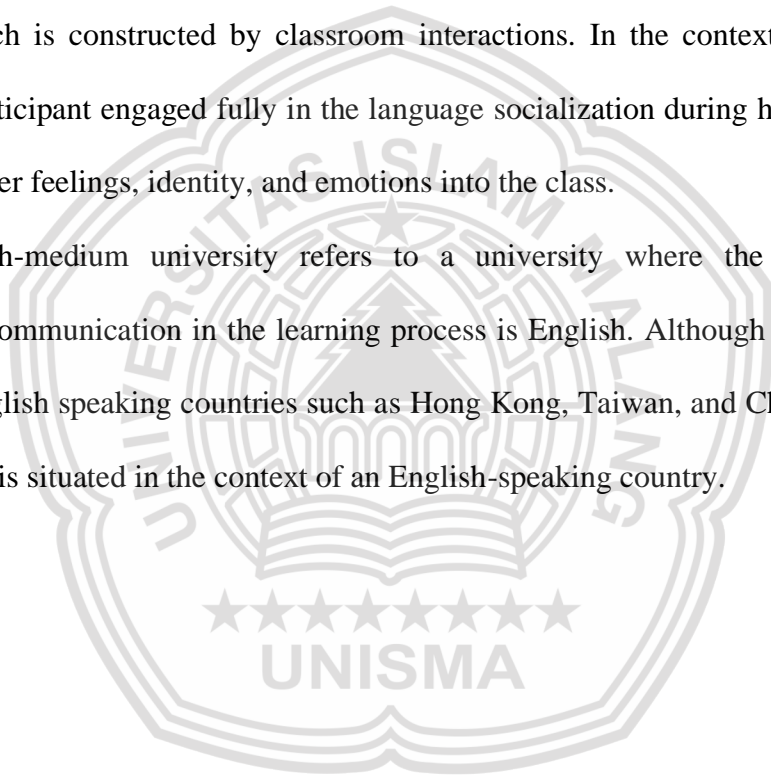
In this study, identity is personal relationships between learners and the surrounding which is ongoing, dynamic, negotiable, and multifaceted. Specifically, identity construction is a process of forming personal understanding of the self which is negotiated through ongoing, dynamic, negotiable, and multifaceted classroom interactions with other living and non-living beings. Four terms are defined here Classroom participation, Community of practice, L2 learning, and English-medium university.

Classroom participation in the context of this study is all forms of learners' oral and written activities that are enacted within the classroom interaction either with classmates or instructors.

Community of practice (CoP) is rather similar to classroom activities. However, in this study, it mainly deals with learners' learning environment that share the same purposes and aims the same targeted learning objectives. Specifically, it is a group of people that undergo the shared problems, passion, efforts, and struggle toward knowledge construction and understanding.

L2 learning is a process of understanding knowledge related to TESOL program which is constructed by classroom interactions. In the context of this study, the participant engaged fully in the language socialization during her study and brought her feelings, identity, and emotions into the class.

English-medium university refers to a university where the official language of communication in the learning process is English. Although this can be in non-English speaking countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, the present study is situated in the context of an English-speaking country.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides the conclusion and implications from the findings as well as future research recommendations.

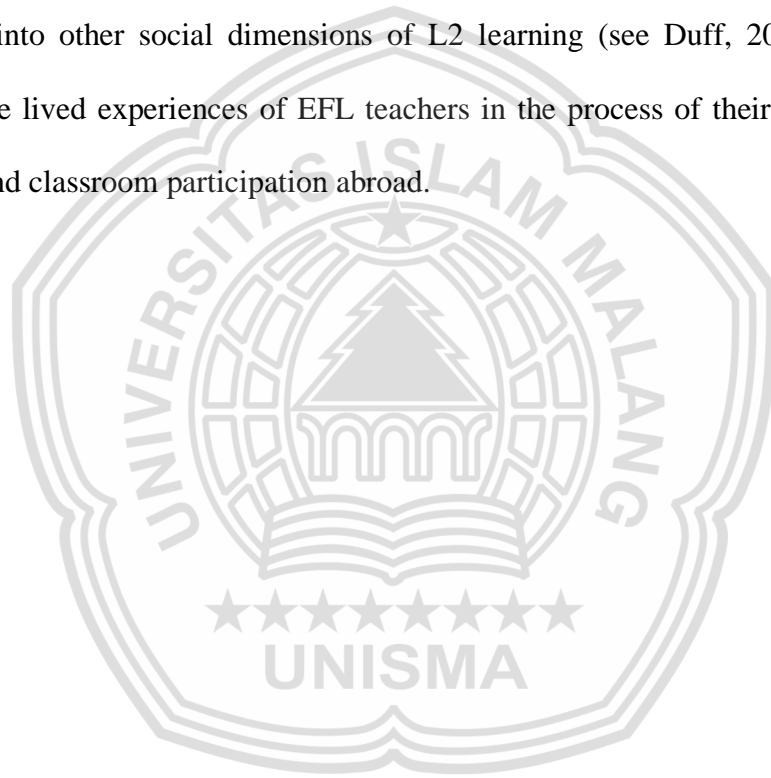
#### 6.1 Conclusion

The present study has sought to investigate how Andin, as an EFL graduate student in Australia, constructed her identity through classroom participation in an English-medium university in Australia. The findings portray a gradual and complex identity construction mediated by the participant's agentic classroom participation. The participant's early identity construction is portrayed prior to coming to Australia as an EFL teacher, student teacher, and scholarship recipient. Further, the participant's identity is negotiated through classroom activities during the first year of the study. Lastly, the participant's involvement in the classroom is negotiated through interactions with her senior colleagues. The study concludes that the participant's identity is constructed through classroom participation with multiple complexities and it evolves gradually following her movement from peripheral to full participation.

#### 6.2 Implications

The findings open a space for EFL teachers to consider the strategy-based second language learning before continuing their degrees abroad and other

possibilities exist in the overseas study as an informed pedagogy. Although the present study recruited single participant and hampered from generalization, the research design made use of three-dimensional frameworks of narrative inquiry that allows for the interwoven of temporality, interaction, and situation in each line of the story. Despite these, future research is encouraged to probe into identity construction and classroom participation using a case study approach to look further into other social dimensions of L2 learning (see Duff, 2019) and investigate the lived experiences of EFL teachers in the process of their identity negotiation and classroom participation abroad.





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