

**CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH SPOKEN ENGLISH: SELF-  
PERCEPTION OF INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS IN ORAL  
COMMUNICATION**

**THESIS**

**Submitted by**

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**FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN  
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH  
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**THESIS**

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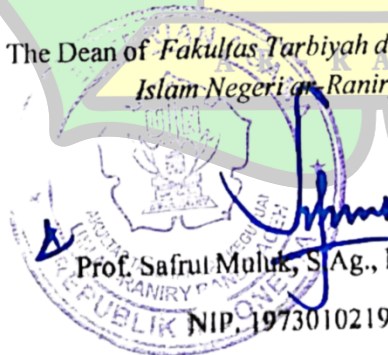
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**SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN**  
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**Constructing Identity Through Spoken English: Self-Perception of Indonesian EFL Learners in Oral Communication**

adalah benar-benar saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan didalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

Banda Aceh, 27 April 2026

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*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*

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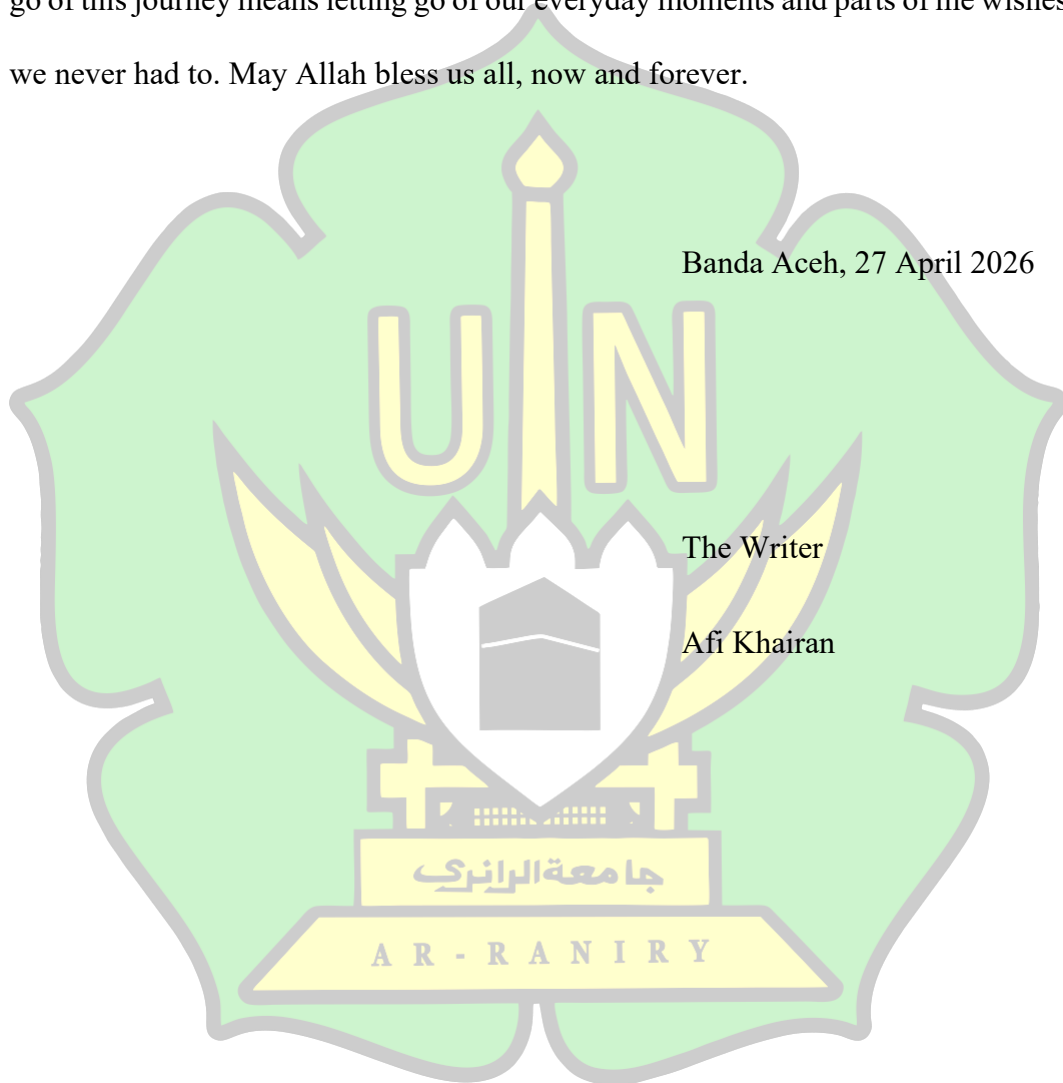
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## ABSTRACT

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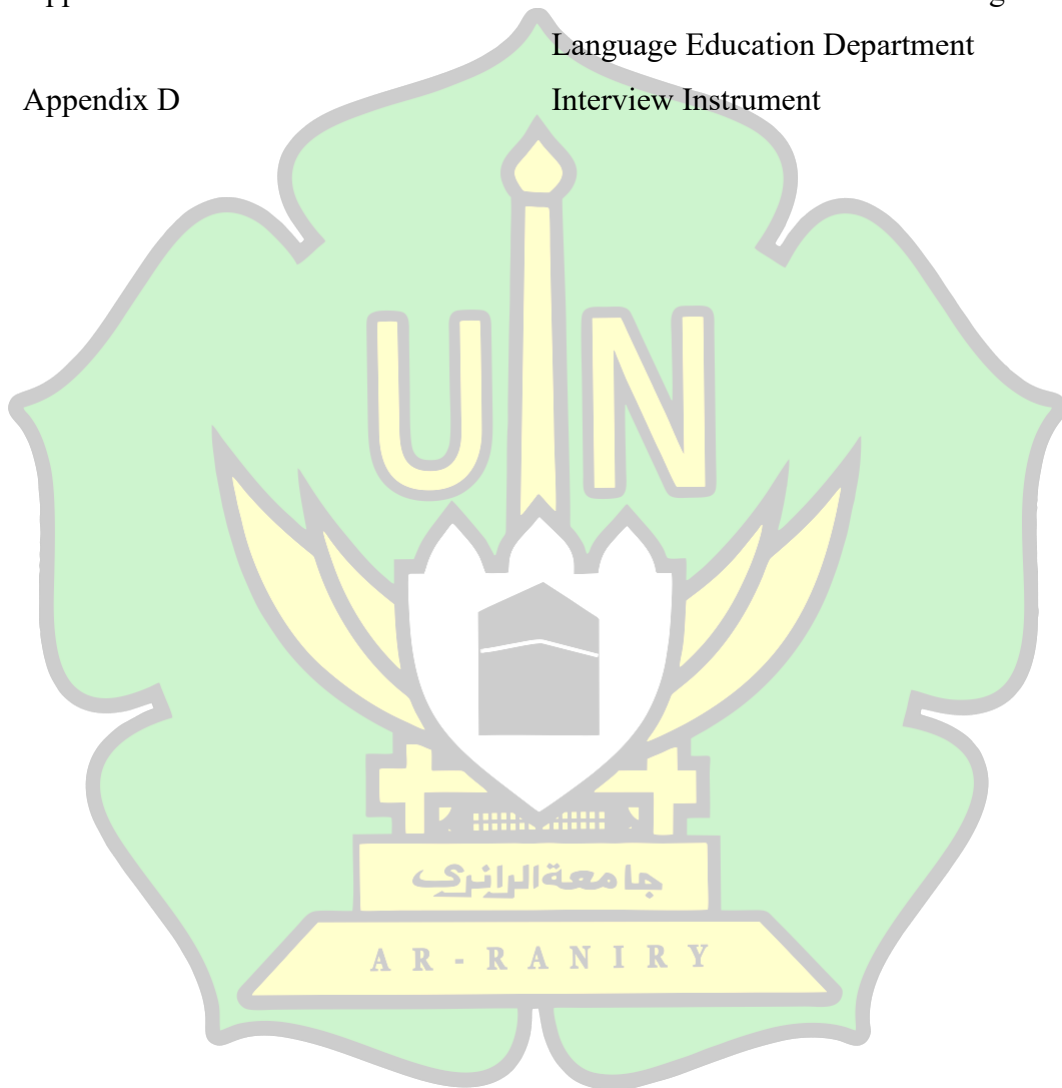
This study explores how university EFL students perceive their identity when speaking English during classroom interactions. The participants were six eighth-semester students from the English Language Education Study Program at *UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh*, all of whom had actively engaged in spoken English in formal classroom settings and had completed Advanced Language Skills Courses. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings reveal six major themes: the shifting self and identity fluidity across languages, language anxiety and self-perception, context-dependent identity, moments of agency and pride, speaking identities in classroom and social contexts, and identity alignment and tension. In this study, identity construction is understood as a fluid, dynamic, and socially negotiated process that occurs through spoken interaction, a perspective that differs from previous studies which largely focused on written communication or treated identity as static. Students perceive their identity as fluid, emotionally mediated, and highly dependent on classroom environment, peer composition, topic familiarity, and lecturer behaviour. Supportive environments foster confident identities, while judgmental settings trigger anxiety and silence. Positive experiences such as helping peers, receiving recognition, and spontaneous success reinforce identity as capable speakers. Outside the classroom, students feel more authentic and confident due to greater autonomy. Identity alignment with core self varies from consistency to tension to enhancement. These findings contribute to understanding the emotional and psychological dimensions of oral communication in EFL contexts, offering insights for more empathetic and effective teaching practices.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of Study

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly in Indonesia, spoken English serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a platform where learners negotiate and construct their sense of self. This concept is deeply intertwined with how language influences identity (Norton, 2000; Barkhuizen, 2016). For many EFL learners, the process of speaking English often brings about a shift in their self-perception. Depending on the context, students may feel more confident, or they may become more reserved, reflecting how language use is closely linked to one's sense of self (Norton, 2000).

Theories of language and identity have long suggested that language is more than an intellectual or linguistic effort, it is an investment identity. Norton (2000) argues that individuals access imagined roles and communities, shaping their self-perception and social identity. Furthermore, Lave and Wenger (1991), learners identities are shaped through their participation in language communities, which is central to the process of second language acquisitions. In addition, language learning is not only about mastering linguistic skills, it is a socially situated practice where learners construct their identities through interaction. Wunseh (2014), stated language learners construct their identities in relation to the social world around them, and these identities are constantly

in flux as they engage with the target language. In EFL contexts, learners often perceive their identities as fluid and multifaceted, particularly when speaking a foreign language like English. As learners engage with English, they may navigate between multiple identities. Sometimes adopting more confident or assertive personality, while other times retreating into self-doubt or reservation. These shifts are crucial to understanding how learners experience language learning beyond the technical aspects of fluency and accuracy.

Much of the research in Indonesia EFL focuses primarily on technical proficiency, such as fluency, accuracy, and vocabulary acquisition (Zarrinabadi, 2014). However, this overlooks the emotional and self-reflective dimensions of language use. Students' psychological and emotional experiences, particularly their sense of identity while speaking English, have received limited attention in the existing literature. By focusing on how learners perceive their identity through spoken English not merely as an academic performance but as a vital aspect of personal identity development, especially in a cultural complex setting.

Identity construction through spoken language in EFL contexts is influenced by various factors, including social-cultural norms, the classroom environment, and learners' personal experiences with English. Previous research indicates that socio-cultural structures and learner agency interact significantly in the identity constructions in EFL learners, with the classroom context playing a pivotal role (Devkota, 2025). Research by Peng (2023) shows the importance of recognizing language as social practice that shapes and

reshapes learners identities in dynamic and context-dependent ways. Furthermore, the classroom environment contributes to shaping student identities, particularly through interaction with their peers and teachers. In addition, Wunseh (2014) highlights that second language learning is deeply rooted in sociocultural contexts, where learners identities are constructed not only through language acquisition but also through social interactions and participation in communities of practice.

According to Block (2007), identity in language learning is inherently linked to the power dynamics and social relationships learners experience within the classroom and beyond. For EFL learners, the use of English often involves negotiating between their native identity and a new foreign identity. Lantolf (2000) further assert that learners identities are fluid and are continuously constructed through language use, suggesting that language learning is not only a linguistic process but also a socio cognitive one. This idea particularly relevant in EFL settings, where learners self-perception and social roles may shift idea is particularly relevant in EFL settings, where learners self-perception and social roles may shift dramatically as they acquire new language skills. Furthermore, Block (2007) emphasizes the importance of context in shaping language learners identities, arguing that learners navigate multiple identities that are often in conflict, and this negotiation becomes especially pronounced when using foreign language.

Previous studies have explored the link between language and identity, such as Salimi and Abedi (2022), who examined how Iranian learners identities

shifted in English language class, though their focus was primarily on written communication. Similarly, Husna and Nasrullah (2023) investigated how international students in Indonesia navigated their cultural and academic identities in English, focusing on acquisition. However, this research emphasized cultural and social identities over oral communication. Situmorang et al. (2021) studied identity reconstruction among international in an English as Lingua Franca program, but again, their study was more focused on reading and writing skills. Ubaidillah and Widiati (2021) and Abdusyukur (2022) further examined identity construction in English, but their studies centred on written language and cultural and academic contexts of learning English. These studies all highlighted the fluidity of identity in language learning but neglected the critical aspect of oral communication, especially in the Indonesian context.

Based on previous studies, much of literature focuses on the role of written communication in language learning and identity construction on EFL learners (Salimi and Abedi, 2022; Husna and Nasrullah, 2023; Situmorang et al., 2021), or examines EFL learners identity shifts in relation to cultural and academic focuses (Ubaidillah and Widiati, 2021; Abdusyukur, 2022). However, there is limited exploration of how EFL learners identities are constructed through spoken English in classroom settings, particularly in the Acehnese context. This study address this gap by examining the ways in which English Language Education students at a university in Aceh construct their identities during spoken English communication in formal classroom settings.

The results are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological aspects of oral communications, which can inform more effective and empathetic teaching strategies that foster confidence and engagement among learners.

### **B. Research Questions**

Based on the aforementioned research background, the researcher formulates the study as follows. How do university EFL students perceive their identity when speaking English during classroom interactions?

### **C. Research Aims**

Based on the background and research questions outlined, this study aims to explore how EFL learners perceive and construct their identity when speaking English during classroom interaction.

### **D. Significance of Study**

The significance of this study lies in contribution to the understanding of language learning, especially in EFL contexts. By focusing on identity, this study challenges the conventional view of language acquisition as solely technical skill and highlights its role in personal identity construction. Understanding how spoken English affect self-perception is critical for both learners and teachers, as it provides insight how language can be used to express and reshape one's identity.

### 1. For EFL Teachers

The findings of this study will be invaluable in promoting a more holistic and student centred approach to teaching. Teachers will gain a deeper understanding of how learners perceive their identities while speaking English, enabling them to create more supportive learning environment, as learners feel more comfortable expressing themselves in English, which in turn enhances their language learning experience.

### 2. For the University

This research is also valuable for policymakers and curriculum developers, as it underscores the need for educational approaches that recognize identity related factors influencing language learning. Incorporating these insights into language teaching methodologies could lead to more effective language education strategies, particularly in contexts where learners may feel marginalized or anxious about their language abilities.

### 3. For Future Research

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding identity and language learning. It will offer a new perspective on how learners negotiate their sense of self through spoken English, especially in EFL settings. Moreover, the study findings could serve as a foundation for future research on the identity related aspects of language use in both academic and social contexts.

## **E. Terminology**

### **1. Identity**

In this study, identity refers to the how EFL learners at a university in Aceh perceive themselves and their role in a given context, particularly when speaking English. Drawing work from Barkhuizen (2016), identity is understood as a dynamic and socially constructed process, shaped by the learners interactions, self-perception, and the cultural and social context of language learning. As noted by Norton (2000), learners identity can shift depending on their interactions with others and the context in which they use English.

### **2. Spoken English**

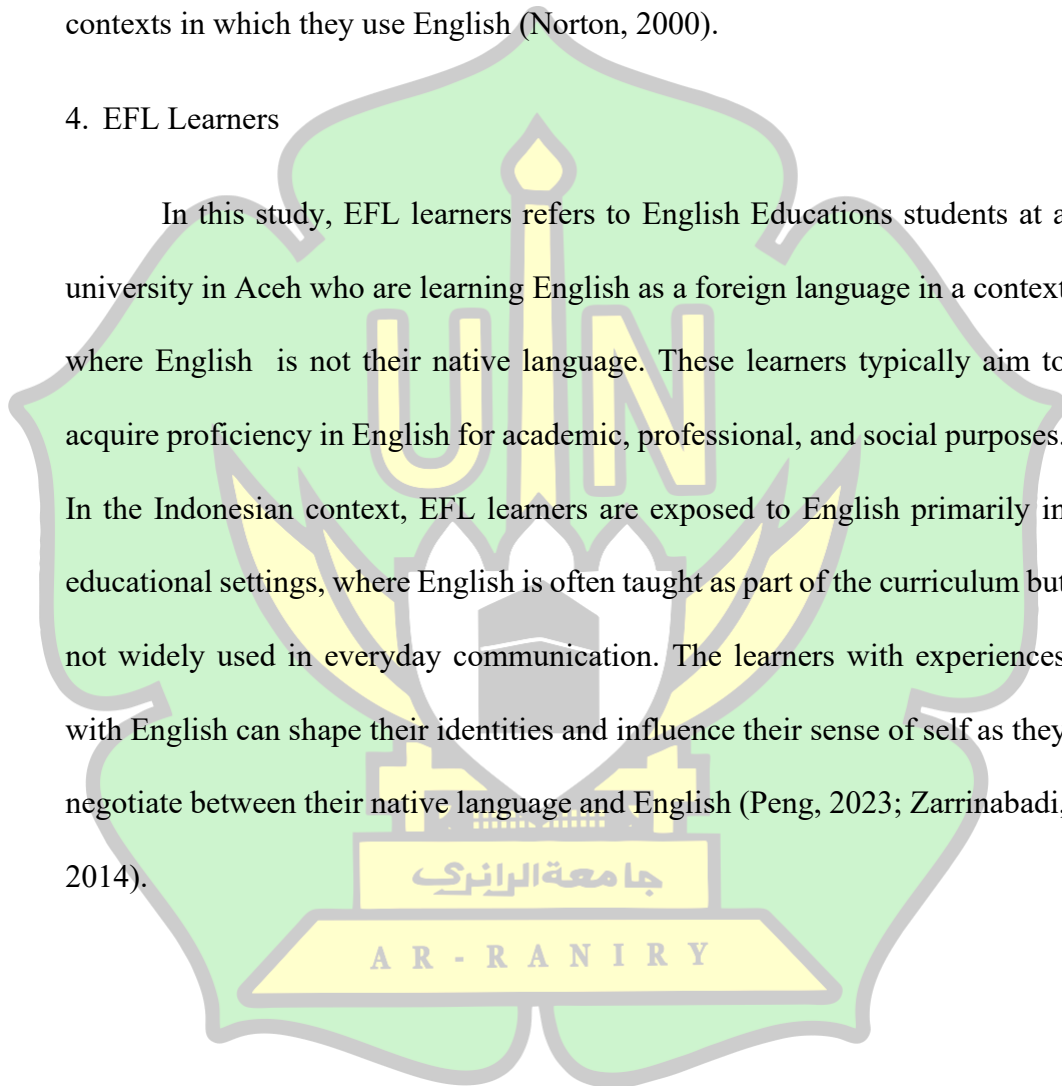
Spoken English refers to the use of English language in oral communication, encompassing both formal and informal speaking situations. In the context of EFL learners at a university in Aceh, spoken English takes place in formal settings within in the classroom, where learners engage interactions with their peers and lecturers. It is a critical component of language acquisition and proficiency, particularly in EFL contexts where learners often face challenges related to fluency, accuracy, and confidence (Richards and Renandya, 2002). The classroom environment provides an essential space for learners to practice spoken English and develop their communication skills (Nunan, 2003).

### 3. Self-Perception

Self-perception in this study refers to the way learners view their own identity, particularly in relation to speaking English. This concept is influenced by a range of factors, including their experiences, interactions, and the social contexts in which they use English (Norton, 2000).

### 4. EFL Learners

In this study, EFL learners refers to English Educations students at a university in Aceh who are learning English as a foreign language in a context where English is not their native language. These learners typically aim to acquire proficiency in English for academic, professional, and social purposes. In the Indonesian context, EFL learners are exposed to English primarily in educational settings, where English is often taught as part of the curriculum but not widely used in everyday communication. The learners with experiences with English can shape their identities and influence their sense of self as they negotiate between their native language and English (Peng, 2023; Zarrinabadi, 2014).



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. The Concept of Identity in Language Learning

##### 1. The Definition of Learner Identity

Identity is viewed as the way an individual understands their connection to the world, how this relationship develops across time and different context, and how they imagine future possibilities for themselves (Zakaria, 2023). Identity in the context of language learning refers to the way learners perceive themselves and their relationship with the world around them through the lens of language use. In language education, identity is not a static entity but rather a fluid, socially constructed concept that evolves as learners interact with the target language and the communities in which it is used (Norton, 2000). Identity plays a crucial role in second language acquisition (SLA), particularly in EFL contexts, where learners sense of self is constantly shaped by their engagement with English (Lave and Wanger, 1991; Gee, 2001).

##### 2. Theoretical Foundations of Identity in SLA

The notion of identity in language learning was notably expanded by Norton (2000), who introduced the concept of investment. Norton argued that language learning is not merely the acquisition of linguistic skills but is deeply intertwined with learners self-perception and social identity. Investment in language learning is motivated by the desire to gain access to social and cultural

capital, positioning the learner with broader social and political structures (Norton, 2000). Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice is also relevant here, as it frames identity as something that is continually negotiated through participation in social groups.

Language learners do not only learn to speak a new language, they engage in a complex process of self-perceptions. According to Rafi (2017), language learners identities are socially situated, constantly shifting and influenced by their participation in different social settings. Giddens (1991) emphasized that identity is a reflective project, where individuals understand their identity through interactions and experiences. For EFL learners, these shifts are most evident when they transition between their native identity and their L2 identity, with each shift revealing new dimensions of themselves. This dynamic interplay is particularly prominent in classroom settings, where silence can be a powerful indicator of learners identity negotiation. As noted in Rahmi (2024) study, students silence in the classroom is not simply an absence of speech, it serves as a space where learners actively construct and reflect upon their identities. Factor such as lack of confidence, cultural expectations, and intimidation by peers, can reinforce silence, shaping learners self-perceptions as less capable or passive participants. These emotional and social factors, influence how learners see themselves and their role in the language learning process, contributing to the fluidity and complexity of their language identity.

### **3. Personal Identity in Language Learning**

Personal identity refers to how an individual perceives their role in the world, particularly to their own socio-cultural context. It involves the intricate self-constructs that are developed from early childhood experiences, gender roles, socio-economics status, and ethnic background (Gecas, 1982). This concept is crucial in language learning because learners bring their lived experiences into the language classroom, where their personal identities interact with their emerging L2 identities. Shoemaker and Tobia (2022) discuss the psychological and moral aspects of personal identity, noting that psychological plays a central role in how individuals perceive themselves over time. This view suggests that identity is not just a biological or physical phenomenon but is deeply shaped by the continuity of mental states and social roles. For EFL learners, their moral self-concept, how they see themselves as social beings is often influenced by how they are perceived in the classroom and how they negotiated their roles. The dynamic between learners self-perception and external recognition in their social environment further complicates their journey of language acquisition, reinforcing the idea that identity formation in language learning is both psychological and social process.

### **4. Shifting and Negotiating Personal Identity**

As learners engage in language learning, they often experience a shift in how they perceive themselves, particularly when using a foreign language like English. According to Peng (2023), this process of identity construction is

dynamic and fluid, where learners adopt and adapt new roles depending on the language context. In the case of Indonesian EFL learners, English often becomes a tool for negotiating their identity in global contexts, with learners simultaneously adopting multiple identities as they move between personal, social, and academic settings. This negotiation process is also evident in Pavlenko and Blackledge (2002), who highlight how language learning is not just about mastering a set of skills, but also a process of self-fashioning where learners negotiate their identities through their interactions with others. They argue that in multilingual contexts, identity is inherently fluid and constructed through discursive practices within different communities of practice. As learners move between different settings, whether academic, social or personal, they constantly shift and reshape their identities in response to the linguistic and cultural expectations of those environment.

This process of identity negotiation allows learners to experiment with multiple self-concepts, adjusting their linguistic behaviours to align with the norms of the context or resisting them to preserve their original self-perceptions. These dynamics resonate with the work of Vandeyar (2010), who discusses how individuals, especially academics, navigate multiple identities within educational environment, and Hendrix et al. (2003), who underscore that identity is fluid, through continuous interaction with social contexts and cultural practices. These shifts are not just about adapting to new environment but also about empowerment, language learning becomes a site for self-identification, where learners assert agency over how they present themselves to the world.

## 5. The Role of Personal Identity in Language Anxiety

One significant factor in the language learning process is language anxiety, which is often exacerbated by the perceived mismatch between personal identity and L2 identity. Language learners who are uncomfortable with their second language often experience feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. This is particularly true for learners who struggle with pronunciation or fluency and feel judged for their linguistic abilities. Horwitz et al. (1986) found that language anxiety is often tied to a learner's sense of self-worth and their ability to perform linguistically in the classroom. Recent studies on foreign language anxiety also support the idea that learners' emotional reactions to language learning significantly affect their self-perception (Kravola, 2016; Shirvan and Talebzadeh, 2018). According to Kralova (2016), language anxiety often arises from a learner's perception that their self-concept is challenged when they cannot express themselves fully in the target language, leading to feelings of self-doubt and anxiety. Similarly, Shirvan and Talebzadeh (2018), emphasize that foreign language anxiety can manifest not only as a barrier to communication but also as a source of negative emotions such as fear and shame, which hinder learners' ability to engage effectively with the language. These emotional responses can often result in avoidance behaviours, further impacting learners' linguistic development.

Sarie (2020) illustrates, learners often feel that their non-native speaker identity is viewed negatively by others, especially in a context where native speakerism prevails. This phenomenon occurs when native speakers of English

are perceived as more authentic or legitimate speakers of the language, marginalizing those who do not fit the native speaker norm. This can cause anxiety and hinder learners' participation, as they may feel that their personal identity as non-native speakers is in conflict with the societal expectations of fluency and correctness.

Given these challenges, language anxiety can act as a barrier to the development of both personal and L2 identities. Rafi (2017) argue that learners' anxiety can limit their willingness to take risks in communication, which is crucial for language development. Therefore, addressing the emotional and identity-related challenges that learners face is essential for promoting effective language learning.

### **B. EFL Learner Identity**

EFL Identity, distinct from personal identity, refers to how learners perceive themselves as speakers of a second language. This identity is not static but evolves as learners gain proficiency in the language and participate in different social contexts. According Norton (2000), L2 identity is deeply connected to learners investment in the language, as they strive to gain access to social and cultural resources that will shape their self-concept. As Sa'd (2017) highlights, learners in EFL context like Iran often experience tension between the desire to integrate into the global English Speaking community and the need to maintain their local identity. Unlike ESL learners, who are immersed in English speaking communities, EFL learners often face the challenge of constructing their identities primarily in environments where

English is not the dominant language. This context requires EFL learners to balance their local cultural identity with their desire to access global opportunities through English (Zacharias, 2010).

### 1. The Dynamic of EFL Identity Formation

The process of EFL identity formation is dynamic and shaped by numerous factors, such as the socio-cultural context, language proficiency, and community involvement. In EFL settings, learners often face the challenge of negotiating their identity as they transition from peripheral members of the target language community to full members with access to the resources and privileges associated with the language (Lave and Wenger, 1991). EFL learners may experience conflicts between their native and the global identity they seek to build through English, experience conflicts between their native culture and the global identity they seek to build through English, especially when they are not directly immersed English speaking environment (Garcia-Pastor, 2018). As Norton (2000) argues, investment in learning the language is not just about linguistic proficiency, it also about access to power, social capital, and opportunities for self expression.

Zacharias (2010) supports this by discussing how EFL learners must negotiate multiple identities, balancing their local identity with the desire to integrate into a globalized world. This dual negotiation often requires learners to adapt their self-concept to reconcile their native identity with the demands of using English as a tool for global communication. In addition, Block (2007) argues, L2 identity is shaped by both internal factors, such as beliefs and

motivations, and external factors, such as cultural norms and societal expectations. Learners may face conflicting pressures from both their native culture and the target language community, as they must navigate multiple identities simultaneously. The development of a strong L2 identity often requires learners to redefine their self-concept and reconcile their personal values with the new social roles they adopt in the target language context (Norton, 2013).

## **2. Social Contexts and Identity Construction**

The social context in which EFL learners acquire English plays a critical role in shaping their identity. As Norton (2013) argues, language learning is an inherently social process that is influenced by the power dynamics and social relationships within the classroom or community. Language learners are not only shaped by the linguistic forms they acquire but also by the social roles they adopt and the relationships they form with others.

## **3. Communities of Practice and Social Interaction**

Communities of practice, as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991), are social groups where learners engage in shared activities and practices that facilitate the development of language skills and identities. In the context of language learning, the classroom functions as a community of practice where learners participate in language-related activities and interact with others. These interactions are crucial for the development of both linguistic proficiency and identity. As learners engage in authentic communication and gain social capital

through their participation, they gradually become legitimate members of the target language community.

Situmorang (2021) emphasizes that social contexts in EFL settings provide learners with the opportunity to construct their social identity as language users. Through interactions with peers and instructors, learners internalize the norms and values of the target language community, shaping their self-perception as English speakers. These social interactions also provide opportunities for learners to experiment with their identities, adopting new roles and self-concepts in response to the social expectations of the language community.

#### **4. Identity and Emotion**

Recent scholarship in applied linguistics has increasingly emphasized that identity construction in language learning is inseparable from emotional experience. Identity is not only shaped through cognitive engagement with language but is also emotionally lived, particularly in EFL contexts where learners must use English in settings marked by evaluation, limited exposure, and social comparison. Emotions such as anxiety, enjoyment, pride, and frustration emerge as central to how learners perceive themselves as legitimate or illegitimate English users, influencing their identity negotiation overtime (Norton, 2000; Hererra and Martinez-Alba, 2022).

For EFL learners, identity construction is often accompanied by heightened emotional vulnerability, especially during spoken communication.

In EFL contexts, English is primarily encountered in formal classroom settings, where speaking becomes a highly visible and evaluative act. These conditions intensify learners' emotional reactions, as oral performance exposes their linguistic competence to peer and teacher judgement. As Du et al., (2026) said such emotional responses reflect learners' self-perception as capable or inadequate speakers, making emotion a key experiential dimension of identity construction in EFL classrooms.

Emotions in language learning are not merely individual psychological reactions but are socially and contextually constructed through interaction. From a sociocultural perspective, emotions arise through learners' engagement with institutional norms, classroom practices, and broader power relations surrounding English use. AlHarbi and Ahmad (2020) argue that emotions are integral to identity formation because they signal moments of alignment or tension between individuals' self-perception and the expectations imposed by their environment. Although their work focuses on EFL teachers, this theoretical position is transferable to EFL learners, whose emotional experiences during classroom interaction similarly reflect identity negotiation processes shaped by social context.

An ecological perspective further highlights that learners' emotional experiences are influenced by multiple contextual layers. Santyarini (2024) demonstrates that identity and emotion are shaped through interactions across classroom (micro), institutional (meso), and societal (macro) levels. Applied to EFL learners, this perspective suggests that emotions experienced during spoken

English activities cannot be separated from factors such as participations norms, assessment practices, institutional expectations, and societal attitudes toward English. Learners anxiety, confidence, or enjoyment in speaking English therefore reflects not only individual linguistic ability but also their positioning within these interconnected contexts.

Recent integrative research further conceptualizes emotion as both a manifestation and a catalyst of identity constructions. Du et al., (2026) propose that emotional experiences indicate whether identity is being verified or challenged in a given context, prompting individuals to adjust their participation and self-perception. In EFL learning, moments of emotional discomfort may signal identify misalignment, leaning learners to withdraw from oral participation, while positive emotions may reinforce emerging identities as competent English speakers. This reciprocal relationship highlights that identity is continuously shaped through emotionally charged experiences of language use.

### **5. The Role of Technology in Social Contexts and Identity**

In recent years, the role of technology in language learning has expanded significantly, providing learners with new platforms to practice English and engage in social interactions. Digital spaces such as social media, language exchange apps, and online communities have transformed how learners construct their identities. These platforms allow learners to interact with speakers of various English varieties and participate in a global dialogue without the constraints of traditional classroom settings (Barkhuizen, 2016).

The digital landscape also promotes zero power inequality, where learners can negotiate their identity as language users without the pressure to conform to native speaker norms (Situmorang, 2021). Online communities create spaces for learners to express their identities freely, whether they choose to conform to or challenge the dominant linguistic norms. This dynamic shift from classroom-based learning to digital learning environments has significant implications for how learners construct their L2 identities and assert their agency in the language learning process.

### **C. Spoken English**

#### **1. The Role of Spoken English in EFL Learning**

Spoken English, as a crucial aspect of language acquisition, is integral to the development of communicative competence in EFL context. In contrast to written English, which allows for time and revision, spoken communication requires immediate response and interaction, posing unique challenges and opportunities for learners (Dörnyei, 2009). Furthermore, Amiruddin (2019), stated that to effectively communicate in spoken English, learners need a strong vocabulary, as having good idea is not enough if one lacks the words to express it clearly. In addition, speaking as a productive skill, involves mental processes and linguistic elements such as words, phrases, and sentences, which enable learners to engage in conversation (Zuhra, Muslem, and Aulia, 2025). Mastering spoken English requires considerable effort and practice, and many foreign students struggle to achieve fluency, as it takes time, persistence, and dedication to develop a good command of spoken English (Amiruddin, 2019)

Real time engagement provides learners with a platform to negotiate meaning, express emotions, and reflect their evolving identities (Hall and Verplaetse, 2000). The dynamic nature of spoken interaction makes it an essential space for learners to explore not only linguistic but also social and emotional aspects of language learning (Kormos and Csizer, 2008)

Moreover, the role of spoken English extends beyond grammar and pronunciation to the performance of identity. Nuridin (2018) state that speaker require more than just linguistic knowledge, they also need an understanding of sociocultural norms, presupposition, context. The act of speaking becomes a way for them to position themselves within the classroom, society, and global context, thus influencing their self-perception and identity construction (Goffman, 1959). This fluidity in identity construction during oral interactions is relevant in EFL, where learners engage with both their native language identity and target language identity in a process that is not linear but rather iterative and dynamic (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005).

While fluency and pronunciation are traditionally prioritize, comprehensive understanding of spoken English in EFL context is goes beyond just linguistic accuracy. In fact, spoken English is deeply embedded in cultural practices, with learners language choice often serving as reflection of negotiation between their own culture identities and the globalized norms of English. According to Kramsch, (2009), language is not only a tool for communication but also means by which individuals express and negotiate their identities. As such learners decisions about how they speak, whether in terms

of accent, vocabulary, or even communication style, are shaped by both their personal cultural backgrounds and the pressures to conform to globalized standards of English.

## 2. Spoken English as a Tool For Identity Construction

The link between language and identity is most evident in the realm of spoken communication. As learners participate in spoken interactions, they are not only using English to convey information but also engaging in identity performance. This process of constructing and performing identity through oral communication is influenced by both external social pressures and internal motivations (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Spoken English serves as a medium where learners actively negotiate their place within different social and cultural contexts, often oscillating between their first language (L1) identity and the emergent second language (L2) identity (Pavlenko and Backledge, 2004).

For instance, in EFL contexts, learners may use English to signify their access to global opportunities, academic success, or social mobility. As a result, learners may modify their speech patterns, adopt specific accents, or emphasize fluency in order to align with the expectations of the language (Holliday, 2005).

The performance of identity through oral communication can also manifest as a source of empowerment or disempowerment. Learners may feel a sense of pride and agency when their spoken English is well received in academic or social settings. Conversely, negative experiences, such as being corrected by teachers or peers or encountering prejudice for their accent, can

have a detrimental impact on their self-image and motivation (Cohen and Macaro, 2007). Thus, the act of speaking in English is closely tied to the psychological and emotional dimensions of language learning, where learners sense of self is constructed, contested, and renegotiated (Rampton, 1995).

Moreover, spoken English plays a crucial role in identity construction for EFL learners. It is not merely a tool for communication but a means of performing identity in various social and cultural contexts. As learners participate in spoken interactions, they are influenced by both external pressures to conform to global English norms and their internal motivations to maintain their personal cultural identity (Anjanillah, Wahyudi, and Syafiyah, 2021). The performance of spoken English can serve as both a source of empowerment and disempowerment, on one hand learners may feel pride and agency when their English is well received, particularly in academic or professional settings, where fluency and pronunciation are highly valued. On the other hand, experiences of prejudice or correction regarding their accents or linguistic choices may harm their self-image, hindering their motivation to participate and furthering feelings of anxiety. This emotional aspect of language use is tied to the psychological and social dimensions of identity formation.

English learners identities are fluid and constructed through ongoing negotiations between their L1 and L2 identities (Anjanillah, Wahyudi, and Syafiyah, 2021). For many learners, English becomes a way to access to global opportunities, such as academic success or social mobility. In these context, learners may modify their speech align with the globalized norms of English,

often adjusting their accent or emphasizing fluency to project a more universal identity. However, this can lead to tension, as learners simultaneously maintain their connection to their local identities and the cultural practices associated with their first language. According to Rostandi and Rohandy (2024), this dual negotiation between personal identity and external expectations is seen in how learners position themselves within discursive spaces, where they navigate global mobility and local affiliation through their language. Thus, the performance of spoken English is closely tied to both self-expression and social adaption, where learners must balance the pressures of globalization with the desire to preserve their cultural identity.

### **3. Language Anxiety on Oral Communication**

Language anxiety is particularly pronounced when learners engage in spoken English. The fear of making mistakes, being misunderstood, or being judged by peers can significantly inhibit learners ability to speak free and confident (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). In addition, “psychological factors, such as a lack of self-confidence and anxiety, negatively impact students speaking abilities” (Robah and Anggrisia 2023, p. 56). In the classroom context, speaking is often seen as highly visible act, where errors in pronunciation, grammar, or fluency are immediately apparent, making learners particularly vulnerable to negative evaluations. This anxiety is often compounded by societal native speakerism, where learners are pressured to emulate native speaker norms, leading to feelings of inadequacy when they fall short (Young, 1999.)

Research by Horwitz et al. (1986) identifies a connection between language anxiety and learners self-perception, noting that learners often experience a disconnect between their native language self-identity and their emerging identity as English speakers. This identity dissonance can lead to a cycle of avoidance, where learners may choose to avoid oral communication altogether to reduce the anxiety they associate with speaking English (Aida, 1994). This avoidance can hinder language development, as opportunities for practice and interaction are lost, perpetuating the learners feelings of incompetence (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994).

However, not all learners experience anxiety in the same way. According to Gregersen and Horwitz (2002), some learners may exhibit positive anxiety, viewing the challenge of speaking as a motivational force rather than an obstacle. For these learners, anxiety can serve as an emotional catalyst, driving them to improve their speaking skills and pushing them to take risks in communication.

#### **4. Fluency and Accuracy in Oral Communication**

The balance between fluency and accuracy in oral communication is a topic of ongoing debate in language teaching. While fluency emphasizes smooth, spontaneous speech, accuracy focus on correct grammar and pronunciation (Aziez et al., 2024). In EFL contexts, fluency is often prioritized to encourage learners to speak without the fear of making mistakes which has been shown to enhance their overall confidence and oral proficiency (Skehan, 1996). A focus on fluency, as suggested by Harmer (2007), can help learners

develop the ability to communicate ideas and engage in real time interaction, fostering a greater sense of agency in spoken English.

However, the accuracy-fluency debate must be approached with care, as excessive focus on fluency can lead to the development of incorrect speech patterns that hinder effective communication. Skehan (1996) argues that most effective teaching approach combines fluency and accuracy, encouraging learners to focus on communicating meaning while also refining their language use for clarity and precision. Therefore, teachers should provide a balance of activities that promote both fluency and accuracy, ensuring that learners are well equipped to engage in spoken communication at all levels.

Recent studies have expanded on this idea by emphasizing that the role of communication strategies is vital in promoting both fluency and accuracy. For example, Jamshidnejad (2011) highlights that communication strategies such as clarification requests and self-repair allow learners to adjust their output in real time and enhance their linguistic accuracy during oral interactions. These strategies give learners the space to engage in collaborative problem solving and language negotiation, which also aids in refining their grammatical and syntactical structures as they communicate. Similarly, Karimy and Pishkar (2017) argue that task based learning approach, where learners frequently engage in speaking tasks with targeted fluency and accuracy goals, facilitates significant improvement in both aspects. Continuously they argue that task repetition plays a pivotal role in this improvement, as it allows learners to

rehearse and refine their language output successive iterations, thereby enhancing both fluency and accuracy.

#### **D. Previous Studies**

In Indonesia, research on identity construction in the EFL context has gained traction due to the country's unique cultural and linguistic diversity. According to Ubaidillah and Widiati (2021), the identity of EFL learners is shaped by the tension between their native cultural identity and their emerging English-language identity. They explore the experiences of Indonesian students studying in Western contexts, highlighting the role of classroom participation in shaping their evolving identities. The study emphasizes the fluid nature of identity, which evolves as learners become more integrated into the English-speaking community.

Similarly, Abdusyukur (2022) conducted a narrative case study of two Indonesian postgraduate students, examining how their English learning journey shaped their learner identities. This study underscores the multi layered and ongoing negotiation of identities, as learners shift from initially seeing English as an imposed school subject to developing positive but complex relationships with the language. However, these identities are often challenged by learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences of false positivity, leading to further investments in their language learning process.

Further research has explored the relationship between language and identity from a postmodern perspective. Piasecka (2019) discusses how foreign

language students perceive the role of English in their identity construction. Her study highlights that foreign language learning is not just about acquiring language skills but is also intrinsically linked to learners' social and personal development. In her study of EFL students, she finds that English language acquisition allows learners to envision new possibilities for themselves, leading to greater openness and tolerance toward other cultures.

Similarly, Lie (2017) examines the implications of English language learning in a multicultural context. Her study discusses how Indonesian learners, particularly young people, are increasingly transforming their cultural identities due to the growing dominance of English in their social lives. She emphasizes that while English serves as a tool for global communication, it also carries prestige and power, influencing learners' self-perception and their role in the global community.

The investment theory, as proposed by Norton (2000), has been foundational in understanding the connection between identity and language learning. Research by Sung (2017) highlights that learners' investment in language learning is tied to their desire to gain access to cultural capital and social networks, which are essential for identity formation. This process is deeply social, as learners navigate both their personal identity and their position in the larger linguistic community. This theory has been widely used to explain how learners engage with English as they seek opportunities for both social mobility and cultural integration.

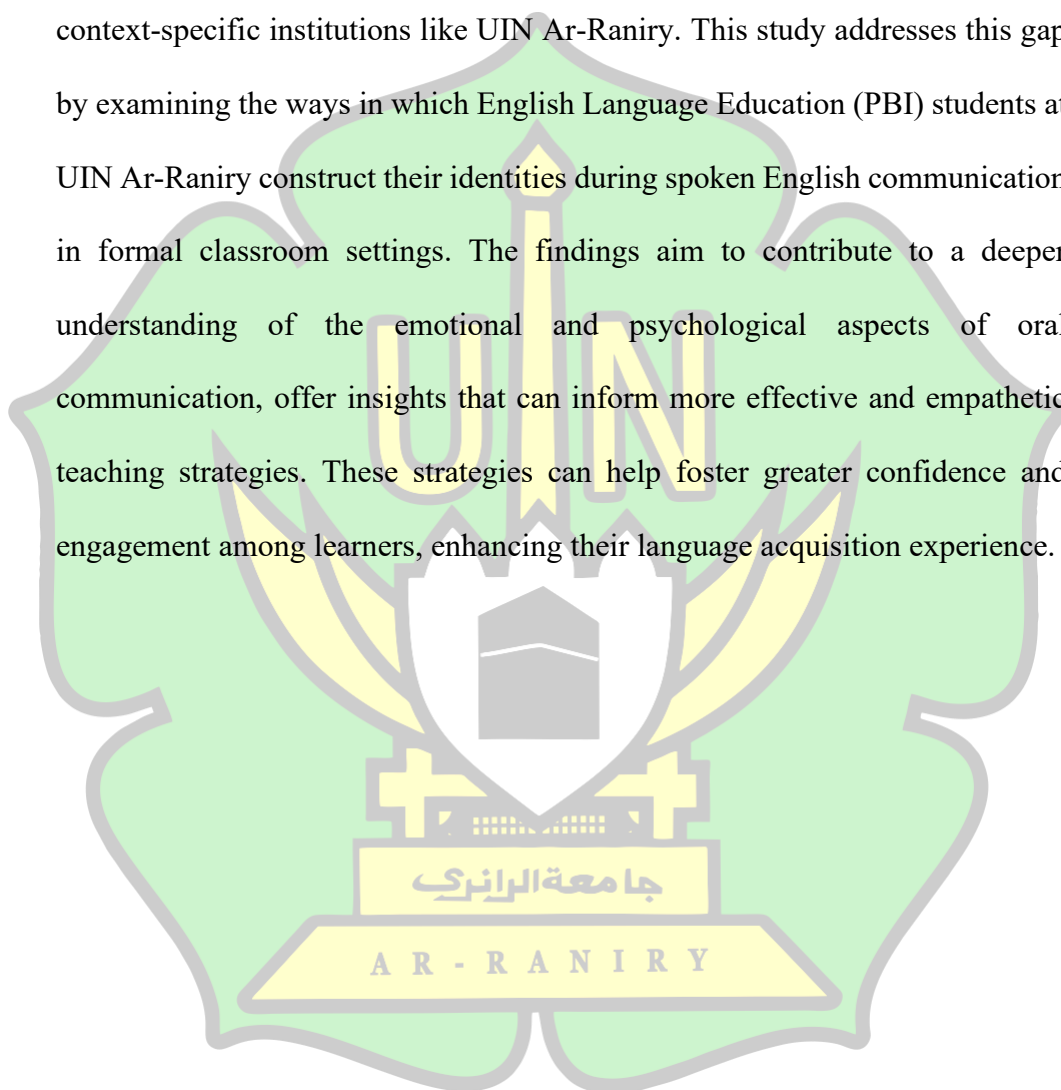
In line with Norton's framework, Tian and Dumlao (2020) investigated the impact of power dynamics and resistance in EFL classrooms, showing that learners' identity positioning within the classroom can directly influence their participation and engagement in language learning activities. Their findings suggest that learners often encounter a complex interplay of resistance and accommodation, as they negotiate their position between their native culture and the global culture represented by English.

Another significant aspect of identity construction involves learners' perceptions of English as a tool for cultural assimilation and globalization. Research by Wirza (2018) examines the evolving identities of Indonesian EFL learners and their engagement with English, noting that students' relationship with English is often shaped by social, cultural, and political forces. This aligns with the study by Lie (2017), which explores how young learners in Indonesia are transforming their identities as they engage more with English, particularly through globalized media and technology. These forces lead learners to redefine their personal identities as global citizens, even as they struggle with the tension between their local cultural identities and the global identities that English helps them construct.

In a similar vein, Piasecka (2019) explores how foreign language learning, especially English, shapes learners' self-concept and their position within broader society. She finds that English proficiency is often perceived as a form of cultural capital, granting learners access to prestige and social status.

However, this process is not without challenges, as learners must also navigate societal power relations that define who has the right to speak English and how.

However, there is limited exploration of how EFL learners identities are constructed through spoken English in classroom settings, particularly within context-specific institutions like UIN Ar-Raniry. This study addresses this gap by examining the ways in which English Language Education (PBI) students at UIN Ar-Raniry construct their identities during spoken English communication in formal classroom settings. The findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological aspects of oral communication, offer insights that can inform more effective and empathetic teaching strategies. These strategies can help foster greater confidence and engagement among learners, enhancing their language acquisition experience.



## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHOD

#### A. Research Design

For this study, a qualitative research approach was employed. Creswell (2007), explained that qualitative research is particularly effective when the goal is to gain in-depth understanding how individuals or groups interpret and make sense of their social or human experiences. This approach was ideal to exploring the complex and multifaceted nature of identity construction, as it allowed the researcher to gain insight into the subjective experiences of participants, how they perceived their identities in relation to spoken English in the classroom.

This approach was particularly valuable for studying the dynamic process of identity construction in language learning, where learners constantly negotiated and redefine their identities through social and academic interactions. As Creswell (2017) further argues, qualitative research emphasized the complexity and richness of human experience, capturing the depth of participants perspectives in a way that other research methods might overlook. By using this approach, this study contributed to a deeper understanding of the role spoken English plays in shaping the identities of EFL learners in a formal academic settings.

The specific method used in this study was descriptive qualitative research, which was designed to provide a systematic and detailed description of real world phenomena. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted, this method involves gathering detailed, contextual data that reflects the realities of the participants experiences. In this study, the descriptive qualitative method was used to explore how EFL learners at a university in Aceh perceived and constructed their identities through spoken English communication in formal classroom settings. By focusing on personal experiences and interpretations, this study sought to elucidate the emotional, social, and psychological factors that influenced their sense of self during these interactions.

### **B. Research Location**

This research was conducted at the English Language Education Study Program (PBI), UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, which provided a rich academic environment where students regularly engaged in spoken English during classroom interactions. This settings allowed the researcher to observe how learners construct and negotiated their identities through real communication practices.

### **C. Participant**

The population of this study consisted all active students from batch 2022 of the English Language Education Study Program (PBI) at UIN Ar-Raniry. The focus of this research was on students who were actively engaged in learning English in a formal academic environment. The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique described by

Sugiyono (2016) as “a sampling method based on specific criteria or considerations.” The final sample will consist of 6 students from this population.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011), stated that qualitative research focused on depth rather than breadth, and often involved smaller sample sizes in order to gather rich, detailed data reflected participants experiences and perspectives. This sample size was deemed appropriate for qualitative research, as it allowed for thorough explorations of participants lived experiences and their complex process of identity construction during spoken English communication in the classroom.

The decision to select these students was based on specific criteria: (1) they had to be active students from the 2023 batch of the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry, (2) they had to have engaged in spoken English communication within formal classroom settings, (3) Students who have already passed Advanced Language Skills Courses, and (4) they had to be willing to participate in 30-45 minute interview. These students were expected to offer valuable insights into the emotional, social, and psychological dimensions of using spoken English in a formal educational setting, which contributed deeper understanding of how language learning influences identity construction in a classroom interactions. The sample size of 6 participants was considered adequate, as long as data saturation is achieved, meaning that no new significant information was generated from additional participants (Creswell, 2017).

#### **D. Data Collection**

The primary method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews. According to Kvale (2015), semi-structured interviews involved a set of predetermined questions designed to guide the conversation, while also allowing for flexibility to probe deeper based on the responses of participants. This approach was particularly beneficial as it combined the consistency of structured questions with the openness of unstructured conversations, enabling the researcher to explore participants' experiences in depth while maintaining a focus on the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the gathering of rich, nuanced data and provided an opportunity to explore the participants' thoughts, feelings, and reflections in greater detail.

The interviews were conducted in an offline setting and audio-recorded as the method for data collection, which was an effective way to capture the participants' responses while allowing them to feel more comfortable and speak freely. The use of audio-recording ensures that the conversations were recorded accurately and could be transcribed later for detailed analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes, providing enough time to cover the key topics related to the participants' experiences with spoken English and their identity formation. This duration was sufficient to gather the necessary data while avoiding participants' fatigue.

To ensure the credibility and robustness of the findings, data triangulation was employed. Triangulation, as described by Denzin and Lincoln

(2011), involves the use of multiple data sources to cross-verify the data and ensure consistency in the findings. In this study, triangulation was achieved by combining:

#### 1. Semi-structured Interviews

The primary method of data collection, allowing for in depth exploration of individual perceptions and experience.

#### 2. Member Checking

After initial interviews, summaries of the transcriptions were shared with participants to ensure accuracy and allow them to provide additional insights or clarifications, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

#### 3. Follow Up Interviews

In cases where data from the initial interviews was unclear or needed further exploration, follow up interviews were conducted to clarify or deepen the understanding of the responses.

### **E. Data Analysis**

Once the interview data were transcribed, they were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used approach in qualitative research. Thematic analysis is particularly effective for identifying patterns and themes across extensive narrative data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Its flexibility makes it especially suitable for exploring students' perceptions, as it allows for the identification of both common themes and notable differences across individual experiences.

In this study, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) was employed to analyze the interview transcripts. The analysis followed six phases: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of the transcripts, (2) generation of initial codes for significant segments, (3) searching for candidate themes by grouping related codes, (4) reviewing and refining themes to ensure coherence and distinctiveness, (5) defining and naming themes to establish clear boundaries and scope, and (6) producing the analytic narrative, supported by relevant and illustrative quotations.

Several strategies were implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Member checking was conducted by sharing summaries of the interview transcripts with the participants to allow them to verify and clarify their statements. An audit trail was maintained to document and trace coding decisions, ensuring transparency in the analysis process. Furthermore, peer debriefing was carried out to further validate the findings.

Credibility of the analysis was further enhanced by cross-referencing the emerging themes with existing literature, situating the findings within the broader context of EFL learning. These strategies align with the recommendations of Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) for ensuring rigor and trustworthiness in thematic analysis.

## **BAB IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, the researcher presents the research findings of this study. The findings were obtained through semi-structured interview with six English Language Education students at UIN Ar-Raniry who shared their experiences and perceptions regarding identity construction through spoken English in classroom settings. The results address the research question stated in Chapter I, focusing on how do university EFL students perceive their identity when speaking English during classroom interactions.

#### **A. Research Findings**

##### **1. The shifting self and Identity Fluidity Across Language**

This section captures participants experiences of feelings like a “different person” when speaking English, characterized by shifts in confidence, thought processes, and self-expression. Participants described how switching to English activates a different version of themselves, one that feels more confident, more thoughtful, or even like someone else entirely. This sense of transformation emerged consistently across interviews, with each participant describing some form of identity shift when using English.

##### **a. Becoming a “Cooler” or More Confident Self**

Several participants described feeling more confident when speaking English, particularly in informal context. This sense of enhanced self-

presentation emerged strongly in their narratives. This transformation is clearly evidenced in MR's statement about speaking English with friends outside the classroom.

*MR: "When I speak English fluently, when I speak with one of my friends, I feel like the main character in anime or game. It looks cool because I'm so confident when I speak English with my friends, not in class, actually."*

In this statement, MR uses the metaphor of the "main character" to express how he perceives himself when speaking English with friends outside the classroom. By referring to a main character, MR conveys a sense of being confident, central, and in control of the situation, qualities he associates with his English-speaking self in informal settings. He explicitly contrasts this feeling with his classroom experience by adding "not in class, actually," indicating that this empowered identity is context-dependent and only emerges when he is free from academic pressure and evaluation.. FRA experiences similarly reflect this senses of enhanced self-presentation when speaking English.

*FRA: "Speaking English makes me feel cooler and more confident. It gives me a different vibe, especially when I can express my thoughts smoothly."*

FRA describes how English generates a "different vibe" that enhances his confidence, particularly when he experiences smooth expression. This

suggest that the act of speaking English itself produces positive emotional states that shape his self-expression. The term “different vibe” implies a qualitative shift in how he experiences himself, not just doing the same thing in a different language, but becoming a different kind of person. IF’s perspective adds another dimension, linking his confidence to the ability to utilize a skill developed over time.

*IF: “I feel pretty cool to be able to use the skill that I’ve been honing for my whole life, basically, and having a place that suits and gives the space to be able to use it.”*

IF expresses pride in being able to utilize a skill developed over time. His use of “cool” reflects satisfaction with his English competence and appreciation for having a context where that competence can be demonstrated.

#### b. Becoming More Thoughtful and Articulate

Beyond feeling “cool” or confident, some participants described a deeper cognitive transformation when speaking English. IF, in particular, emphasized that English enables him to become more thoughtful and articulate.

*IF: “I tend to think about things differently when I’m using another language. And sometimes when I speak English, I think of things from a different point of view that maybe I cannot see with my mother tongue language, and it really sometimes opens up new options when thinking, and it really does help me open more vision for certain conditions.”*

*IF: “In English, I tend to be a little bit more specific, a little more theoretical, and I tend to draw more inspiration when I think in English.”*

*IF: “It makes me somehow a lot more wise, a lot more thoughtful... just overall, a better mind. Like it’s a better way to think for me, at least.”*

The progression in IF statements reveals a deepening sense of how English transforms his cognitive experience. His claim that English provides a “better way to think” is particularly striking, suggesting that for some learners, the second language becomes a preferred cognitive framework.

### c. Imagining a New Cultural Identity

For some participants, the shifts when speaking English included imagining themselves as members of English-speaking cultures. AR expressed this transformation strongly, connecting English to a sense of becoming someone else entirely.

*AR: “I feel like I’m a different person... speaking English is like you being someone else, because I am inspired when I’m watching a presenter speaking English on television and then I realized, ‘What if I’m being there to speak English like him?’ and then I try to speak English like I’m being a person, and then in the classroom itself, I’m really, really confident to speak in English. And like being someone who is not me, like in other circumstances.”*

AR explicitly states that speaking English allows him to be someone else. His inspiration from television presenters reveals that this transformation is aspirational, he is not just becoming different but becoming someone he admires. This indicates that for him, English is not just a language but a medium for accessing an imagined identity. Furthermore, MA's comment illustrates this dimension of cultural imagination.

*MA: "When I speak English, I imagine myself as an American, because I try to imitate the American accent. So, yes, I do feel like a different person."*

MA describes actively imagining himself as American when speaking English, using accent imitation as a bridge to this imagined identity. This indicates that pronunciation choices can serve as identity performance, he is not just producing sounds but performing a particular cultural identity through those sounds.

## **2. Language Anxiety and Self-Perception**

This theme encompasses the nervousness, fear of judgment, and self-doubt participants experience when speaking English in classroom settings, and how these feelings shape their identity as language learners, and others described how anxiety fundamentally shapes their classroom experience and self-perception. This anxiety manifests in various ways, including fear of making mistakes, physical symptoms, sensitivity to peer judgment, and complex emotional responses combining both pride and shyness.

a. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Many participants described anxiety rooted in fear of making mistakes and being judged by others. MR's words provide a clear illustration.

*MR: "I'm just afraid of making mistakes with pronunciation, or lack of vocabulary, things like that."*

MR identifies specific linguistic concerns, pronunciation errors and vocabulary limitations, that trigger his fear. This indicates that awareness of linguistic gaps directly threatens his confidence. The specific listing of concerns reveals the depth of his self-monitoring. Furthermore, FRA expresses a more generalized fear of error.

*FRA: "I'm afraid that I will say something wrong, you know. So I feel nervous about that."*

FRA's generalized fear suggests that the possibility of making mistakes itself creates anxiety, regardless of whether mistakes actually occur. The phrase "you know" invites shared understanding, implying that this fear is common among learners. FRA further explains how the presence of highly competent peers intensifies his anxiety.

*FRA: "I feel nervous when the class has so many people, and many of them are really good at English. So I feel nervous, I'm afraid that I will say something wrong."*

The repetition of “I feel nervous” emphasizes the intensity of this emotion. His awareness of peers who are “really good at English” creates social comparison that shapes her emotional response. This indicates that anxiety is not purely individual but socially constructed through comparison with perceived more competent others.

For some participants, anxiety manifested physically, affecting their ability to speak smoothly. MR’s description illustrates this embodied dimension:

*MR: “When I speak English in the classroom, there are a lot of words that get stuck in my tongue. I’m just like, ‘ah, ah, ah’ (stutters).”*

MR describes a physical sensation of words becoming trapped, indicating that anxiety has embodied effects that directly impede speech production. The metaphor “stuck in my tongue” vividly captures how anxiety creates physical blockage.

MR’s stuttering illustrates how anxiety manifest in actual speech patterns, creating a cycle where physical symptoms reinforce self-perception as a struggling speaker. The stuttering becomes evidence to himself and others that he is not a fluent speaker.

#### b. Perceived Judgement From Peers

Participants frequently mentioned feeling observed and judged by their peers. MZA reflection reveals this awareness of scrutiny.

*MZA: “ I think other students, or friends, or colleagues, they will... observe me, you know? They will try to find mistakes, they will try to judge me.”*

MZA perceives peers as actively seeking errors in his speech. The progression from observe to find mistakes to judge reveals an escalating sense of threat. This awareness of being under scrutiny fundamentally shapes how he experiences classroom participation. MR’s recollection of a specific incident provides concrete evidence of peer judgement.

*MR: “My friend looked at me like (gestures showing a bad look).”*

MR’s memory of a specific negative look demonstrates how nonverbal feedback can reinforce feelings of inadequacy. Such moments shape future willingness to speak. FRA’s sensitivity in classes with senior students reveals how classroom hierarchy affects identity.

*FRA: “In a class that feels more elite, such as when they are many senior students... I sometimes feel that people pay more attention to how I speak. If I sound strange or make grammatical mistakes, I feel like I might be judged by them more critically.”*

FRA’s use of “elite” to describe classes with senior students reveals his perception of hierarchy. The presence of peers intensifies his awareness of potential judgement and shapes his self-perception as potentially inadequate. The phrase “might be judged” indicates that anticipated judgement, not just actual feedback, it shapes his experiences.

In other hand, MZA express a duality that many participants shared simultaneously pride and shyness.

*MZA: “Every time I speak English in the classroom, I will feel like a bit shy, but at the same time, I feel proud too.”*

MZA simultaneously experiences of shyness and pride reveals the complex emotional landscape of language learning, where positive and negative feeling coexist. The conjunction “but at the same time” suggest these emotions are not sequential but simultaneous, he is both shy and proud in the same moment. However, MZA also offered a distinctive, reframing peer judgement as form of care and learning opportunity.

*MZA: “When, let’s say, when I speak, and then somebody in the class said, ‘That’s not right, MZA’, or ‘That’s not how to pronounce it,’ I feel like they are watching me, they are listening to me, they are not just sitting there, they are focusing on me. So, I think that is okay for them to judge or to correct my English. It’s not a problem because, you know, we are students with each other, learning, trying to be better in English.”*

MZA interprets peer correction as evidence of being noticed and cared for, the progression from “watching me” to “listening to me” to “focusing on me” transforms potential threat into affirmation. MZA demonstrates that he actively construct his self-perception not as a passive recipient of judgement but as an active interpreter of social feedback. By viewing corrections as a sign

of recognition and value, he protects his identity from the threat of inadequacy and reinforces a sense of belonging and legitimacy as an English learner. This shows that MZA identity as a capable and resilient language learner shaped by both his linguistic competence and his ability to reinterpret potentially negative experience as opportunities for affirmation and social connection.

### 3. Context-Dependent Identity

This theme captures how participants identity and confidence fluctuate dramatically based on classroom environment, peer composition, and topic familiarity. Participants consistently emphasized that who they become as speakers depends fundamentally on where they are, who is present, and what they are discussing. Identity is not a stable possession carried from context to context but is dynamically produced within specific social configurations.

#### a. Supportive and Judgemental Environments

The classroom atmosphere emerged as a critical factor shaping participants' willingness to speak and their sense of identity as English users. Participants described how the same individual can feel completely confident in one setting and deeply anxious in another, depending on whether the environment feels supportive or judgmental. This fluctuation reveals that identity is not an internal possession but something that emerges from interaction between person and context. FRA's statement clearly illustrates how the classroom atmosphere shapes his confidence.

*FRA: "I tend to feel more confident when the classroom atmosphere is supportive... my close friends, they support how I speak, even if my English is not very good."*

FRA explicitly links supportive atmosphere, particularly the presence of close friends, to increased confidence. The qualification of his English is not very good is significant, it suggest that friends support compensates for perceived linguistic inadequacy. This indicates that emotional safety enables more positive identity expression regardless of actual proficiency. Furthermore, MA's comparison between his current and past experiences further illustrates the role of institutional culture.

*MA: "I think my friends perceive me positively. I remember back in high school, some of my friends would say I speak too much English, but in UIN Ar-Raniry, my friends are comfortable when I speak English. They don't try to correct my grammar, so I'm happy to speak English here. I don't feel judged when I speak."*

MA contrast his current university experience with past negative experiences, noting that absence of judgement creates happiness and comfort. This suggest that institutional and peer culture significantly shapes learners emotional experience and willingness to participate. The contrasting experience FRA describes in classes with highly competent peers reveals how the same individual can feel completely different depending on classroom composition.

*FRA: “I feel nervous when the class has so many people, and many of them are really good at English.”*

FRA’s sense of self shifts from confident to nervous depending on who is in the classroom. The presence of many people, especially peers who stand out, activates a different self-perception. This confirms that identity does not remain static, but rather emerges from specific social configurations.

#### b. Topic Familiarity as Confidence Driver

Beyond the social environment, participants identified topic familiarity as a critical factor influencing their confidence and willingness to speak. Knowing the subject matter provided a sense of competence that enabled participation, while unfamiliar topics triggered anxiety and withdrawal. This finding reveals that identity construction involves not only social positioning but also perceived intellectual competence. FRA identifies topic understanding as equally important as environment.

*FRA: “When I understand the topic well and the environment is positive for me, it really helps me speak more comfortably and more confidently.”*

FRA statement about topic well and environment positive reveals that confidence requires both external safety and internal sense of competence. Neither alone is sufficient, both must align for optimal participation. In addition, MA’s words further elaborate this connection between topic knowledge and willingness to speak.

*MA: "When I speak English in the classroom, I feel comfortable when I know the context. I feel like a person who's still learning English. If I understand the context the lecturer is trying to explain, I would love to try to speak or give my personal opinion about the topic."*

MA explicitly connects topic knowledge to willingness to speak. His identity as someone who try to speak emerges only when he feels competent in the subject matter. The phrase he still learning English it suggest that he maintains a learner identity even when confident. In other hand, AR describes the negative side of this relationship, how unfamiliar topics produce "stuckness" and anxiety.

*AR: "If I'm not really familiar with the topic, I feel like sometimes I get a bit stuck because I really don't know what to explain, and I just explain something that doesn't match the material. And that makes me feel nervous at the time, and that makes me feel less confident."*

AR describes that being unfamiliar with a topic produces "stuckness," which leads to an inappropriate explanation and creates nervousness, reducing confidence. This shows that knowledge of the topic directly affects performance and self-perception.

### c. Lecturer Influence on Confidence

The presence and behaviour of lecturers significantly shape how students perceive themselves as English speaker. Unlike peers, lecturers hold

authority and evaluative power, which can either threaten or support students identity formation. AR's remark reveals the ambivalence of lecturer correction.

*AR: "Some lecturers really correct my grammar when I speak... it points out my mistakes that I need to improve on."*

AR acknowledge that correction highlights his errors, which can make him feel exposed and inadequate as a speaker. His identity as a capable English user is momentarily challenged, even when the feedback is well-intentioned. Furthermore, FRA experiences heightened pressure with instructors compared to peers.

*FRA: "With instructors, the feeling is a bit different. I often feel more pressure when speaking English in front of them. I worry about whether I can answer this questions properly or whether my vocabulary and grammar are accurate."*

FRA's worry about accuracy reflects how the power differential with lecturers can construct an identity of vulnerability and self-doubt. He sees himself as someone who might be judged lacking, rather than as a legitimate communicator. MA identifies lecturer vocabulary choice as factor affecting his confidence.

*MA: Professor M... sometimes uses vocabulary that we don't really understand... that's when I feel unsure about answering his questions."*

When lecturers use language beyond students' comprehension, MA feels uncertain and less capable. His identity as a competent speaker is

undermined by the perceived gap between his own linguistic resources and those of the lecturer. Furthermore, FRA contrast his experience with lecturers who emphasize accuracy rather than who prioritize communication.

*FRA: “There are many lecturers who don’t really care about grammar or fluency. So when I know they don’t care too much about that, I don’t feel more nervous, and I can express my thoughts more freely.”*

In such environments, FRA feels safer and more authorized to speak. His identity shifts from anxious performer to confident communicator, demonstrating that lecturer attitudes toward error directly shape whether students perceive themselves as legitimate or inadequate English speakers.

#### **4. Moments of Agency and Pride**

This theme captures experiences where participants feel proud, capable, and agentic in their English-speaking identity, moments that reinforce positive self-perception. Despite the anxiety and context-dependence documented in previous themes, all participants described specific moments where they felt empowered through English. These moments like helping others, receiving cognition, succeeding spontaneously, provide counter narratives to self doubt and serve as resources for positive identity construction.

##### **a. Helping Others as Empowerment**

One powerful source of empowerment came from using English to help others. When participants found themselves in positions where they could assist peers who were struggling, they experienced a sense of competence and

value that reinforced their identity as capable English speakers. This form of empowerment is particularly significant because it comes not from external validation but from the experience of being useful to others. MZA description of helping freshmen illustrates how using English to assist others reinforces identity.

*MZA: “When I speak in the classroom, I feel like, oh, they can't answer the question. Maybe they can't, they don't know the vocabulary or they don't know how to construct the sentences. So when I take the place, I answer the question... I think I help them to, you know, understand how to answer, how to construct sentences.”*

MZA describes using English to help freshmen who struggle to answer questions, his observations of their difficulty positions him as knowledge in comparison. When he said taking the place it suggest stepping into a role of authority, reinforcing his identity as a capable English speaker. Furthermore, MZA next statement explicitly links his pride to helping others

*MZA: “I feel proud because I helped them in a way that maybe it's not a direct way, but I think that's it, why I'm proud.”*

MZA suggest that his help is subtle, perhaps modelling rather than explicit teaching. This indicates that identity affirmation comes not just from personal achievement but from contributing to others learning.

## b. Recognition and Positive Feedback

External validation from peers and lecturers strengthened participants sense of competence, while anxiety often stemmed from fear of negative evaluation, positive evaluation, when it occurred, it had powerful effects on identity. Being seen, heard, and appreciated by others provided evidence that contradicted self-doubt and reinforced positive self perception. AR statement of receiving applause illustrates this.

*AR: “When I present something, my friends said, 'Your explanation is really well.' And then I had an applause from my friends. It really boosts my confidence and makes me really proud of myself.”*

AR describes how peer applause directly boosts his confidence and pride. The sequence compliment, applause, confident boost, pride it reveals how social recognition leads into positive self-perception. The phrase being proud of himself emphasizes that this pride is internalized, not just momentary pleasure and the recognition becomes part of how he sees himself. In addition MA’s experience of being heard without interruption illustrates how even basic respect can affirm student identity.

*MA: “The lecturer didn’t judge me until I finished my sentence, and all my friends listen to me... After finishing my sentence, the lecturer gave me positive feedback.”*

MA’s emphasizes on being allowed to finish without judgement reveals how basic respect signals validation, being heard fully without interruption or

premature evaluation, communicates that his voices matters. The positive feedback afterward reinforces this affirmation, but the experience of being listened to already contributes to positive identity.

### c. Spontaneous Competence

Unexpected moments of successful spontaneous speaking created powerful feelings of pride and self-affirmation. When participants succeeded in unplanned speaking situations, answering questions without preparation, presenting unfamiliar material, or responding in the moment, they received evidence of their competence that contradicted any self-doubt they might harbour. These moments become turning points in identity construction, MR who generally experiences significant anxiety, describes such a moment of successful spontaneous.

*MR: "There was one time during a practical class when the lecturer gave a question to all students. I answered one question, maybe there was a little bit of bad pronunciation, but yeah, I thought it was good."*

MR statement reveals that his anxiety persist even in this moment of success because the self monitoring continues. However, his conclusion represent a counter narrative to his usual self-perception, this indicates even learners with anxiety can experiencing empowering moments that challenge their usual self-perception and provide alternative evidence about their capabilities. Furthermore, AR description of unplanned successful presentation offers a vivid example of spontaneous competence.

*AR: "There's one time when my lecturer asked me to present in front of the class, and then when I presented in front of the class, I really didn't know the material because she asked me instantly... But the material that she gave me, I knew the story of it because I already read it in the news or maybe in some articles. So when I explained it, it felt like water—literally clear when I explained it. And I feel like I'm really proud."*

AR metaphor "like water" captures an uncharacteristic moment of effortless fluency. This spontaneous competence directly contradicts his usual self-perception as hesitant speaker, temporarily constructing an identity as capable and natural. The pride he feels reflects a momentary identity shift from anxious learner to fluent user, suggesting that unexpected success can serve as a powerful resource for reshaping long term self-perception. In addition, IF describes successfully presenting unfamiliar material with minimal preparation.

*IF: "For example, we have this class, and we have to present a PowerPoint every single week... I never really read or watched the PowerPoint that was made by my friends, my group members. And when the time comes for us to present the PowerPoint, I just read it for like a couple of seconds, a minute, and then I'm like, 'Okay, I can do this.' And then I start explaining things, and the lecturer, surprisingly, seems pretty impressed, and I feel proud of that."*

IF ability to perform well spontaneously reinforced his identity as a capable, adaptable speaker. The lecturer surprise mirror his own, he may not have expected to succeed, making the success more affirming.

### 5. Speaking Identities in Classroom and Social Contexts

This theme captures the sharp contrast participants describe between their English speaking identities inside formal classroom settings and outside informal/ social contexts. All six participants described some version of this duality, suggesting it is a fundamental aspect of EFL learner experience. The classroom self is described as careful, anxious, and restricted, while the outside self is free, confident, and authentic.

#### a. Authenticity and Constraint in English-Speaking Identity

Participants consistently reported feeling more free and authentic when speaking English outside the classroom. This freedom manifested as confidence, fluency, and the ability to be oneself, qualities that seemed inhibited in classroom settings. The contrast reveals how institutional contexts can constrain rather than enable positive identity expression. MR distinction between speaking from desire than obligation captures this contrast.

*MR: "Outside the classroom, in informal settings, when you want to speak English, you speak because you enjoy it."*

MR distinguishes between speaking from desire which is outside classroom than obligation inside classroom, his statement reveals that outside speaking is intrinsically motivated, while inside speaking may be extrinsically

motivated. This distinction between “want to” and “have to” is fundamental to understanding why identity expression differs so dramatically across contexts. Furthermore, FRA explicitly notes the lack of concern for grammar outside classroom.

*FRA: “Outside the classroom, I don't have to worry too much about my grammar or anything else.”*

FRA statement about too much acknowledges that some worry may persist, but the contrast with classroom contexts is clear. This suggest that classroom context heighten attention to accuracy in ways that can inhibit free expression. The freedom from grammatical self-monitoring outside class enables a different kind of speaking, more spontaneous, more focus on meaning than form.

#### b. Casual and Academic Language Use

The type of language participants used differed dramatically between contexts. Outside the classroom, they felt authorized to use informal language, slang, and abbreviations that would be inappropriate in academic settings. This linguistic contrast reflects different identity possibilities, different ways of being an English speaker that are enabled or constrained by context. MZA statement below illustrates this linguistic contrast.

*MZA: “I tend to like abbreviate some words, like ‘IMO’... in chatting terms, you know? I like to abbreviate, like my opinion, ‘IMO,’ like*

*'ASAP' (as soon as possible), something like that. So, it's not something that you can use in a formal or academic situation, right?'*

MZA describes using abbreviations and informal language outside class from his chatting habits. Although these examples come from written communication, they reflect a broader informal register that also characterizes his casual spoken English outside the classroom. Such abbreviations and shortened expressions are commonly used in everyday conversation among young speakers. This indicates that different contexts demand different speaking identities: a formal, monitored identity in the classroom and a casual, free-flowing identity outside it.

*FRA: "Outside the classroom, I can use more categories of words, whether it's slang or... I can express myself more freely without worrying too much about grammar or anything else."*

FRA suggest that classroom contexts restrict the linguistic resources learners feel authorized to use. Slang, in particular represents a register that feels prohibited in academic settings. This restriction may limit expressive possibilities, certain meanings, tones, or identities may only be accessible through informal language. Furthermore, IF explicitly links formality to professor presence.

*IF: "With social interactions because there's not that much restrictions, you can use more categories of words, whether it's slang or a lot more."*

*But in a classroom, I kind of have to be formal, because we're talking with professors."*

The presence of professors demands a formal linguistic register, which in turn forces students to adopt a different identity performance. This power relationship shapes IF's identity by constraining how he can express himself. In the classroom, he perceives himself as someone who must be careful, controlled, and deferential, an identity that feels less authentic than his casual, spontaneous self outside. Thus, the hierarchical position of professors does not merely influence language choice, it actively constructs a more constrained and less empowered speaking identity for the student.

## **6. Identity Alignment and Tension**

This theme captures how participants perceive the relationship between their English-speaking self and their core personal identity. The data reveal three distinct patterns, some participants experience alignment with their core identity, others experience tension with their core identity, and one participant experiences enhancement enables preferred self-expression. This variation demonstrates that identity construction through language is highly individual.

### **a. Alignment Through Consistency**

Some participants felt that speaking English did not fundamentally change who they were. For these learners, English was simply tool for communication rather than a medium for identity transformation. Their core

personality traits remained consistent across languages, MR explanation illustrates alignment through consistency.

*MR: "My personality is not to speak a lot. Actually, in any classroom, I don't speak a lot. So it's not just speaking English... it aligns with my personal identity."*

MR explains that his quiet classroom attitude is consistent across languages. His statement in any classroom emphasizes that this trait is context-dependent rather than language-dependent. His identity as someone who does not speak much in classrooms remains stable whether the medium is Indonesian or English. This indicates that for some learners, fundamental personality traits persist across language. Furthermore, MA describes that he just being himself when speaking English.

*MA: "I feel it aligns with my identity because I'm just being myself. When the lecturer asks me a question, I try to answer it in English using the vocabulary I remember."*

MA describe just being himself suggest alignment rather than transformation. His identity remains stable across languages, English is simply the medium through which he express that stable self. The phrase of using vocabulary he remembered acknowledges his learner status without threatening his sense of self, he is still himself, even when his linguistic resources are limited. In addition FRA distinguishes between stable core identity and fluctuating emotional experience.

*FRA: “While my core identity stays the same, the level of pressure and self-awareness becomes much higher when I speak English.”*

FRA layered model stable core with fluctuating surface, provides a nuanced understanding of identity. The core remains the same while pressure and self-awareness vary. This suggests that identity can remain consistent even as emotional experience change across contexts, FRA further elaborates this model.

*FRA: “I don't think I change very much. I'm still the same nervous guy, but the level of nervousness is different.”*

FRA self description as the same nervous guy reinforces identity stability while acknowledging that nervousness intensifies with English. The phrase level nervousness is different suggest that the same core self experiences different emotional intensifies in different contexts. This indicates that personality traits persist across language even when emotional intensify varies.

For other participants, formal classroom expectations created tension with their natural personality. These learners experienced a mismatch between who they felt themselves to be and who they had to become in classroom settings. This tension created discomfort and potentially inhibited authentic self expression, MZA statement illustrates this tension.

*MZA: “I'm not a very, like, rigid person. You know, I'm kind of an easy going person. So when we speak in the classroom, we try to speak*

*academically. We try to be more formal, we use like formal vocabulary... formal English, it's not for me, I think."*

MZA explicitly names the mismatch between his easy-going personality and required classroom formality. The repetition of "try" suggests efforts and strain, becoming formal requires work because it is not natural to him. His conclusion reveals that this tension may lead him to disidentify with formal classroom English, seeing it as incompatible with his sense of self.

For AR, English was not just aligned with identity but actually enhanced self-expression. Unlike participants who experienced alignment or tension, AR found in English a medium for a more confident, expressive version of himself than his native language afforded. This represents the most dramatic form identity transformation, AR quotes illustrates this enhancement.

*AR: "English is not my first language, but it has become an important part of my academic journey because I'm an English Language Education student, right? So, English is not only a language but has become a part of my identity through the academic journey itself."*

*AR: "When I speak in English, it feels like, 'This is me,' and I want to speak as much as I want."*

AR describes English as integrated into his identity through sustained academic engagement. The phrases becoming a part of his identity suggest gradual incorporation rather than sudden transformation. His rhetorical

“right?” invites agreement that this is natural for an English education student, implying that for him, the choice of major reflects and shapes who he is.

His statement “this is me” indicates that English enables authentic self expression. For him, English is not a mask but a medium for revealing his true self. The desire to speak as much as he want suggest that English unlock expressive possibilities that might otherwise remain constrained. In English, he feels authorized to fully express himself.

## **B. Discussion**

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and the theoretical frameworks presented in the literature review. Overall, the results demonstrate that EFL students at UIN Ar-Raniry perceive their identity when speaking English as a complex, fluid, and context-dependent phenomenon shaped by multiple factors including emotional states, social environment, topic familiarity, and relationships with peers and lecturers. The six themes that emerged from the findings collectively answer the research question by revealing how students experience, negotiate, and construct their identities through spoken English in classroom interactions. The discussion is organized around these six themes, each addressing a distinct dimension of identity perception.

### **1. The Shifting Self, Identity Fluidity Across Language**

Participants reported feeling fundamentally different when speaking English, describing shift such as becoming more confident, more articulate, or

even imagining themselves as someone from another culture. These findings confirming Norton's (2000) notion of identity as fluid and multiple. English enables access to alternative selves that feel more confident, more thoughtful, or culturally imagined. This findings extends Norton's investment framework by showing that investment operates not only in social identities, such as becoming a member of imagined communities, but also in cognitive identities like becoming more articulate and in performative identities such as adopting foreign accents. As Zacharias (2010) notes, EFL learners must negotiate multiple identities, balancing their local identity with the desire to integrate into globalized worlds, which is clearly evident in participants imagining themselves as Americans or as admired television presenters when speaking English.

## **2. Language Anxiety and Self-Perception**

Participants experienced anxiety in various forms such as, fear of making mistakes, physical symptoms like stuttering, and heightened sensitivity to judgement from more proficient peers. This anxiety profoundly shapes how students perceive themselves as English speakers, aligning with Horwitz et al., (1986) foreign language anxiety framework. Participants exhibited communication apprehension through fear of mistakes, physical symptoms such as stuttering, and heightened sensitivity to judgement from more proficient peers. This comparison with "elite" peers socially constructs anxiety, reflecting Sarie's (2020) observation that non-native speaker identity is often viewed negatively where native-speakerism prevails. The coexistence of

shyness and pride supports Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) concept of perfectionist anxiety and Du et al. (2026) claim that emotional experiences signal whether identity is being verified or challenged. Crucially, some participants reframed peer correction as evidence of being noticed and cared for rather than as threat, demonstrating that learners can exercise agency in interpreting emotional events and actively shape their own identity instead of passively receiving judgement.

### **3. Context-Dependent Identity**

Students perception of their own identity shifts depending on who is in the classroom, how supportive the atmosphere feels, and whether they are familiar with the topic being discussed. For instance, the same student may feel confident speaking among close friends but anxious when surrounded by more proficient peers, or comfortable when discussing familiar topics but stuck and nervous when facing unfamiliar material. This fluctuation supports Block's (2007) argument that identity is inherently linked to social relationships and power dynamics within specific contexts. This context-dependent nature also illustrates Lave and Wenger (1991) concept of communities of practice, where supportive environments enable students to perceive themselves as legitimate speakers authorized to speak freely, while judgemental environments trigger peripheral withdrawal and silence. Following Rahmi's (2024) analysis, such silence is not lack of competence but active identity negotiation protecting the self from potential threat. Topic familiarity further affects confidence by shaping perceived competence, connecting to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy

theory. Students perceive themselves as confident speakers only when they feel they have something valuable to contribute, revealing that identity perception involves both social positioning and belief in one's own capability.

#### **4. Moments of Agency and Pride**

Positive experiences such as helping peers, receiving recognition, and succeeding spontaneously reinforce students' perception of themselves as capable English speakers. These moments align with Norton's (2013) concept of investment, where learners commit to language when they perceive returns that enhance their sense of self, returns that can include the relational satisfaction of contributing to others' learning. Peer applause validates identity through social reflection, as Giddens (1991) describes, while helping less experienced peers exemplifies legitimate peripheral participation, moving learners from peripheral novices toward more central, legitimate participants in the classroom community. Spontaneous competence acts as what Du et al. (2026) term emotional catalyst, providing counter-evidence to self-perception as a struggling speaker and enabling identity reconstruction from anxious performer to capable speaker.

#### **5. Speaking Identities in Classroom and Social Contexts**

Students perceive themselves as more confident, fluent, and authentic when speaking English outside the classroom, illustrating Gee's (2000) concept of multiple identity kits, the classroom demands formality and careful word choice, while outside contexts permit slang and spontaneous expression.

This distinction between speaking from desire rather than obligation directly supports Self-Determination theory's emphasis on autonomy as essential for intrinsic motivation, as articulated by Ryan and Deci (2000). The constraints of formal education may inadvertently undermine the very conditions that enable positive identity perception. Linguistic choices across contexts perform different identities, as Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue, challenging any hierarchy that privileges academic language over informal registers and demonstrating that students perceive themselves as having multiple ways of being English speakers.

#### **6. Identity Alignment and Tension**

Students perceive the relationship between their English-speaking self and core personal identity in three distinct patterns: alignment, tension, and enhancement. This variation illustrates Pavlenko and Backledge's (2004) concept of identity negotiation, where learners actively negotiate who they can be in different contexts with different outcomes. Alignment represents successful negotiation where English does not disrupt self-perception, connecting to Gecas (1982) work on personal identity as developing from early experiences and remaining stable across contexts. Tension arises when classroom formality conflicts with natural personality, highlighting the need for classroom environments that allow authentic self-expression. Enhancement represents the most dramatic outcome, where English enables a more confident and expressive identity than the native language affords, resonating with

Kramersch (2009) concept of the multilingual subject, where each language offers different possibilities for self-expression.

Overall, identity construction through spoken English for EFL students at UIN Ar-Raniry is a complex, multifaceted process shaped by emotional, social, and contextual factors. However, this study's reliance on self-reported data from a small number of participants at a single institution limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include larger and more diverse participant samples across multiple institutions to validate these patterns and employ longitudinal designs to track how students identity perceptions evolve over time as they progress through their academic programs.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### A. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how university EFL students perceive their identity when speaking English during classroom interaction. The research question guiding this study was "How do university EFL students perceive their identity when speaking English during classroom interactions?" Through semi-structured interviews with six English Language Education students at UIN Ar-Raniry, the study employed thematic analysis to identify patterns in participants' experiences and perceptions.

The findings reveal that EFL students perceive their identity when speaking English as a complex, fluid, and context-dependent phenomenon. Six major themes emerged from the data, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of identity perception in spoken English context.

First, students perceive their identity as fluid and multiple when speaking English. Participants described like "different persons" when using English compared to their native language, experiencing shifts in confidence, thought process, and cultural imagination. Some felt more confident and "cooler", others become thoughtful and articulate, while some imagined themselves as members of English-speaking cultures such as an Americans or admired television presenters. This findings confirms that identity perception is not static but constantly negotiated through language use.

Second, students' identity perception is emotionally mediated, particularly through language anxiety. Participants experienced fear of making mistakes, physical symptoms such as words getting stuck or stuttering, and sensitivity to judgement from more proficient peers. The presence of "elite" peers in the classroom intensified anxiety, demonstrating that identity perception is socially constructed through comparison. However, some participants also expressed duality, feeling both shy and proud simultaneously and reframed peer correction as positive attention rather than threat, showing that learners can exercise agency in interpreting emotional experiences.

Third, students perceive their identity as context-dependent. Their confidence and willingness to speak fluctuated dramatically based on classroom environment, peer composition, topic familiarity, and lecturer behaviour. Supportive environments with close friends enabled positive identity expression, while judgemental environment triggered withdrawal and silence. Topic familiarity provided a sense of competence that enabled participation, while unfamiliar topics produced stuck and anxiety. Lecturer attitudes toward error also significantly shaped students' willingness to speak, with lecturers who prioritized communication over accuracy creating safer spaces for identity expression.

Fourth, students experience moments of agency and pride that positively shape their identity perception. Helping others, receiving recognition and positive feedback from peers, and succeeding in spontaneous speaking situations provided counter-narratives to self-doubt. These moments became

resources for constructing identity from anxious to capable speaker, demonstrating that positive emotional experiences can serve as catalyst for identity development.

Fifth, students perceive their identity differently inside and outside the classroom. Outside the classroom, they reported feeling more confident, fluent, and authentic because they had autonomy over their participation. The classroom context constrained identity expression through formality requirements, grammatical self-monitoring, and hierarchical relationship with lecturers.

Sixth, students perceive the relationship between their English-speaking self and core personal identity in three distinct patterns: alignment (English self consistent with core identity), tension (English self conflicts with core identity), and enhancement (English self enables preferred self-expression). This variation demonstrates that identity perception through language is highly individual.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that for EFL learners at UIN Ar-Raniry, perceiving their identity when speaking English is never simply about assessing linguistic competence. It is always also about navigating complex emotional landscapes, negotiating positions within classroom communities, responding to contextual factors, and relating their English-speaking self to who they understand themselves to be.

However, this study has limitations. The findings are based on self-reported data from a small number of participants from a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the results. The perceptions documented represent the views of these specific participants and may not reflect the experiences of all EFL learners in Aceh or broader Indonesian contexts.

## **B. Suggestions**

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, several suggestions are offered for EFL teachers, students, and future researchers.

### **1. Suggestion for EFL Teachers**

For EFL teachers, it is recommended that they recognize students' identity perception as a crucial factor influencing willingness to speak English in the classroom. Teachers should create supportive and non-judgmental classroom environments where effort and communication are valued over grammatical accuracy, as students' confidence fluctuates significantly based on whether they perceive the environment as supportive or judgmental. Reducing peer judgment and fostering collaborative learning can help students feel safer to speak. Additionally, teachers should be mindful of their feedback styles, balancing correction with positive reinforcement and prioritizing communication over accuracy, especially in speaking activities where fluency and confidence are primary goals. Providing opportunities for topic preparation before speaking tasks and ensuring topics are accessible to students' knowledge and interests can also enhance confidence. Teachers should acknowledge the emotional dimensions of language learning, recognizing that anxiety, pride, and

shyness are integral to identity construction, and create spaces where students can express these emotions positively. Finally, bridging the gap between inside and outside classroom identities by incorporating more authentic, informal speaking activities can help students use English in ways that feel more natural and less constrained.

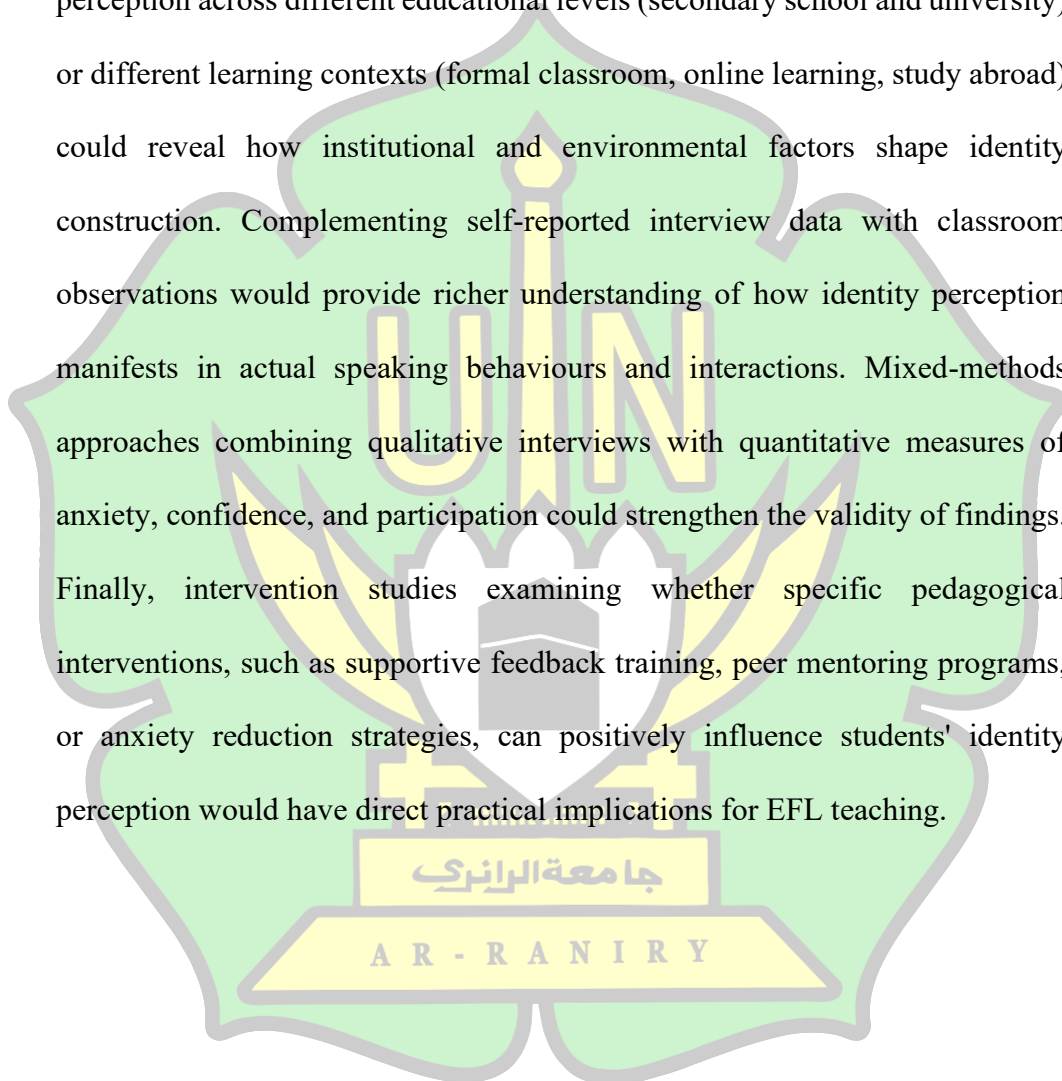
## **2. Suggestions for EFL Students**

For EFL students, it is encouraged that they understand identity perception as dynamic and actively shaped. Students can benefit from reframing challenges positively, interpreting peer correction as attention and care rather than judgment, which transforms potentially threatening situations into opportunities for affirmation and learning. Seeking supportive communities of practice both within and beyond the classroom, including online spaces, allows students to practice speaking in environments where they feel more autonomous and authentic. Recognizing and celebrating moments of success, such as spontaneous competence, successful communication, and positive feedback, serves as valuable resources for building positive identity perceptions. Students should also be patient with their identity development, understanding that feeling different when speaking English is normal and that shifts between anxiety and pride are part of the learning journey.

## **3. Suggestions for Future Researchers**

For future researchers, it is suggested that studies address the limitations of this research by including larger and more diverse participant samples from multiple institutions across Aceh and other Indonesian provinces to validate

whether the patterns of identity perception identified here hold true more broadly. Longitudinal studies tracking how students' identity perceptions evolve over time would provide valuable insights into the developmental trajectory of identity construction in EFL learning. Comparative research examining identity perception across different educational levels (secondary school and university) or different learning contexts (formal classroom, online learning, study abroad) could reveal how institutional and environmental factors shape identity construction. Complementing self-reported interview data with classroom observations would provide richer understanding of how identity perception manifests in actual speaking behaviours and interactions. Mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative interviews with quantitative measures of anxiety, confidence, and participation could strengthen the validity of findings. Finally, intervention studies examining whether specific pedagogical interventions, such as supportive feedback training, peer mentoring programs, or anxiety reduction strategies, can positively influence students' identity perception would have direct practical implications for EFL teaching.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Appointment Letter of Supervisor



KEPUTUSAN DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH  
NOMOR: 1478 TAHUN 2025

TENTANG:  
PENGANGKATAN PEMBIMBING SKRIPSI MAHASISWA  
DENGAN RAHMAT TUHAN YANG MAHA ESA

DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH

- Menimbang :
- bahwa untuk kelancaran bimbingan skripsi mahasiswa pada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh maka dipandang perlu menunjuk pembimbing skripsi;
  - bahwa yang namanya tersebut dalam Surat Keputusan ini dianggap cakap dan mampu untuk diangkat dalam jabatan sebagai pembimbing skripsi mahasiswa;
  - bahwa berdasarkan pertimbangan sebagaimana dimaksud dalam huruf a dan huruf b, perlu menetapkan Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.
- Mengingat :
- Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003, tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional;
  - Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005, tentang Guru dan Dosen;
  - Undang-Undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2012, tentang Pendidikan Tinggi;
  - Peraturan Presiden Nomor 74 Tahun 2012, tentang perubahan atas peraturan pemerintah RI Nomor 23 Tahun 2005 tentang pengelolaan keuangan Badan Layanan Umum;
  - Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 4 Tahun 2014, tentang penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Tinggi dan Pengelolaan Perguruan Tinggi;
  - Peraturan Presiden Nomor 64 Tahun 2013, tentang perubahan Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Menjadi Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
  - Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 44 Tahun 2022, tentang Organisasi dan Tata Kerja UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
  - Peraturan Menteri Agama Nomor 14 Tahun 2022, tentang Statuta UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
  - Keputusan Menteri Agama Nomor 492 Tahun 2003, tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang Pengangkatan, Pemindahan dan Pemberhentian PNS di Lingkungan Depag RI;
  - Keputusan Menteri Keuangan Nomor 293/Kmk.05/2011, tentang penetapan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh pada Kementerian Agama sebagai Instansi Pemerintah yang menerapkan Pengelolaan Badan Layanan Umum;
  - Surat Keputusan Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor 01 Tahun 2015, Tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang kepada Dekan dan Direktur Pascasarjana di Lingkungan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

#### MEMUTUSKAN

- Menetapkan :
- Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh tentang Pembimbing Skripsi Mahasiswa.
- KESATU :
- Menunjuk Saudara :  
**Rahmi, M.TESOL., Ph.D**
- Untuk membimbing Skripsi
- Nama : Afi Khairan  
NIM : 220203057  
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
Judul Skripsi : Constructing Identity Through Spoken English: Self-Perception of Indonesian EFL Learners in Oral Communication
- KEDUA :
- Kepada pembimbing yang tercantum namanya diatas diberikan honorarium sesuai dengan peraturan perundang-undangan yang berlaku;
- KETIGA :
- Pembiayaan akibat keputusan ini dibebankan pada DIPA UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor SP DIPA-025.04.2.423925/2025 Tanggal 02 Desember 2024 Tahun Anggaran 2025;
- KEEMPAT :
- Keputusan ini berlaku selama enam bulan sejak tanggal ditetapkan;
- KELIMA :
- Keputusan ini berlaku sejak tanggal ditetapkan dengan ketentuan bahwa segala sesuatu akan dirubah dan diperbaiki kembali sebagaimana mestinya, apabila kemudian hari ternyata terdapat kekeliruan dalam Surat Keputusan ini.

Ditetapkan di : Banda Aceh  
Pada tanggal : 30 Oktober 2025  
Dekan,

  
Sahri Muluk

#### Tembusan

1. Sekjen Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
2. Dirjen Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
3. Direktur Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
4. Kantor Pelayanan Perpendokhwaan Negeri (KPPN), di Banda Aceh;
5. Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh di Banda Aceh;
6. Kepala Bagian Keuangan dan Akuntansi UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh di Banda Aceh;
7. Yang bersangkutan;
8. Arsip.



## Appendix B: Recommendation Letter from *Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA  
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH  
FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN

Jl. Syekh Abdur Rauf Kopeima Darussalam Banda Aceh Telp/Fax. : 0651-752921

Nomor : B-1420/Un.08TL.00/3/2026/3/2026

Lamp : -

Hal : **Penelitian Ilmiah Mahasiswa**

Kepada Yth,

Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry dengan ini menerangkan bahwa:

NIM : 220203057

Nama : AFI KHAIRAN

Program Studi/Jurusan : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Alamat : Komplek Pola Permai No 17

Saudara yang tersebut namanya diatas benar mahasiswa Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan bermaksud melakukan penelitian ilmiah di lembaga yang Bapak Ibu pimpin dalam rangka penulisan Skripsi dengan judul **CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH SPOKEN ENGLISH: SELF-PERCEPTION OF INDONESIA EFL LEARNERS IN ORAL COMMUNICATION**

Banda Aceh, 06 Maret 2026

An. Dekan

Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan Kelembagaan



Prof. Dr. Buhori Muslim, M.Ag.

NIP. 197508152001121002

Berlaku sampai : 17 April 2026

جامعة الرانيري

AR - RANIRY

## Appendix C: Confirmation Letter from English Language Education Department



**KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA**  
**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY**  
**FAKULTAS TARBİYAH DAN KEGURUAN**  
**PRODI PENDIDIKAN BAHASA INGGRIS**  
 Jln Syekh Abdur Rauf Kopelma Darussalam Banda Aceh  
 Email : pbi.fik@ar-raniry.ac.id Website : https://ar-raniry.ac.id

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**SURAT KETERANGAN**  
 Nomor: B-121/Un.08/PBI/Kp.01.2/3/2026

Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Darussalam Banda Aceh menerangkan bahwa yang nama tersebut di bawah ini:

Nama	: Afi Khairan
NIM	: 220203057
Prodi	: Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Alamat	: Komplek Pola Permai, No 17. Ajun Lam Hasan

Benar telah melakukan pengumpulan data untuk penelitian pada Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh dalam rangka penyusunan Skripsi yang berjudul:

**"CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH SPOKEN ENGLISH: SELF-PERCEPTION OF INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS IN ORAL COMMUNICATION"**

Demikianlah Surat Keterangan ini kami buat agar dapat dipergunakan seperlunya.

Banda Aceh, 31 April 2026  
 Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris,  
  
**Syarifah Dahliana**

**Appendix D: Interview Instrument****INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Name :

Student ID/ NIM :

Semester :

Phone Number :

This Research is about how EFL students perceive their identity when speaking English during classroom interactions. The purpose of this study is to explore how students experience shifts in self-perception, emotional responses such as anxiety or pride, and the influence of classroom environment, peers, and lecturers on their speaking identity. Data will be collected through semi structured interview and the conversation will be audio-recorded with the participants consent. The data will be used only for research purposes to protect the privacy of the interviewees. During the interview, the participant will be asked several questions related to their experiences speaking English in the classroom. The interview process will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

**Questions:**

1. Can you describe how you feel when you are speaking English in classroom at UIN Ar-Raniry?
2. Do you think speaking English makes you feel like a different person? How so?
3. How do you think others in the classroom perceive you when you speak English?
4. Can you think of a time when speaking English in class made you feel proud of yourself? What happened?
5. Conversely, can you recall a situation when speaking English made you feel unsure or less confident?
6. How do you think speaking English influences your relationship with your peers and lecturers?
7. Do you feel that speaking English in class aligns with your personal identity? Why or why not?
8. Do you think your identity is different when you use English outside the classroom (e.g., in social or informal settings)? How?
9. What would you change about your experience of learning English to make you feel more confident in speaking it?

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Name : Afi Khairan  
Place/ Date of Birth : Banda Aceh/ June 12, 2004  
Nationality : Indonesia  
Religion : Islam  
Sex : Male  
Marital Status : Single  
Occupation : Student  
Address : Kompleks Pola Permai, No. 17, Kecamatan Peukan Bada  
E-mail : 220203057@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

### Parents

Father's Name : Rudi Saputra  
Mother's Name : Risna Wardhani

### Educational Background

Elementary School : SDN 29 Banda Aceh  
Junior High School : SMPN 3 Banda Aceh  
Senior High School : SMAN 7 Banda Aceh  
University : English Language Education, UIN Ar-Raniry