

**The Role of English in the Formation of
Gen Z's Identity in Digital Era**

THESIS

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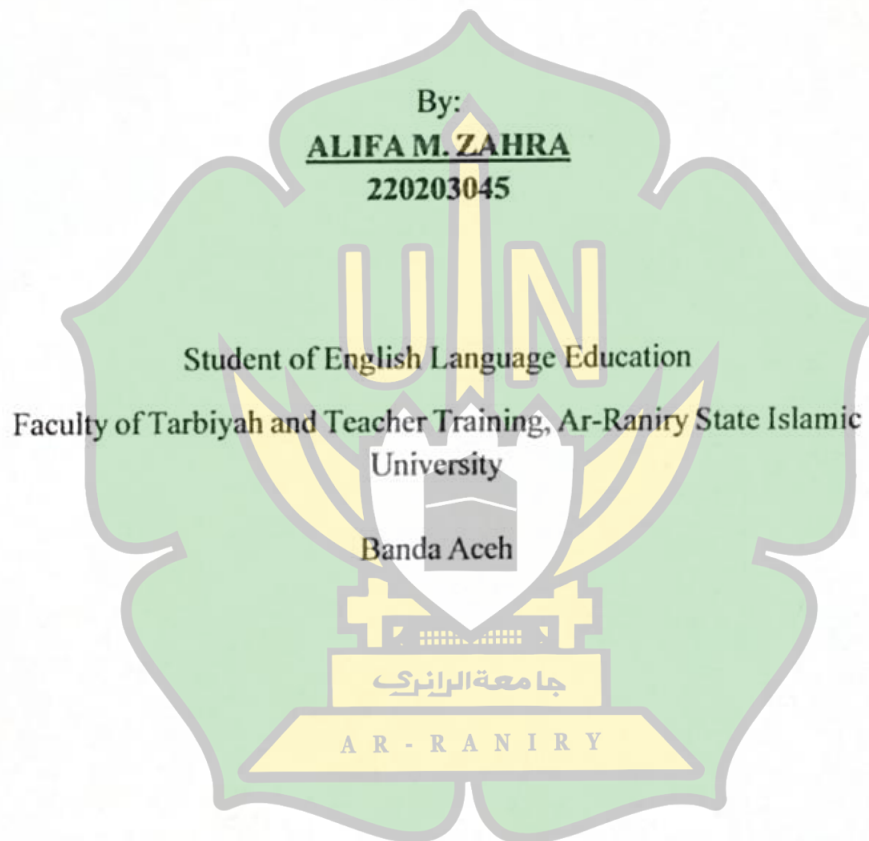


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**THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN THE FORMATION OF GEN Z'S
IDENTITY IN DIGITAL ERA**

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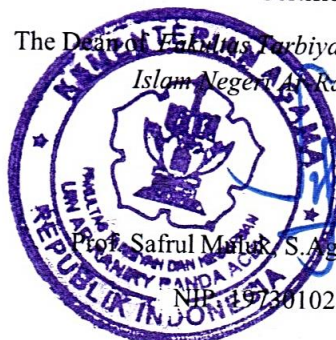
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adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan didalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan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

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Saya yang membuat pernyataan



Alifa M. Zahra

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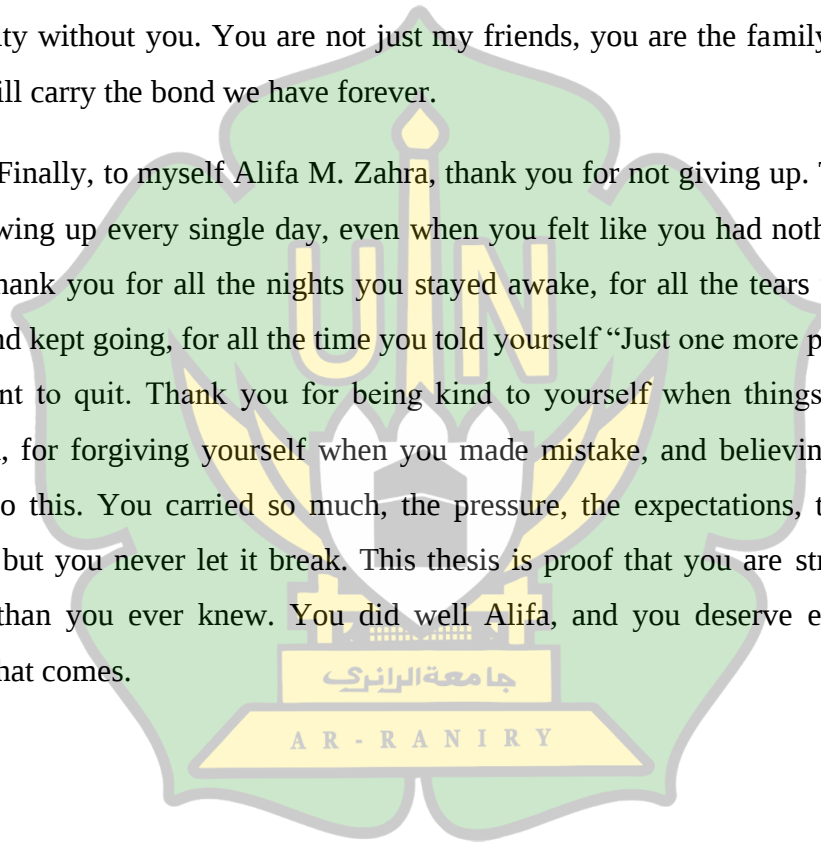
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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative study explored how Acehnese Gen Z used English on social media to construct and express their identity. Using digital ethnography, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten Acehnese Gen Z participants aged 20-24 years and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Four major themes emerged: Using English for self-expression and confidence, English as a symbol of modernity and aesthetic identity, code-mixing as a natural digital practice, and English as a marker of global identity. The findings revealed that English functioned as a symbolic resource through which Acehnese Gen Z performed multiple identity facets simultaneously local and global, traditional and modern. Participants strategically used English to access symbolic capital associated with modernity and global connectivity while maintaining Acehnese and Indonesian identities through code-mixing practices. Drawing on Hall (1996), Norton (2013), and Gee (2000), this study demonstrated that English use reflected identity investment processes where language choice was tied to social positioning and access to imagined global communities. These findings contribute to understanding how non-native English speakers in postcolonial contexts negotiate hybrid identities through multilingual digital practices.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the study, research questions, research aims, significance of the study, and key terminologies. It explains the context of English use among Acehnese Gen Z on social media and its relationship with identity construction. The chapter also presents the main focus and purpose of the research. Finally, it provides the foundation for understanding the overall direction of the study.

A. Background of Study

In today's digital era, the rapid development of social media platform has transformed communication practices, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z is used henceforth), who are highly engaged in online interactions. The use of English on social media has become increasingly common among Indonesian youth, not only as a means of communication but also as a way to present themselves and connect with global digital culture. The rise of English in digital spaces like social media and online games has influenced how Gen Z build their identity. According to Avci et al. (2025), identity development is a continuous process where people discover who they are through two main activities: making commitments and exploring possibilities. Commitments are the choices people make about their identity, such as their values, beliefs, and goals. This identity formation process is not fixed but keeps shaping and reshaping through their experiences and social interactions.

In general, identity is a reflection of who we are or what we show, including how we perceive ourselves and how we show ourselves to others. Identity is not fixed, it can change and develop according to experience, culture and communication methods, including language. Therefore, a person's identity is seen through the symbols they use in daily communication. According to Norton (2013), social interaction and language use continuously shape identity, a view further supported by Maehler (2025), who argues that identity is a dynamic process.

shaped by experience and interaction. Identity development is increasingly taking place online in the digital age, especially on social media. Perez-Torrez (2024) claim that “Social media are settings where adolescents construct their identities while engaging social interactions” (p.1). This is supported by recent research which shows that digital platforms have become primary spaces for identity exploration among Gen Z, allowing them to construct and express multiple identities simultaneously (Avci et al., 2024; Maheswari, 2025). Young people, including Gen Z, use social media as a mirror to show who they are (self presentation), compare themselves to others (social comparison), and get audience response. The way Gen Z uses English in the Indonesian context is to carry out this process. English serves as a communication tool as well as a representation of modernity and lifestyle that captures the essence of the digital generation.

In this study, the meaning of identity is generational identity, specifically Gen Z. Generational identity is defined as a sense of belonging and shared characteristics among individuals born and growing up during the same historical period (Chyrvonyi, 2025). A specific age group’s common experiences and communication styles help to shape its generational identity. Having grown up in the digital age, Gen Z is called digital natives. As a result, digital spaces play a significant role in shaping and expressing their identity, one example is the language they use on social media. English, which was formerly just used for international communication, has grown into an expression of modernity, lifestyle, and status in society. Many Gen Z use English, either entirely or in combination with Indonesian, to create a particular self image, such as being more sociable, smart, or culturally aware. This phenomenon shows that English is used to express identity as well to deliver messages.

In today’s digital era, language plays a big role in shaping and strengthening generational identity. New words or slang that appear online are important clues for understanding how certain age groups express themselves and stand out from older generations (Chyrvonyi, 2025). Therefore, this study explores how English is used by Acehnese Gen Z in digital spaces and how it shapes their generational identity.

While this phenomenon is visible on social media, little is known about how Acehnese Gen Z use English to create their online selves. Previous research has mainly focused on the communication side how Gen Z mix English and Indonesian when chatting online (Tarihoran et al., 2022). A study by Akmal et al. (2022) examined Acehnese Gen Z's language use on Twitter, but focused more on general linguistic features rather than how English specifically construct their identity. However, few studies have explored how English actually shapes their digital identity. Therefore, this research is important to address how English contributes to Gen Z's identity construction in the digital age.

What makes Acehnese Gen Z particularly distinct from other Indonesian Gen Z is their position at the intersection of three linguistic layers: Acehnese as their heritage language, Indonesian as the national language, and English as the global digital language. Unlike Gen Z in metropolitan city like Jakarta where English mixing has become a mainstream urban trend, Acehnese Gen Z navigate English use within a more culturally and religiously conservative context. In Aceh, where Islamic values and local traditions strongly influence daily life, using English on social media is not merely about appearing trendy, it may also represent a subtle form of expressing modernity, global aspiration, or even personal identity within a society that highly values local norms. This unique sociolinguistic landscape where English use exists alongside strong local language preservation efforts remains largely underexplored. Therefore, focusing on Acehnese Gen Z provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of how English functions in identity construction beyond the metropolitan context of Jakarta.

B. Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How do the Acehnese Gen Z use English on social media to construct and express their identity?
2. What roles does English play in the generational identity construction among Acehnese Gen Z in digital spaces?

C. The Aim of Study

Based on the research questions, this study has the following aims:

1. To explore how Acehese Gen Z use English on social media to construct and express their identity.
2. To examine the roles of English in the generational identity construction among Acehese Gen Z in digital spaces.

D. The Significance of Study

1. Theoretical Significance.

This study contributes to sociolinguistic and cultural identity research by exploring the intersection between language and generational identity in digital contexts. It deepens the understanding of how English, beyond its communicative function, serves as a symbolic and cultural tool in shaping Acehese Gen Z's digital identity.

2. Practical Significance.

Practically, this study provides valuable insights for educators, language practitioners, and digital content creators in designing communication strategies, language curricula, and digital content that align with Acehese Gen Z's linguistic practices and identity needs in online spaces.

E. Terminologies

There are several terminologies that need to be further explained:

1. Gen Z

In this study, Gen Z specifically refers to Acehese young adults born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019), aged 20-24 years at the time of data collection, and residing in Aceh Province. This generation is known as digital natives because they have been familiar with technology, the internet, and social media since childhood. This study focuses specifically on Acehese Gen Z to understand how English practices on social media intersect with their unique

cultural context as young Acehnese living in a region with distinct linguistic and cultural heritage.

2. Identity

According to Hall (1996), identity is “never unified and increasingly fragmented, never singular but multiply constructed across different discourses, practices and positions. Norton (2013) defines identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future”. More recently, Burnett (2023) argues that individuals actively shape their identities through linguistic choices in social interactions, emphasizing that identity is something people “do” through language rather than something they simply “have”.

In this study, identity is understood as how Acehnese Gen Z construct and express who they are through the use of English on social media, including both how they see themselves and how they want to be seen by others in digital space.

3. Digital Era

According to Baym (2015), the digital era is marked by internet based technologies shaping everyday social interaction. The Digital Era refers to a time when internet based information and communication technology has become an essential part of daily life. Social interaction, entertainment, education, and self expression often take place through digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and online games.

In this study, the digital era refers to the current time when platform like Instagram and Tik Tok serve as key spaces for identity construction among Acehnese Gen Z.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical and empirical foundations that support the study of English use and identity among Acehese Gen Z. It discusses identity, the role of English, social media, identity construction, modernity, and language practices in digital contexts. The chapter also reviews relevant previous studies related to the research topic. Finally, these discussions provide the theoretical basis for analyzing the findings of the study.

A. Theoretical Framework of Identity

This study employs three interconnected theories to examine how Acehese Gen Z uses English on social media for identity construction:

a. Identity as Dynamic Process (Hall, 1996)

Recent studies emphasize that identity is dynamic and continuously evolving (Maehler, 2025). This perspective is in line with Hall (1996), who conceptualizes identity as not fixed but as an ongoing process of becoming. Identity is “never unified and increasingly fragmented, never singular but multiply constructed across different discourses, practices and positions” (p.4). For Gen Z in digital spaces, this means their identities are constantly negotiated through multiple cultural influences and global connectivity. Hall's framework emphasizes that identity construction occurs through positioning defining who we are by differentiating ourselves from others. Acehese Gen Z's English use can be understood as a form of positioning that differentiates them from previous generations while connecting them to global youth culture.

b. Identity Investment Theory (Norton, 2013)

Norton (2013) argues that language use involves “investment” in identity speakers are “constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (p.45). Unlike motivation, investment

fluctuates based on social conditions and desired access to symbolic resources. For Acehnese Gen Z, choosing English represents an investment in identity positions that are modern, globally connected, and culturally sophisticated. Norton's concept of "imagined communities" explains how English use connects them to global communities of English speakers and international youth culture while maintaining local connections.

c. Discourse and Affinity Identity (Gee,2000)

Gee (2000) differentiates between discourse identity (individual traits recognized through language performance) and affinity identity (group membership through shared practices). When Acehnese Gen Z use English phrases like "living my best life," they perform discourse identity, signaling global cultural familiarity. Through shared English practices in fandoms or gaming communities, they demonstrate affinity identity with communities that transcend national boundaries. Gee's framework recognizes that identity performance is contextual and strategic the same individual performs different identities across platforms, using English to achieve specific social goals.

In this study, the theories by Hall (1996), Norton (2013), and Gee (2000) work together to describe Acehnese Gen Z's English use as complex identity work operating at individual, community, and societal levels. Hall (1996) provides a macro-level understanding of identity as a culturally negotiated process, Norton (2013) explains the motivational dynamics behind language choice, and Gee (2000) offers tools for analyzing actual identity performance through linguistic practices. Together, they frame English not merely as a communication tool but as a resource for identity construction and social positioning in digital environments.

B. The Role of English

English has become one of the most widely used languages in the world, functioning not only as a means of international communication but also as a powerful social and cultural resource. Crystal (2003) describes English as a global language, meaning it is used by people across different countries and cultures as a

shared medium of interaction. In the context of digital communication, English plays an even more significant role, as it has become the dominant language of the internet, social media platforms, and global digital culture (Crystal, 2011).

Beyond its communicative function, English carries important symbolic meanings, particularly in non-English speaking countries like Indonesia. It is widely associated with modernity, education, cosmopolitanism, and social prestige (Azmi & Hanum, 2021). This symbolic dimension means that the choice to use English is rarely neutral it reflects the speaker's social aspirations, cultural orientations, and desired identity positions. In this sense, English functions not merely as a tool for conveying information but as a resource for social positioning and identity construction.

In the context of social media, the role of English has expanded significantly. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are largely driven by English-language content, trends, and aesthetics, which means that users who engage with these platforms are constantly exposed to English as a marker of digital participation and cultural awareness (Crystal, 2011). For Generation Z, who grew up as digital natives, English is not experienced as a foreign language in the traditional sense but rather as a naturalized part of their digital environment. They use English strategically in captions, hashtags, comments, and bios to signal particular identities and affiliations.

The role of English in Indonesia is further shaped by the country's postcolonial history and its relationship with globalization. English proficiency is increasingly seen as a marker of educational achievement and professional competitiveness, leading many young Indonesians to voluntarily adopt English in informal settings, including social media (Sulaiman & Fata, 2019). This voluntary adoption reflects what Norton (2013) describes as identity investment the idea that people use language not simply to communicate but to invest in particular social and identity positions they wish to access.

For Acehese Gen Z specifically, the role of English is particularly complex. Unlike their counterparts in metropolitan cities like Jakarta, Acehese young people navigate English use within a sociolinguistic landscape that includes three languages Acehese, Indonesian, and English and within a cultural context shaped by strong Islamic values and local traditions. In this setting, using English on social media is not simply about following global trends; it may also represent a subtle assertion of modernity, global aspiration, and personal identity within a society that places high value on local cultural norms. Understanding the role of English for Acehese Gen Z therefore requires attention not only to what English communicates but also to what it symbolizes within this specific cultural and linguistic context.

C. English, Social Media and Identity Formation

In the digital era, identity construction becomes increasingly complex as individuals navigate between online and offline selves. This section focuses on the roles of social media platforms as digital space where identity formation occurs. Maheswari (2025) explains that Gen Z often develops what is referred to as “digital duality,” where identity is simultaneously constructed in both physical and virtual spaces. This results in identities that are more fluid, flexible, and sometimes fragmented. Furthermore, social media platforms serve not only as communication tools but also as spaces for identity exploration, where individuals experiment with different ways of presenting themselves (Avci et al., 2024).

Social media platforms provide a space for Gen Z. Social media platforms provide a space for Gen Z to actively shape and express their identity through language. Identity in sociolinguistic studies is understood as dynamic and constantly reshaped through social and cultural interactions (Hall, 1996; Norton, 2013). Norton (2013) argues that language use involves investment in social identity, meaning that when someone uses a particular language, they are not only communicating but also signaling how they want to be perceived by others. Gee

(2000) further explains that identity can be seen in various forms, such as discourse identity an identity that emerges from the way a person speaks and interacts and affinity identity, which is formed when someone feels part of a group or community. These theoretical concepts are highly relevant to understanding how Gen Z uses English in digital spaces.

Crystal (2011) explains that English has become the dominant language of the Internet, making it a natural medium for self-expression among digital natives. On platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, English allows users to present a stylish, humorous, intelligent, or globally connected self-image. Through elements such as captions, hashtags, and comments, English becomes a stylistic choice that reflects the user's values, social aspirations, and cultural orientation. Digital platforms encourage multimodal expression combining text, sound, and images which amplifies the use of English for identity performance. For instance, users may pair trending English audio with personal captions to express moods or social commentary. This interaction between language and visual performance deepens how identity is crafted in real time.

According to Baym (2015), online platforms enable curated performances of self, where users strategically choose language and tone to align with a particular persona. For Gen Z, English provides access to a vast set of cultural codes from memes to song lyrics that they remix to define who they are. This process highlights that identity online is not fixed but negotiated through interactive, language-driven participation. This aligns with recent findings that social media allows users to curate and experiment with multiple identities depending on context and audience. Through features such as captions, hashtags, and trends, users actively construct and reconstruct their identities in real time, making identity a performative and dynamic process in digital environments (Maheswari, 2025).

Research by Sari and Rahmawati (2022) demonstrates this phenomenon among Indonesian Gen Z, showing that they frequently use English in their

TikTok profiles and captions to express uniqueness and modern identity. This practice aligns with Norton's concept of identity investment, where English serves not merely as a communication tool but as a symbolic resource for constructing desirable social identities in digital spaces.

In relation to this research on Acehnese Gen Z, identities are largely shaped through social media, which provides a space for self-presentation and cross-cultural interaction. English serves as a crucial medium in this process. By using English in captions, comments, or bios, Acehnese Gen Z are not only expressing themselves but also negotiating their cultural identities between their local identity as Indonesians and their global identity as part of an international digital community. Thus, in this study, identity is understood more specifically as the digital identity of Acehnese Gen Z, which is formed through the use of English on social media as a symbolic tool that helps them demonstrate who they are, how they want to be perceived, and which digital communities they choose to be a part of.

D. English and Identity Construction

Building on the previous discussion of digital spaces, this section shifts focus to examine English itself as a symbolic resource for identity construction. Identity construction through language is understood as a dynamic process through which individuals actively negotiate who they are and how they wish to be perceived by others in specific social contexts (Norton, 2013; Hall, 1996). For Acehnese Gen Z, English functions not merely as a foreign language learned in school but as a symbolic resource for constructing and performing identities in digital spaces.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that identity in the digital era is characterized by what Maheswari (2025) terms "digital duality" the simultaneous construction of identity across both physical and virtual spaces. This duality results in identities that are more fluid, flexible, and sometimes fragmented as individuals adapt their self-presentation across different platforms and audiences. Avci et al. (2024) further demonstrate that social media platforms serve as active spaces for identity exploration, where individuals experiment with different ways of presenting

themselves rather than passively consuming content. Through features such as profiles, stories, captions, and hashtags, users curate multiple versions of themselves that may emphasize different aspects of their personalities, values, or social connections.

The construction of identity through language on social media involves what Gee (2000) identifies as both discourse identity and affinity identity. Discourse identity emerges through language performance when Acehnese Gen Z use English phrases like "living my best life" or "good vibes only," they signal individual characteristics such as optimism, cultural awareness, or alignment with contemporary wellness discourse. This linguistic performance allows them to be recognized as possessing certain valued traits by their audience. Affinity identity, in contrast, is demonstrated through participation in shared practices with communities that have common interests or cultural affiliations. By adopting English terms used in global fandoms (such as "bias" in K-pop communities or "stan" culture), Acehnese Gen Z users signal their membership in transnational communities that transcend geographic and linguistic boundaries.

The strategic and performative nature of digital identity construction is particularly evident in how Gen Z manage multiple identities across platforms. Maheswari (2025) explains that Gen Z individuals frequently adapt their self-presentation based on social expectations, platform norms, and digital trends. This multiplicity reflects what scholars describe as "context collapse" in digital spaces, where diverse audiences can view the same content simultaneously. Language choice becomes a key strategy for managing these multiple presentations users may employ different levels of English use, different styles of code-mixing, or different linguistic registers depending on whether they are posting on professional platforms like LinkedIn, visual platforms like Instagram, or trend-driven platforms like TikTok.

Social media platforms also transform identity construction by making self-presentation subject to immediate audience validation. Hanan (2025)

demonstrates that Instagram users actively construct their self-image through curated self-expression while seeking social validation from their audience through likes, comments, and shares. This validation process creates a feedback loop that shapes ongoing identity formation. When Acehnese Gen Z receive positive responses to posts using English, this reinforces associations between English use and valued identity positions. The interactive nature of social media means that identity construction through language is not a solitary process but fundamentally social, responsive to audience reactions and continuously negotiated through digital interactions.

For Acehnese Gen Z, identity construction through English involves negotiating between local and global, traditional and modern, Acehnese and international identities. This negotiation is visible in widespread code-mixing practices, where users blend Indonesian and English within single posts or captions. Code-mixing enables what scholars describe as 'glocal' identity construction identities that are simultaneously rooted in local cultural contexts while oriented toward global participation (Roudometof, 2016). Recent studies on Indonesian digital creators demonstrate that such glocal practices are particularly evident on platforms like TikTok, where creators strategically blend English, Indonesian, and local expressions to engage diverse audiences while maintaining cultural authenticity (Muhsyanur et al., 2025).

The symbolic value of English in identity construction is shaped by broader social meanings attached to the language in Acehnese and Indonesian contexts. These meanings are influenced by Indonesia's postcolonial relationship with English, globalization processes that position English as the language of technology and international business, media exposure associating English with popular culture, and educational systems treating English proficiency as a marker of achievement (Kirkpatrick, 2007). However, Acehnese Gen Z do not simply inherit these meanings passively; they actively reshape them through creative digital practices, creating new associations between English and youth identity, digital fluency, aesthetic sensibility, and cultural participation.

Understanding identity construction through English among Acehnese Gen Z requires recognizing that language choice is deeply embedded in social power relations and access to symbolic capital. When Acehnese Gen Z use English on social media, they invest in identity positions associated with modernity, education, cosmopolitanism, and social mobility positions that carry particular value in contemporary Indonesian and Acehnese society. This investment reflects Norton's (2013) argument that language learning and use are fundamentally about identity and social positioning rather than purely linguistic competence. The strategic deployment of English in digital contexts demonstrates how Acehnese Gen Z actively work to construct identities that position them favorably within both local peer networks and imagined global communities.

E. English as a Symbol of Modernity

In this study, modernity refers to the qualities and attitudes that connect people to contemporary global culture, digital technology, and cosmopolitan ways of life. It is not just about being "new" or "current" but more about being open to global influences, actively engaging with digital platforms, and participating in international cultural trends. For Gen Z who grew up surrounded by the internet and social media, being modern means being digitally fluent, globally connected, and in tune with what is happening in youth culture around the world. In many non-English speaking countries, including Indonesia, English has become strongly associated with these modern characteristics because it is the dominant language of the internet, international business, popular culture, and global communication (Crystal, 2011). When young people use English on social media, they are not just communicating in another language but are also signaling that they identify with modern, globally oriented lifestyles and values.

In non-English speaking countries, English is often seen as a symbol of modernity, cosmopolitanism, and cultural prestige. This is particularly evident in the phenomenon of Gen Z using English in informal settings not out of necessity, but because they associate English with being trendy and culturally aware.

Androutsopoulos (2014) notes that English serves as a marker of "cool" in digital youth culture, distinguishing users on a social and cultural level. Even when local words exist, English terms such as "vibes," "crush," or "lit" are frequently preferred. In this context, English becomes more than a communication tool; it functions as a linguistic trend that is part of a digital aesthetic and identity style.

In the Indonesian context, this symbolic function of English is closely linked to concepts such as intelligence, fashion, and cosmopolitanism (Azmi & Hanum, 2021). This reflects a generational shift in which language is not only functional but also carries symbolic weight. Sulaiman and Fata (2019) further found that Indonesian youth perceive English on social media as a sign of high status and educational background. This perception leads to the voluntary adoption of English, even in casual interactions, as a way of projecting upward mobility and a modern outlook.

Moreover, this symbolism is often reinforced by influencers, brands, and pop culture figures who consistently use English in their content. As Gen Z encounters English through these aspirational figures, they internalize the idea that English equals success, trendiness, and social capital. In this way, English use becomes performative not just linguistic, but aspirational. It signals not only who they are but also who they aspire to be, positioning them within a global, modern identity framework that transcends local linguistic boundaries.

F. Language Practice and General Value

Language use on social media often reflects generational values such as inclusivity, creativity, humor, and digital literacy. Gen Z values self-expression, social awareness, and connectivity, and their language habits reflect these priorities. They mix languages, invent slang, and embrace hybridity, as seen in phenomena like Jaksel English. Tagg (2015) argues that digital discourse is highly performative Gen Z does more than just speak; they enact different identities. Whether through memes, voiceovers, or text posts, language becomes a tool for reflecting beliefs, humor, and group belonging.

Studies by Renata et al. (2024) and Karim and Fitriani (2023) demonstrate that everyday online English use among Indonesian Gen Z reflects values such as confidence, global perspective, and playfulness. These practices go beyond language acquisition; they perform cultural functions. For Gen Z, language is a way to socially position oneself in relation to particular communities, trends, or worldviews. For example, using English as the caption for a post instead of Bahasa Indonesia may indicate connection with global pop culture, social movements like feminism or sustainability, or other contemporary identities, rather than simply reflecting language fluency.

Digital contexts, according to Baym (2015) and Danet and Herring (2007), facilitate fluid identity performances such as being funny, sarcastic, activist, or cute and language serves as a switch that enables Gen Z to transition between these roles with ease. This linguistic flexibility reflects broader Gen Z characteristics like adaptability, authenticity, and non-conformity. Instead of adhering to formal registers, Gen Z frequently creates hybrid forms to express belonging within their digital tribes, such as mixing slang, English phrases, emojis, and regional dialects. Through these practices, language becomes not just a means of communication but a dynamic resource for navigating multiple identities and cultural spaces simultaneously.

G. Previous Study

Several previous studies have examined how young people, particularly Gen Z, use English on social media. More recent studies highlight that digital platforms play a crucial role in identity construction (Hanan, 2025; Sari & Rahmawati, 2022; Sulaiman & Fata, 2019). These researchers conducted their studies in different context and confirm that similar findings related to how English is used by Acehnese Gen Z.

Research by Karim and Fitriani (2023) found that many Indonesian Gen Z adopt English vocabulary and expressions from influencers on YouTube and

Instagram, demonstrating how digital content significantly shapes Gen Z's linguistic style and identity formation.

In a more recent study, Perez-Torres (2024) argued that social media serves as a "digital mirror" for adolescents in the article "Social Media: A Digital Social Mirror for Identity Development During Adolescence." In this environment, identity is constructed through self-presentation, audience feedback, and social comparison. These findings underscore the importance of examining Gen Z's English use on social media, as language in the digital age functions not merely as a communication tool but as a continuously negotiated identity marker.

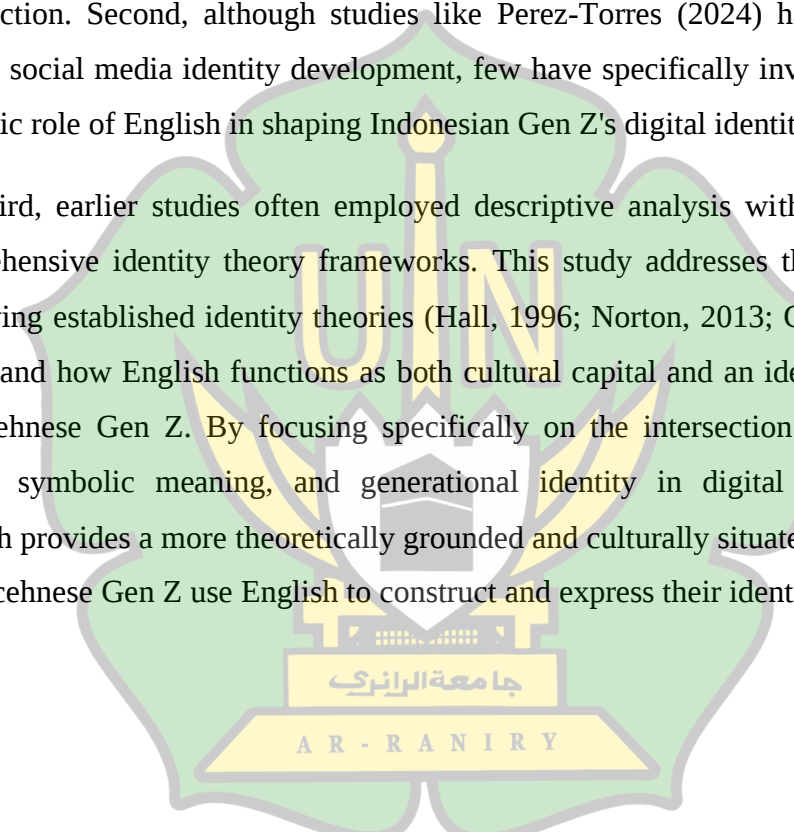
More recent studies have further highlighted the role of digital platforms in shaping identity among Gen Z. Hanan (2025) found that Instagram plays a significant role in identity formation, where users construct their self-image through self-expression and seek social validation from their audience. The study shows that language choice, including the use of English, is closely related to how individuals want to be perceived in digital spaces. In addition, Maheswari (2025) explains that Gen Z individuals often manage multiple identities across platforms, adapting their self-presentation based on social expectations and digital trends. These findings suggest that identity in the digital era is not only constructed but also strategically performed.

In the Acehese context, Yunsida, et.al. (2022) examined code-mixing practices among Acehese youngsters on Instagram and WhatsApp. They found that Acehese youth frequently mix English and Indonesian at various linguistic levels (word, phrase, clause) and reported motivations including appearing 'cool and smart' and following trends. However, their study focused on linguistic forms rather than the symbolic meaning of English for identity construction, which is the focus of the present study.

More recently, Faizah, et.al (2025) investigated how social media exposure has led to phonological shifts among Acehese Gen Z, particularly on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Their findings suggest that digital media significantly

influences Acehese youth's linguistic practices, supporting the need for research on how English specifically shapes their identity. While these studies reviewed above (including Hanan, 2025; Sari & Rahmawati, 2022; and Yusnida et al., 2022) provide valuable insights into Gen Z's language practices and digital identity formation, several gaps remain. First, most previous research has examined English use primarily as a communication function or through attitude assessment, with limited focus on the sociolinguistic processes of identity construction. Second, although studies like Perez-Torres (2024) have explored general social media identity development, few have specifically investigated the symbolic role of English in shaping Indonesian Gen Z's digital identity.

Third, earlier studies often employed descriptive analysis without utilizing comprehensive identity theory frameworks. This study addresses these gaps by employing established identity theories (Hall, 1996; Norton, 2013; Gee, 2000) to understand how English functions as both cultural capital and an identity marker for Acehese Gen Z. By focusing specifically on the intersection of language choice, symbolic meaning, and generational identity in digital spaces, this research provides a more theoretically grounded and culturally situated analysis of how Acehese Gen Z use English to construct and express their identities online.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology used to investigate English use and identity construction among Acehese Gen Z. It explains the research design, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis process. The chapter also describes the use of digital ethnography and semi-structured interviews in collecting the research data. Finally, it explains how thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret patterns in the data.

A. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design combined with digital ethnography to investigate how Acehese Gen Z used English on social media to construct and express their identity. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this research because it allowed for in-depth exploration of meaning making processes, social practices, and identity performance in natural digital contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive nature of this study enabled the researcher to capture and analyze the linguistic and symbolic patterns of English use among Acehese Gen Z without imposing predetermined categories or experimental interventions.

This study was grounded in a social constructivist paradigm, which posited that reality and meaning were socially constructed through human interaction and cultural practices (Schwandt, 1994). This paradigm aligned with the theoretical frameworks employed in this research, Hall's (1996) conceptualization of identity as culturally negotiated, Norton's (2013) emphasis on the social contexts of language investment, and Gee's (2000) understanding of identity as performed through discourse. From a constructivist perspective, Gen Z's English use on social media was not merely linguistic behaviour but a meaningful social practice through which they actively constructed and negotiated their identities. As Hall (1996) argued, identity is never fixed but continuously negotiated through cultural practices and discourse, which made a constructivist paradigm particularly fitting

for examining how Acehnese Gen Z performed their identities through English in digital spaces.

Digital ethnography was used in this study to observe how Acehnese Gen Z used English in their everyday social media activities (Pink et al., 2016). Digital ethnography was chosen over ethnography because it allowed the researcher not only to observe participant's social media activity, but also to conduct interviews with them, resulting in a deeper and more complete understanding of how they used English to construct their identity. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to study participant's real and natural behaviour, rather than placing them in artificial settings like a laboratory. In other words, instead of asking participants to perform in a observed how they actually communicated on platforms like Instagram and TikTok in their daily lives. Digital ethnography recognizes online spaces such as social media as real cultural environments where people build identities, interact socially, and develop their language practices (Kozinets, 2015).

By using this approach, the study treated social media platform as important spaces where Gen Z actively build their identities through the language they used, the visuals they shared and the way they engaged with others online. As Maheswari (2025) noted, these digital spaces allowed individuals to explores and contrusct multiple identities at the same time. This allowed the researcher to analyze both how participants used English on social media, such as through code-mixing, slang and caption, including the platform they used, the audience they had in mind, and the cultural context around them. To support this, Hine's (2015) idea of embedded and everyday ethnography was also applied, which means that online environments were treated as natural and important part of participant's daily lives, not as something separate or artificial.

B. Research Participant

1. Population

Gen Z were people who were born between 1997–2012; those born in those years were then aged 13–28 years old at the time of data collection. The population for this study consisted of Acehnese Gen Z aged 20–24 years who actively used English on social media platforms, drawn from the researcher's followers on Instagram or TikTok. This included students from various educational backgrounds (not limited to English majors) who regularly engaged with platforms such as TikTok and Instagram where English was used for self-expression and identity construction. This age group was considered particularly relevant because, as Avci et al. (2025) explained that identity development during young adulthood was a continuous process in which individuals actively explored and committed to identity choices through social experiences and interactions.

While the researcher was from the English Language Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry, this study did not limit participants to English students only. The focus was on Acehnese Gen Z's natural English use on social media regardless of their formal English education background, as the phenomenon of English use for identity construction transcended academic specialization. As Chyrvonyi (2025) observed, Gen Z was typically more skilled with technology and expressed themselves more openly and genuinely on social media, regardless of formal language education, which further justified the inclusive scope of the population in this study.

2. Sample

This study employed purposive sampling to select participants who could provide rich, relevant data about English use and identity construction on social media. Purposive sampling was appropriate for qualitative research because it allowed the researcher to deliberately select participants who had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015).

The participants for this study were ten Acehnese Gen Z individuals who had to meet specific criteria to ensure they could provide meaningful insights into the research questions. All participants had to be active users of at least one major social media platform, particularly Instagram or TikTok, as these platforms were central to Gen Z's digital identity construction platforms through which, as Sari and Rahmawati (2022) found, Indonesian Gen Z employed English not merely for communication but to project identity and construct a modern self-image. Lastly, participants had to be willing to participate in a semi-structured interview and openly discuss their social media language practices, ensuring voluntary participation and informed consent throughout the research process.

All participants had to be aged between 20–24 years old, representing young adults who were actively shaping their identities and had substantial control over how they presented themselves in digital spaces. They had to demonstrate active English use on social media by incorporating English into their posts, captions, comments, or bios at least three times per week.

To provide a clearer picture of the participant's digital backgrounds, the researcher also recorded basic information about their social media accounts during the data collection period. This included the platforms they used and the number of followers and following on their accounts. This information was included to describe the participants' online presence and social media background, rather than to measure their popularity or influence. The participant profiles are presented in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1 *Participant's Social Media Profiles*

Participant	Age	Platform	Followers	Following
P1	22	Instagram	111	181
P2	22	Instagram	245	351
P3	22	Instagram	189	257
P4	21	Instagram	122	412
P5	22	Instagram	128	151

P6	21	Instagram	50	52
P7	22	Instagram	201	604
P8	22	Instagram	738	759
P9	22	Instagram	62	62
P10	21	Instagram	115	115

The participant's had different numbers of followers and following, reflecting the variation in their social media backgrounds. However, these numbers were not used as a measure of popularity or as a basis for participant selection. Instead, the information provided additional context about the participant's presence in digital spaces where they regularly used English. The selection of participants remained based on the criteria established in this study, particularly their age, English use on social media, and willingness to participate in the interview.

Before recruitment, an initial observation was conducted for one month on the researcher's Instagram and TikTok followers. This observation aimed to identify potential participants who actively used English in their posts, captions, stories, or comments. Anonymized screenshots were taken as evidence. This process assured that the recruited participants genuinely used English on social media before being invited for interviews.

The researcher's Instagram account had a total of 126 followers at the time of the study. During the one month observation period, the researcher carefully reviewed all followers and found that many of them actively used English in their social media posts, captions, stories, and comments. However, after contacting individually through direct messages, only ten followers confirmed their willingness to participate in this study. These ten participants were then selected as the final sample, as they not only met all the established criteria but also gave their informed consent to take part in the semi-structured interviews.

Before recruitment, an initial observation was conducted for one month on the researcher's Instagram and TikTok followers. The researcher's Instagram

account had a total of 126 followers at the time of the study. During the one-month observation period, the researcher carefully reviewed all followers and found that many of them actively used English in their social media posts, captions, stories, and comments. Anonymized screenshots were taken as evidence.

After the observation period, the researcher contacted potential participants individually through direct messages to explain the research purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. However, after being contacted, only ten followers confirmed their willingness to participate in this study. Those who expressed interest and confirmed their willingness to participate were formally invited to take part in the semi-structured interview. This recruitment strategy allowed the researcher to access participants who genuinely demonstrated active English use for identity construction in digital spaces while ensuring ethical research practices through voluntary participation and informed consent.

The sample size of ten participants was considered appropriate for qualitative research focused on in-depth exploration of meaning and experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This number allowed for sufficient data saturation while remaining manageable for detailed analysis. Purposive sampling ensured that all participants had substantial experience using English on social media, which was essential for addressing the research questions about identity construction through language choice. The geographic focus on Aceh Province provided a specific cultural context for understanding how Acehnese Gen Z negotiated their linguistic identities in digital spaces, while the age range of 20–24 years focused on young adults who were at a critical stage of identity formation and digital engagement.

C. Data Collection

The data collection began during one month observation period on the researcher's Instagram and TikTok followers. During this period, the researcher observed potential participant's social media activities, focusing on their use of English in posts, captions, stories, and comments. Anonymized screenshots were collected as evidence. This observation served as an initial stage to ensure that the

recruited participants met the criteria of actively using English on social media. After the observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted as the main data collection method

The main data were collected through semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 10 to 15 minutes, conducted both face-to-face and online conferencing platforms based on participant preference and availability. This flexibility in interview mode ensured participant comfort and accessibility while maintaining the quality of data collection.

Participants were allowed to use whichever language they felt most comfortable with during the interview, whether Indonesian, English, or a mixture of both, to encourage authentic and natural expression of their thoughts and experiences. This approach was consistent with the nature of Acehnese Gen Z's digital communication, which tended to involve code-mixing between Indonesian and English as a natural linguistic practice (Tarihoran et al., 2022). This method allowed the researcher to explore in depth how participants used English to negotiate their identities in digital contexts and what symbolic meanings they attached to English language practices on social media.

Before each interview began, participants were fully informed about the research purpose, procedures, and their rights as research participants. The researcher explained that participation was voluntary, that they had the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences, and that all information shared was to be kept confidential. Participants were asked to provide informed consent, either in written form for face-to-face interviews or verbal consent that was audio recorded for online interviews. Permission to audio record the interview was also explicitly requested, and participants were assured that recordings were only used for research purposes and were stored securely.

Each interview was audio-recorded using a reliable recording device. The recordings were essential for later transcription and detailed analysis. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, each participant was assigned a unique code such

as P1, P2, P3, and so on, which was used throughout the research process instead of their real names. All identifying information was removed from transcripts and any research outputs. The audio recordings and transcripts were stored in password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher and research supervisors.

The interview followed a semi-structured format guided by key themes and questions designed to address both research questions. The first set of questions explored how participants used English on social media to construct and express their identity, covering topics such as English use patterns, motivations for language choice, identity construction through language, code-mixing practices, and community belonging. These themes were informed by Norton's (2013) concept of identity investment, which suggested that language choice reflected speakers' desire to access particular symbolic and social resources. The second set of questions examined the symbolic role of English as a marker of modernity and generational identity, including questions about English as a symbol of modernity, social status and perception, generational identity markers, and cultural and global identity connections. These questions drew on the work of Androutsopoulos (2014), who noted that English functioned as a marker of "cool" in digital youth culture, and Azmi and Hanum (2021), who found that English was associated with intelligence and cosmopolitanism among Indonesian youth. Throughout the interview, the researcher employed probing questions to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses and provide specific examples from their social media practices, ensuring rich and detailed data collection.

After each interview concluded, the researcher thanked the participant sincerely and provided them with an opportunity to add any additional thoughts or ask questions about the research. Participants were informed about the possibility of member checking, where they might be contacted later to review the researcher's interpretation of their responses to ensure accuracy and validity. The researcher documented any observations about the interview context, participant demeanour, and emerging themes immediately after each interview to preserve

important contextual information that might not be captured in the audio recording alone.

D. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to identify patterns in how Acehnese Gen Z participants used English on social media and how this related to their identity construction. Thematic analysis was appropriate for this qualitative research as it allowed systematic identification and interpretation of meaningful themes within the data while maintaining theoretical flexibility. This method enabled the researcher to move beyond surface-level descriptions to interpret the underlying meanings and patterns in participant's language practices and identity expressions.

The first phase of analysis involved transcription and familiarization with the data. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation of participant's words. The transcripts preserved both Indonesian and English segments exactly as spoken by participants, maintaining the authenticity of code-mixing practices that were central to this research particularly relevant given that, as Tarihoran et al. (2022) demonstrated, code-mixing between Indonesian and English was a widespread and meaningful practice among Gen Z in digital communication. After transcription, the researcher read all transcripts multiple times to become thoroughly familiar with the data, taking initial notes about interesting features, patterns, or potential themes that emerged across different participant's accounts.

The second phase involved systematic coding of the interview data. The researcher worked through each transcript line by line, identifying meaningful segments related to English use and identity construction and assigned descriptive codes to these segments. Codes were generated both inductively from the data itself and deductively informed by the theoretical frameworks of Hall (1996), Norton (2013), and Gee (2000). Examples of codes included reasons for language

choice, identity markers, symbolic meanings of English, code-mixing patterns, platform-specific practices and self-presentation strategies. This coding process was conducted manually or with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software to organize and manage the codes systematically.

The third phase involved searching for themes by grouping related codes together to form broader patterns of meaning. The researcher examined all the codes generated and considered how they might combine to form overarching themes that addressed the research questions. This process required moving back and forth between the codes and the raw data to ensure that emerging themes were grounded in participant's actual experiences and words. Potential themes were documented with supporting codes and relevant data extracts, creating an initial thematic map that showed relationships between different themes and sub-themes.

The fourth phase involved reviewing and refining the identified themes to ensure they worked both at the level of individual data extracts and across the entire dataset. The researcher checked whether the themes accurately represented the coded data and whether they told a coherent and compelling story about the data in relation to the research questions. Some themes were combined if they were too similar, split if they contained multiple distinct ideas, or discarded if they lacked sufficient evidence. This iterative process ensured that the final themes were distinct yet interconnected, with clear boundaries and sufficient supporting data. The researcher also checked that all relevant data had been captured within the themes and that the themes addressed both research questions comprehensively.

The fifth phase involved defining and naming each theme clearly. The researcher wrote a detailed analysis of each theme, explaining what it meant, why it was important, and how it related to the research questions and theoretical framework. Each theme was illustrated with representative quotations from participants that demonstrated the theme clearly and authentically. The analysis went beyond simply describing what participants said to interpreting what their

language practices revealed about identity construction processes, the symbolic meanings of English, and generational identity formation in digital spaces. The themes were examined through the theoretical lenses of Hall's (1996) dynamic identity construction, Norton's (2013) identity investment, and Gee's (2000) discourse and affinity identity. For example, participant's English use in captions and bios was interpreted through Gee's (2000) distinction between discourse identity and affinity identity where English served both as a personal style marker and as a signal of belonging to global digital communities such as fandoms or lifestyle groups (Karim & Fitriani, 2023).

The final phase involved producing the research report, where the themes were presented with sufficient evidence from the data and analyzed in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks. The analysis aimed to tell a coherent and persuasive story about how Acehnese Gen Z used English on social media for identity construction and what symbolic role English played in their digital lives. In doing so, the findings were situated within broader scholarly discussions on English as a symbol of modernity and cosmopolitanism (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Azmi & Hanum, 2021; Sulaiman & Fata, 2019), as well as research on Gen Z's performative language practices in digital environments (Tagg, 2015; Baym, 2015).

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, several validation strategies were employed throughout the analysis process. Member checking was conducted by sharing interpretations with selected participants to verify that the researcher's understanding accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives, consistent with best practices in qualitative research credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process allowed participants to confirm, clarify, or challenge the researcher's interpretations, enhancing the validity of findings. The researcher also practiced reflexivity by maintaining awareness of personal biases, assumptions, and positionality that might influence data interpretation, and documented reflections throughout the research process. Additionally, the analysis was discussed with research supervisors who could provide alternative perspectives

and challenge interpretations, contributing to more robust and credible findings. If any statement or finding lacked clear source support in the data, it was not included in the final analysis, ensuring that all claims were grounded in evidence rather than researcher assumptions.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion based on the data collected from Acehnese Gen Z participants. It describes the themes identified through the thematic analysis of their experiences and English use on social media. The findings are organized according to the research questions and supported by participants' statements. Finally, the discussion interprets the findings using the theoretical frameworks and previous studies presented in Chapter II.

A. Findings

Before the interviews, a one-month preliminary observation was conducted on the researcher's Instagram and TikTok followers. The observation confirmed that all ten participants actively used English in their social media posts, captions, or comments, which supported their selection for this study. Based on the interview data collected from ten participants, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis by identifying significant statement and assigning codes of data. The identified codes were then grouped into several categories based on the similarities, as presented in **Table 4.1** below.

Table 4.1 *Code Grouping into Categories*

Codes	Categories	Example
Confidence, Expressive, Self expression	Emotional and Identity expression	"When I post in English, I feel more confident and expressive,..." (P1)
Aesthetic, Trendy, Stylish, Modern	Perception of English	"... When I use English, it makes me seem more modern. Because English is modern language. I just follow the trend" (P2)

Code-mixing, Flexible, Natural	Language practice	“I mix language because sometimes a certain word or expression sound better in English while others are clearer in Indonesian. Mixing them makes my message more flexible and expressive” (P6)
Global identity, Open minded	Identity construction	“Using English helps me express a different side of myself. It allows me to be more creative, open minded, and show that I can connect with a global culture” (P6)
Access to information, Connecting with others	Functional use of English	“I use English in social media because English is an international language. So, if we use English, people from other countries can understand what we mean” (P4)

Based on the code grouping presented in **Table 4.1**, four main themes emerged from the data to address both research questions.

1. English Use in Constructing and Expressing Identity

The thematic analysis of interview data addressing the first research question reveals that English plays an important role in how participants construct and express their identity on social media. Two main themes emerged from the data: Using English for Self-Expression and Confidence, and Code-mixing as a natural language in digital practice.

Table 4.2 below presents the distribution of these themes across the ten participants. A checkmark (✓) indicates that the code or theme was present in the participant's interview responses.

Table 4.2 *Distribution of Themes Across Participant.*

Code	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Confidence	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Self expression	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Expressive	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Code-mixing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Flexibility	✓			✓		✓				
Natural communication	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		

As shown in Table 4.2, the theme of code-mixing was present in all ten participants (100%). Self expression was present in nine participants (90%), while confidence and expressive were present in seven participants each (70%).

a. Using English for Self-Expression and Confidence

The first theme that emerged from the data reveals how participants use English to express their thoughts, emotions, and identities more freely and confidently on social media. Many participants reported feeling more expressive and self assured when using English compared to Indonesian in their social media posts. This pattern appeared consistently across multiple participants, suggesting

that English functions not merely as a communication tool but as a medium for performing particular aspects of identity.

Regarding the emotional impact of using English, Participant 1 explained how English makes her feel confident when posting on social media:

"When I post in English, I feel more confident and expressive. But when I post in Indonesian, I feel more comfortable and closer to my local friends."
[P1]

This statement illustrates that English and Indonesian serve different identity functions for Gen Z users. While Indonesian provides comfort and local connection, English enables a sense of confidence and enhanced expressiveness. The participant's distinction between the two languages suggests that language choice is intentional and tied to specific self-presentation goals.

Similarly, Participant 9 described how English helps him express himself more effectively:

"When I post in English, I feel more confident and expressive, but when I use Indonesian, it feels more casual and closer." [P9]

This response reinforces the pattern that English carries associations with confidence and expressiveness. The contrast between *"confident and expressive"* versus *"casual and closer"* indicates that participants perceive English and Indonesian as serving distinct communicative and identity purposes in digital spaces.

The sense of confidence was not limited to emotional expression but also extended to how participants presented themselves to their audience. Participant 8 described his experience posting in English:

"Posting in English makes me feel confident. Like I'm connecting with a wider audience Indonesian feels more relaxed and personal." [P8]

This statement suggests that English provides access to a broader, more global audience, which enhances the participant's sense of confidence. English use is linked to aspirations for wider social reach and participation in global digital culture.

Beyond confidence, participants also associated English with the ability to express certain feelings or moods that Indonesian could not capture as effectively. Participant 3 explained this nuance:

"Using English helps me express my feelings in a different way. Sometimes there are words in English that sound deeper or more suitable to describe what I feel, so English can help me show my thoughts or mood in another style."
[P3]

This statement reveals that English offers expressive resources that participants perceive as unavailable or less effective in Indonesian. The phrase "in another style" suggests that English allows participants to perform a different version of themselves one that may feel more modern, creative, or emotionally nuanced. This supports the idea that language choice in digital spaces is closely tied to identity performance.

The perception that English enables better expression of specific emotions was also mentioned by Participant 8, who stated:

"Because it feels more expressive and sometimes Indonesia doesn't capture the vibe I want." [P8]

The use of the term "vibe" itself an English word commonly used in Gen Z digital discourse illustrates how English has become embedded in participants' everyday linguistic repertoire. The participant's statement indicates that English words and expressions carry particular connotations that Indonesian equivalents may not fully convey, making English the preferred choice for certain types of self-presentation.

In addition, P5 mentioned:

“I feel more expressive in English than in Indonesian”

This supports the idea that English allows participants to present a different version of themselves. The comparison with Indonesian indicates that participants are aware of how each language shapes their identity differently, where English is associated with openness and expressiveness.

Another important perspective was shared by P7:

“Some words in English sound more natural or simple for social media”

This suggests that English is also chosen for its practicality in digital communication. The words “*natural*” and “*simple*” indicate that English fits well with the informal and nature of social media interaction.

Interestingly, some participants also noted that Acehese serves a similar expressive function in specific contexts. P4 stated that:

“There are some words that describe feelings more strongly in Acehese than in English or Indonesian”

Suggesting that while English dominates public-facing posts, Acehese retains a role in emotionally charged or culturally intimate expression.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that using English for emotional and identity expression among Acehese Gen Z on social media. By using English, participants feel more confident, expressive, and capable of conveying specific moods or feelings that align with their desired online personas. This suggests that English is not chosen arbitrarily but strategically deployed to achieve particular self-presentation goals in digital contexts.

b. Code-mixing as a Natural Language in Digital Practice

The second theme that emerged from the data is the widespread practice of code-mixing blending English and Indonesian within the same posts, captions, or

comments. All participants reported regularly mixing both languages, describing this practice as natural, flexible, and authentically representative of how they communicate in everyday digital life. Code-mixing was not perceived as linguistic confusion or deficiency but rather as a deliberate and creative linguistic strategy.

When asked about code-mixing, Participant 1 responded enthusiastically:

"Yes, of course, I often mix both languages in one caption or story, I love it." [P1]

The phrase *"I love it"* suggests that code-mixing is not just accepted but actively enjoyed. This positive attitude indicates that mixing languages is valued as a form of self-expression and linguistic creativity.

Participants explained that code-mixing feels more natural than using a single language exclusively. Participant 4 described her reasoning:

"Why do I mix English and Indonesian? Because it is a daily use. Maybe because of the delay in thinking when we speak Indonesian, there are English words that we usually use. So, we don't know what Indonesian is. On the contrary, when we speak English, we don't know what English is so, we use Indonesian. So, I often mix English and Indonesian because sometimes I forget what is in Indonesian and in English." [P4]

This statement reveals that code-mixing occurs because certain concepts or expressions are more readily available in one language than the other. The participant's reference to *"forgetting"* words in one language while speaking the other illustrates that bilingual speakers naturally draw from both linguistic repertoires based on accessibility and appropriateness.

Participant 1 further explained the functional reasons for code-mixing:

"Because mixing languages feels more natural and flexible, sometimes Indonesian explains feelings better but English makes it sound more stylish and

concise. And at the same time, it helps me improve my English while I'm just casually posting on my social media." [P1]

This response highlights that code-mixing allows participants to leverage the strengths of both languages: Indonesian for clarity and emotional depth, English for style and conciseness. The added benefit of English practice through casual social media use suggests that code-mixing also serves an informal learning function.

The naturalness of code-mixing was emphasized by multiple participants. Participant 5 stated:

"Yes, it feels more natural and easy to talk like that. It sounds like we really speak in everyday." [P5]

The phrase *"sounds like we really speak in everyday"* indicates that code-mixing reflects participants' authentic linguistic behaviour. Rather than adopting a single language for the sake of consistency, participants mix languages because that is how they genuinely communicate in their daily lives.

Participant 6 explained the flexibility that code-mixing provides:

"I mix languages because sometimes a certain words or expressions sound better in English while others are clearer in Indonesian. Mixing them makes my message more flexible and expressive." [P6]

This statement underscores that code-mixing is a strategic choice that enhances communicative effectiveness. By selecting words from both languages based on their suitability, participants can craft messages that are both precise and stylistically appealing.

The naturalness and flexibility of code-mixing were also mentioned by Participant 8:

"Yes, all the time, it just flows naturally." [P8]

The phrase *"it just flows naturally"* confirms that code-mixing is not a conscious, laborious process but an automatic and fluid linguistic practice for Gen Z users.

Participant 10 provided a more pragmatic perspective on code-mixing, explaining that it accommodates different levels of English proficiency:

"Like I said in the previous question it most likely because some people especially when they aren't really fluent in English language but they still try to understand the English word or language we often try or it's better to mix and match a few words such as like in a full sentence we can't be really comprehend a full sentence to other people who aren't really understand it but they understand a few words in English such as an easy to be word or something that are related to their daily life commonly." [P10]

This statement reveals that code-mixing also serves a social function: making content accessible to audiences with varying English proficiency levels. By mixing languages, participants can communicate with both English-proficient and Indonesian-dominant audiences simultaneously.

Beyond English-Indonesian mixing, some participants also incorporate Acehnese into their digital code-mixing practice. P6 stated *"I might say, im so tired today, hana semangat lagi"*. While P8 noted, *"It just come out naturally, for example, that boy geutanyoe smart banget"*. This trilingual mixing further illustrates how Acehnese Gen Z draw from their full linguistic repertoire in digital communication.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that code-mixing is a widespread and normalized practice among Acehnese Gen Z on social media. Participants view language mixing as natural, flexible, and representative of their authentic communicative style. Code-mixing allows them to draw on the expressive strengths of both languages while maintaining accessibility and stylistic appeal.

2. English as a Symbol of Modernity and Generational Identity

The findings related to the second research question reveal that English plays a symbolic role in shaping participant's identity. Two main themes emerged: English as a symbol of modernity and aesthetic identity, and English as a marker of global identity.

Table 4.3 below presents the distribution of these themes across the nine participants. A checkmark (✓) indicates that the code or theme was present in the participant's interview responses.

Table 4.3 *Distrbution of Themes Across Participant*

Code	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Aesthetic	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			
Trendy	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Modern	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stylish	✓	✓						✓		
Global identity	✓		✓			✓		✓		
Open mindedness	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓
Access to information	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓
Connecting with others	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓

As shown in Table 4.3, the themes of modern, trendy, and open mindedness appeared most frequently across participants. The following sections elaborate on these themes, beginning with English as a symbol of modernity.

a. English and Perception of Modernity

The first major theme reflects participants' perception of English as a symbol of modernity, trendiness, and aesthetic appeal. Across the interviews, participants consistently associated English with contemporary digital culture and used it to make their content appear more stylish, updated, and visually appealing. This

symbolic function of English extends beyond communication to encompass lifestyle and identity signaling.

When asked whether using English makes them seem more modern or trendy, participants responded affirmatively. Participant 1 stated:

"Yes, I think English has a strong influence in today's modern and trendy culture. Using English on social media can make posts look more up to date and stylish, and honestly, I really like that." [P1]

This response clearly demonstrates that English is perceived as aligned with modernity and stylishness. The participant's explicit acknowledgment *"I really like that"* suggests that the symbolic value of English is not only recognized but also actively desired. Using English becomes a way to participate in contemporary digital aesthetics and signal cultural awareness.

Participant 2 supported this association between English and modernity, explaining her motivation for using English:

"In my opinion, yes. When I use English, it makes me seem more modern. Because English is a modern language. I just follow the trend." [P2]

The statement *"English is a modern language"* reflects a deeply internalized belief that English inherently carries modern connotations. The phrase *"I just follow the trend"* indicates that English use is part of broader Gen Z linguistic and cultural practices, suggesting peer influence and generational patterns in language choice.

The aesthetic dimension of English use was particularly emphasized by participants when discussing captions and visual content. Participant 1 explained:

"I usually use English when I post some lyrics or write captions on my Instagram stories. And I feel like using English makes the vibes look more classy or aesthetic. And that is why I use English when I post on my Instagram stories." [P1]

The use of terms like *"classy"* and *"aesthetic"* reveals that English is valued not just for its communicative function but for its visual and stylistic qualities. In digital platforms like Instagram, where visual presentation is central, language becomes part of the overall aesthetic package. English captions are perceived as enhancing the *"vibe"* or mood of the content, making posts more appealing.

Similarly, Participant 3 described how English contributes to the aesthetic quality of her posts:

"I usually choose to use English when I post something aesthetic, or when I want the caption to look more interesting. For example, when I post a photo or a story that has a certain mood, I feel that English sometimes fits better."
[P3]

This statement illustrates that English is selected based on its perceived fit with the mood or aesthetic of the content. The participant's careful consideration of when English *"fits better"* shows that language choice is a deliberate aesthetic decision, similar to choosing filters, fonts, or music for social media content.

The association between English and trendiness was further emphasized by Participant 7:

"I think English sounds more modern and catchy sometimes it just feel easier to express certain feeling in English also I'm used to seeing this everywhere on social media so I just follow that." [P7]

This response highlights how English has become normalized in Gen Z social media practices through constant exposure. The phrase *"I'm used to seeing this everywhere"* suggests that English use is reinforced by peer modeling and platform trends. By adopting English, participants align themselves with what they perceive as standard Gen Z digital behaviour.

Participant 4 explicitly connected English use to appearing modern and trendy:

"Yes, I do. I think that using English makes me seem more modern and trendy. Because, as I said earlier, English is an international language. So, it makes people see that I can speak an international language. And also, they understand what I mean." [P4]

This statement links modernity not only to the language itself but also to the global status of English. Being able to use an "international language" signals cosmopolitanism and global awareness, qualities that participants associate with modern identity.

Even Participant 10, who took a more pragmatic view of English as a practical requirement rather than a fashion statement, acknowledged that others perceive English as modern:

"For a few people yes it it might seems like it's modern or trendy but for me it's more likely a something that we need to do or I quote something that are more requirement for now society..." [P10]

Although this participant personally views English as functional necessity, the acknowledgment that *"for a few people"* it appears modern confirms that the symbolic association between English and modernity is widespread among Gen Z.

Interestingly, when asked about Acehnese language use, most participants rejected the notion that local languages are "less cool" than English. P4 stated, *"Acehnese is our identity. It makes us show our identity and show our culture."* P5 added, *"Acehnese shows our identity and roots. It makes our content stand out."* This suggests that while English symbolizes modernity and global belonging, Acehnese simultaneously serves as a source of cultural pride and local authenticity.

Overall, these findings indicate that English is strongly associated with modernity, trendiness, and aesthetic identity among Acehnese Gen Z. Participants consciously use English to make their social media content appear more stylish,

contemporary, and visually appealing. This symbolic function positions English as cultural capital that signals participation in global digital youth culture.

b. English as a Marker of Global Identity

The fourth major theme reveals how participants use English to express global identity and signal their connection to international communities and cultures. English was consistently associated with open-mindedness, global awareness, and participation in worldwide digital conversations, positioning participants as members of a global generation rather than solely local communities.

Participant 1 explicitly connected English use to global identity:

"Using English helps me show that I'm open-minded and interested in global culture. So, especially in this era, I think being good at English is important because it makes many things easier. Like accessing information, connecting with people, and following trends." [P1]

This statement demonstrates that English is valued not only as a communication tool but as a marker of global orientation and cultural openness. The participant links English proficiency to practical benefits accessing information, connecting with people, and following trends all of which are essential for participating in global digital culture.

Similarly, Participant 6 described how English helps her express a globally connected identity:

"Using English helps me express a different side of myself. It allows me to be more creative, open minded, and show that I can connect with a global culture." [P6]

The phrase *"connect with a global culture"* indicates that English serves as a bridge to international communities and cultural conversations. By using English,

participants signal that they are not limited by local linguistic or cultural boundaries.

Participant 7 explained how English use reflects identification with global trends:

"I think it shows that I'm open to global trend and not just local stuff it also shows my style and who I want people to see me like more expressive or up to date." [P7]

This response reveals that English use is tied to self-presentation goals: being perceived as someone who is aware of and participates in global rather than merely local trends. The phrase *"who I want people to see me"* underscores the performative nature of language choice in digital identity construction.

The connection between English and global citizenship was further emphasized by Participant 10:

"What I think about using English to help me express about who I am isn't really exactly helping that much because using a different language especially a global language are most likely just something that we require to do on social media, not something that are most likely to use to make us feel to express things but sometimes it is required to use English to talk to other people especially in global area so we will be more globally connected to each other." [P10]

Although this participant views English primarily as a functional requirement rather than an identity expression tool, the acknowledgment that English is necessary for being *"globally connected"* confirms that English serves as the linguistic currency of global digital participation.

Participant 8 described how English positions him within a wider, more international audience:

"It shows the side of me that is modern and open to the world, not just code, not just local." [P8]

The contrast between *"open to the world"* and *"not just local"* illustrates how English use helps participants transcend local identity boundaries and claim membership in global communities.

Participant 4 linked English use to international accessibility:

"I use English in social media because English is an international language. So, if we use English, people from other countries can understand what we mean. Especially in social media like Instagram or TikTok." [P4]

This statement highlights that English provides access to international audiences, enabling participants to communicate beyond Indonesian-speaking communities. The global reach of English makes it the preferred language for those seeking wider engagement.

The role of English as a global identity marker is further reinforced by participant's reports of Acehnese use on private accounts. P6 and P9 noted that friends use Acehnese on their "third accounts" (private accounts with close friends), while English dominates public-facing posts. This division suggests that English is perceived as the language for global, public audiences, whereas Acehnese is reserved for intimate, local, or culturally specific communication.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that English functions as a marker of global identity among Acehnese Gen Z. By using English on social media, participants signal their connection to international communities, global trends, and worldwide cultural conversations. English use reflects values of open-mindedness, cosmopolitanism, and participation in a globally connected digital generation.

B. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several important dimensions of how Acehnese Gen Z uses English on social media to construct and express their identities, and how English functions symbolically as a marker of modernity and generational belonging. The data indicate that English is not merely a foreign language learned in school but has become an integral part of participants' digital linguistic repertoire, serving multiple identity, social, and cultural functions.

The finding that participants feel more confident and expressive when using English on social media compared to Indonesian directly supports Norton's (2013) theory of identity investment. Participants reported that English allows them to express certain feelings or moods that Indonesian cannot capture as effectively. For example, P1 stated, "When I post in English, I feel more confident and expressive," while P3 explained that "sometimes there are words in English that sound deeper or more suitable to describe what I feel." According to Norton (2013), language use involves "investment" in identity as speakers are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. When participants choose English over Indonesian, they are not simply communicating; they are investing in identity positions associated with confidence, modernity, and global orientation. Norton's concept of "imagined communities" is also evident here, as participants use English to signal affiliation with global communities of English speakers and international youth culture. This finding aligns with previous research by Sari and Rahmawati (2022), who found that Indonesian TikTok users employ English to project a modern self-image, and with Sulaiman and Fata (2019), who reported that college students perceive English as a marker of intelligence and global connectivity.

Another key finding reveals that code-mixing between English and Indonesian is a widespread and normalized practice among all ten participants. Participants described mixing languages as natural, flexible, and representative of their authentic daily communication. P1 stated, "Mixing languages feels more natural

and flexible," while P5 explained that "it sounds like we really speak in everyday." P8 added that "it just flows naturally." This finding reflects Hall's (1996) conceptualization of identity as never unified but multiply constructed across different discourses, practices and positions. Code-mixing allows participants to perform hybrid identities that are simultaneously local and global, traditional and modern. Rather than choosing one identity over another, participants blend linguistic resources to construct identities that honor both local roots and global aspirations. This finding also supports previous research by Tarihoran et al. (2022), who found that code-mixing between Indonesian and English is a widespread practice among Gen Z in digital communication. The present study extends this finding by showing that code-mixing is not merely a communicative strategy but a form of identity performance.

Participants also use specific English terms such as "vibes," "aesthetic," and "mood" in their social media posts, and they describe English use as something that reflects "how Gen Z talks." This finding can be understood through Gee's (2000) distinction between discourse identity and affinity identity. At the discourse level, participants use English to perform individual identity traits such as confidence, expressiveness, and cultural sophistication. When P9 stated, "I think it helps me show a more creative and expressive side of myself," this demonstrates discourse identity using language to signal personal characteristics. At the affinity level, English signals membership in communities that transcend national boundaries. Participants' references to "following trends," being "up to date," and connecting with "global culture" indicate that English use is about belonging to a generational and cultural group global Gen Z. This finding aligns with Chyrvonyi (2025), who argues that specific linguistic markers including slang and borrowed terms are crucial for expressing and recognizing generational identity.

The findings strongly suggest that English functions as a marker of generational identity. Participants distinguish themselves from older generations not just through English use itself but through specific practices such as code-

mixing and adopting global digital trends. This supports Chyrvonyi's (2025) argument that linguistic markers are crucial for understanding generational identity in digital communication. The participants' descriptions of English as "natural" for their generation and references to "how Gen Z talks" indicate that English use has become normalized as part of Gen Z's communicative style in Indonesia. This normalization is reinforced through peer modeling on social media participants mentioned seeing English "everywhere" on their feeds and "following" what others do. This peer-driven language socialization process shapes generational linguistic norms (Leppänen et al., 2009).

The association between English and modernity, trendiness, and aesthetic appeal emerged strongly from the data. P1 stated that using English "makes the vibes look more classy or aesthetic," while P2 said, "When I use English, it makes me seem more modern. Because English is a modern language." P3 explained that she uses English "when I post something aesthetic, or when I want the caption to look more interesting." This finding supports Androutsopoulos (2014), who notes that English serves as a marker of "cool" in digital youth culture across multiple national contexts. The aesthetic dimension of English use reveals that English is valued not just for its communicative function but for its visual and stylistic qualities. On visual platforms like Instagram, where presentation matters, language becomes part of the overall aesthetic package. This finding also aligns with Azmi and Hanum (2021), who found that in the Indonesian context, English is associated with intelligence, fashion, and cosmopolitanism. The present study adds nuance by showing that for Acehese Gen Z, this symbolism operates within a culturally conservative context where English use may carry additional meaning as a form of subtle modernity.

Finally, participants use English to express global identity and signal their connection to international communities. P1 stated, "Using English helps me show that I'm open-minded and interested in global culture," while P6 explained that English allows her to "connect with a global culture." P7 said, "I think it shows that I'm open to global trends and not just local stuff." This finding supports

Norton's concept of imagined communities, where Acehnese Gen Z use English to affiliate with global digital communities even while maintaining local Acehnese and Indonesian identity. This finding also aligns with Roudometof's (2016) concept of glocalization, where identities are simultaneously rooted in local cultural contexts while oriented toward global participation. Code-mixing enables this glocal identity construction, allowing participants to honor both local roots and global aspirations.

The findings on Acehnese language use add an important dimension to the discussion of identity construction among Acehnese Gen Z. Unlike English, which participants use to signal modernity and global belonging, Acehnese functions as a marker of local identity, cultural authenticity, and intimacy. Participants like P4 and P6 explicitly stated that Acehnese represents "our identity" and "our culture," suggesting that digital identity for Acehnese Gen Z is not simply about adopting global English but about strategically navigating trilingual resources Acehnese, Indonesian, and English depending on audience, platform, and communicative purpose. The finding that Acehnese is more frequently used on third accounts (private accounts with close friends) indicates that language choice is closely tied to perceptions of privacy and social closeness. This supports García and Wei's (2014) translanguaging framework, where multilingual speakers draw from their full linguistic repertoire to achieve different social and identity goals. While English may dominate public-facing content, Acehnese retains a vital role in constructing intimate, culturally grounded identities in digital spaces.

In summary, the findings of this study demonstrate that English serves both practical and symbolic functions in digital communication among Acehnese Gen Z. On one hand, it is used for communication and accessing information. On the other hand, it is used as a resource for identity construction, allowing individuals to express themselves, build a certain image. These findings highlight the important role of language in shaping identity, particularly in digital spaces where self-presentation is highly visible and continuously negotiated.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions and suggestions based on the findings and discussion of the study. It summarizes the main findings concerning English use and identity construction among Acehnese Gen Z. The chapter also highlights the roles of English in expressing personal, modern, local, and global identities. Finally, suggestions are provided for educators, researchers, and other parties interested in English use and digital identity.

A. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how Acehnese Generation Z use English on social media and how it relates to their identity construction in digital spaces. Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that English plays a significant and multidimensional role in shaping how participants express themselves, present their identity, and position themselves within both local and global contexts.

First, the study found that English is widely used for self-expression and confidence. Participants reported that they feel more expressive, comfortable, and confident when using English, especially in informal contexts such as social media posts, captions, and stories. This indicates that English provides a linguistic space that allows individuals to communicate more freely without feeling overly constrained. It also suggests that language choice is closely connected to self-presentation, where participants intentionally use English to construct a more confident and expressive identity in digital environments.

Second, the findings reveal that code-mixing between English and Indonesian is a common and natural practice among participants. Rather than strictly separating languages, participants flexibly combine both languages depending on context, purpose, and emotional expression. This reflects a hybrid identity where individuals integrate both local and global linguistic resources. The use of code-

mixing also demonstrates that language practices among Generation Z are dynamic and adaptable, especially in digital spaces where communication is more informal and fluid.

Third, English is strongly associated with modernity and aesthetic value. Participants frequently use English to make their content appear more stylish, trendy, and visually appealing. This suggests that English carries symbolic meaning and is used strategically to construct a desirable digital image. In this context, English becomes more than just a communication tool; it functions as a form of symbolic capital that enhances how individuals are perceived by others on social media.

Fourth, the study shows that English also functions as a marker of global identity. Participants use English to access global content, follow international trends, and connect with people from different cultural backgrounds. This indicates that English enables individuals to go beyond their local context and participate in a wider global community. As a result, English plays an important role in shaping a globalized identity among Generation Z.

In a broader sense, this study demonstrates that English serves both practical and symbolic functions in digital communication. On one hand, it is used as a tool for communication and accessing information. On the other hand, it is used as a resource for identity construction, allowing individuals to express themselves, build a certain image, and align with modern and global culture. These findings highlight the important role of language in shaping identity, particularly in digital spaces where self-presentation is highly visible and continuously negotiated.

This study contributes to sociolinguistic research by demonstrating how English functions in postcolonial, digitally connected contexts where it is neither the colonial language nor solely a foreign language, but a symbolic resource for youth identity construction. The findings extend Norton's identity investment theory by showing how investment operates in informal digital contexts where language is used for identity performance rather than formal learning. They also

support Hall's framework by illustrating how identity is multiply constructed through linguistic choices in digital spaces, and they apply Gee's concepts by demonstrating how language simultaneously performs individual and group identities in contemporary youth culture.

The findings also have practical implications for educators. The study suggests that Gen Z learns and uses English primarily for identity expression and social positioning rather than traditional communicative competence.

B. Suggestion

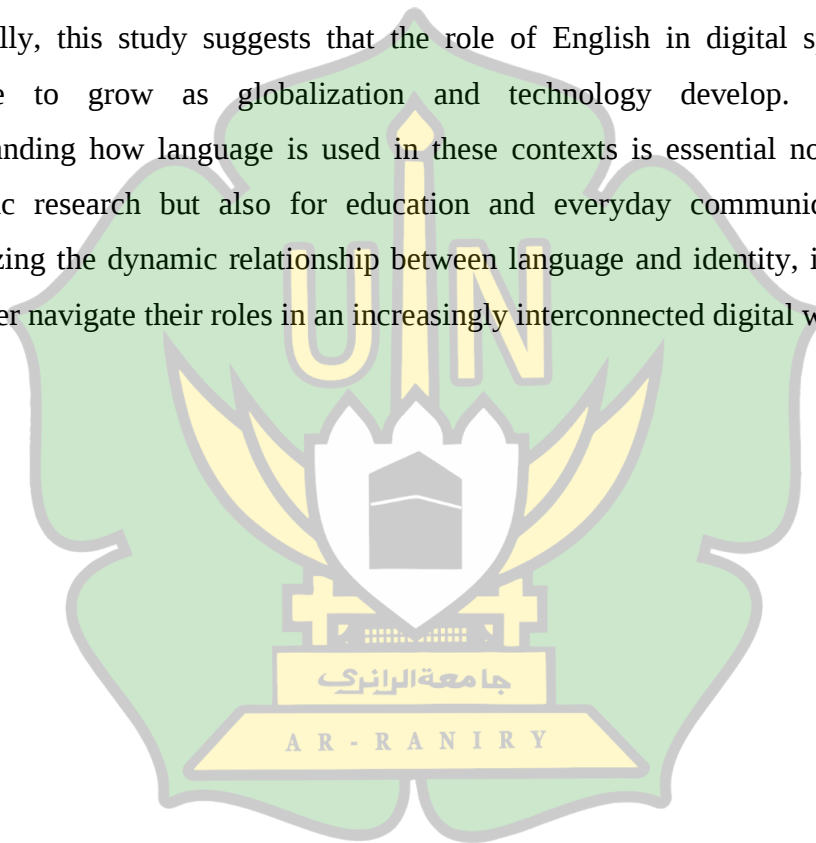
Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be proposed for educators, future researchers, and social media users.

First, for educators, it is important to recognize that students' use of English on social media reflects authentic and meaningful language practices. Therefore, English teaching should not be limited to formal grammar and classroom-based communication, but should also consider how students use language in real-life digital contexts. Teachers can incorporate activities that allow students to create social media-style content, such as captions, short videos, or digital storytelling, using English. This approach can make learning more relevant, engaging, and aligned with students' daily experiences. In addition, educators should acknowledge the role of code-mixing as a natural part of language development rather than viewing it as a mistake.

Second, for future researchers, it is recommended to expand this study by involving a larger and more diverse group of participants to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Future studies may also explore different regions, age groups, or social backgrounds to compare how English is used across contexts. In terms of methodology, combining interviews with other data sources, such as actual social media posts or digital content analysis, could provide deeper insights into how language is used in practice. Furthermore, future research could examine other aspects of identity, such as gender, cultural identity, or professional identity, in relation to language use in digital spaces.

Third, for students and social media users, it is important to be aware of how language choice can influence identity and self-presentation. While using English can provide opportunities for global communication and access to information, it is also important to maintain a balance with local language and cultural identity. Being mindful of language use can help individuals express themselves more authentically while still engaging with global digital culture. This awareness can also encourage more critical and intentional use of language in online interactions.

Finally, this study suggests that the role of English in digital spaces will continue to grow as globalization and technology develop. Therefore, understanding how language is used in these contexts is essential not only for academic research but also for education and everyday communication. By recognizing the dynamic relationship between language and identity, individuals can better navigate their roles in an increasingly interconnected digital world.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Appoinment Letter of Supervsior


KEPUTUSAN DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH
NOMOR: 1496 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/KM.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 :

KESATU :

Menunjuk Saudara :

Dr. Risdaneva, MA

Untuk membimbing Skripsi

Nama : Alifa M. Zahra
NIM : 220203045
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul Skripsi : **The Role of English in the Formation of Gen Z's Identity in Digital Era**

KEDUA :

KETIGA :

KEEMPAT :

KELIMA :

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


Saiful 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 Perbendaharaan Negara (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 the Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan



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

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

Nomor : B-3298/Un.08/FTK.1/TL.00/5/2026

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 : 220203045

Nama : ALIFA M. ZAHRA

Program Studi/Jurusan : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Alamat : BIREUEN-TAKENGON JULI COT MESJID

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 ***THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN THE FORMATION OF GENERATION Z'S IDENTITY IN DIGITAL ERA***

Banda Aceh, 11 Mei 2026

An. Dekan

Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan Kelembagaan



Prof. Dr. Buhori Muslim, M.Ag.

NIP. 197508152001121002

Berlaku sampai : 26 Juni 2026

AR - RANIRY

Appendix C

Confirmation Letter of Conducting Research at the English Language Education Department



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

SURAT KETERANGAN
 Nomor: B-319/Un.08/PBI/Kp.01.2/5/2026

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:

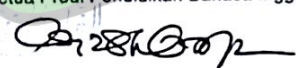
Nama	: Alifa M. Zahra
NIM	: 220203045
Prodi	: Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Alamat	: Dusun Lampoh Balee, Juli Cot Mesjid, Kec. Juli,

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:

"The Role of English in the Formation of Generation Z's Identity in Digital Era"

Demikianlah Surat Keterangan ini kami buat agar dapat dipergunakan seperlunya.

Banda Aceh, 21 Mei 2026
 Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris,



Syarifah Dahliana

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: The Role of English in the Formation of Gen Z's Identity in Digital Era

Researcher: Alifa M. Zahra

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. You are invited because you are an Acehnese young adult aged 20-24 years old who actively uses English on social media platform such as Instagram. This research aims to explore how Acehnese Gen Z uses English on social media to construct and express their identity, and what role English plays in shaping their generational identity in digital spaces.

If you agree to participate, you will be involved in a semi-structured interview session. The interview will include questions about your social media language practices, your motivations for using English, how English helps you express who you are, your code-mixing practices, and your views on English as a symbol of modernity and global identity. The session will last approximately 10-20 minutes, and with your permission, the conversation will be audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of data.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline participation, refuse to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, explanation, or any impact on your personal or academic positions. You also have the right to withdraw your data prior to the analysis stage.

Confidentiality

All information provided in this study will be treated confidentially. Your name and any identifying information will not appear in any report or publication. A participant code (P1, P2, P3) will be used to protect your identity. All collected data, including audio recordings and transcripts, will be securely stored and used solely for academic and research purposes.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact:

Researcher:

Alifa M. Zahra

Department of English Language Education UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh

Email: 220203045@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

Phone: +6282315214855

Statement of Consent

I have read and understood the information provided above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and all of my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any consequences. By signing below, I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Banda Aceh, 2026

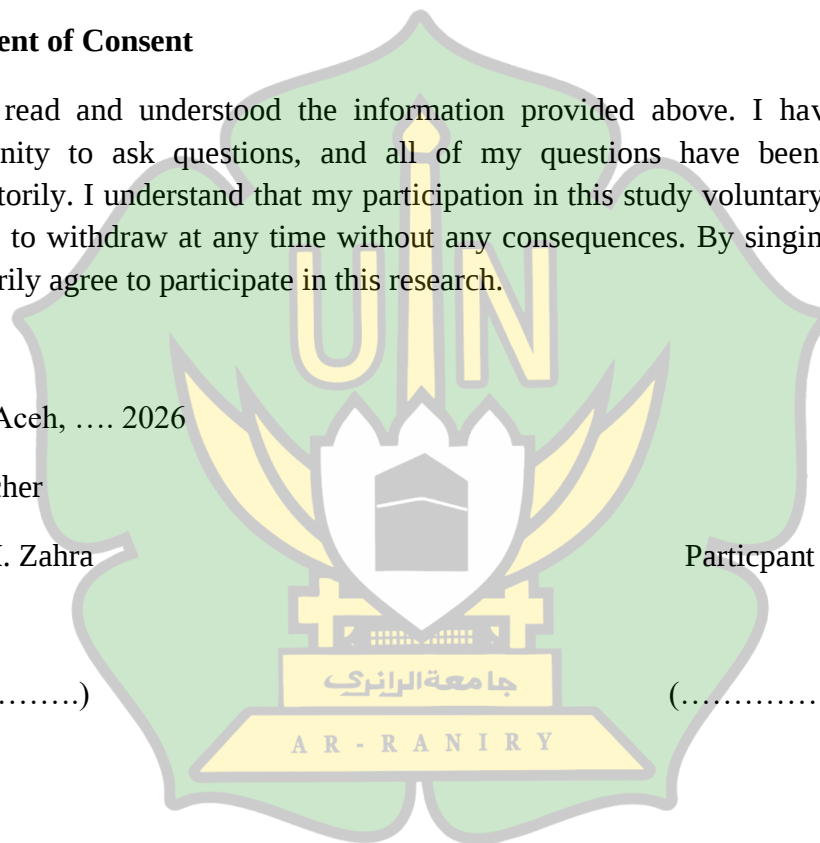
Researcher

Alifa M. Zahra

(.....)

Participant

(.....)



Appendix E

Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol

Research Project Title: The Role of English in the Formation of Gen Z's Identity in Digital Era

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Research Investigator: Alifa M. Zahra

Participant:

Position of Interview: Acehnese Gen Z Instagram/Tiktok users (researcher's followers)

This research explores how Acehnese Gen Z uses English on social media to construct and express their identity in the digital era. The study aims to investigate how Acehnese Gen Z use English on social media to build and show who they are, and what role English plays in shaping their generational identity in digital spaces. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, and the conversation will be audio-recorded with the participant's consent. All information provided by the participants will be kept confidential and used solely for academic research purposes. During the interview, participants will be asked several questions regarding their experiences and practices of using English on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. The interview is expected to take approximately 10–20 minutes.

Questions

1. Which social media platform do you use most frequently?
2. How often do you use English in social media post?
3. Can you describe some situations where you choose to use English?
4. Why do you choose English on social media?
5. How do you feel when you post in English versus Indonesian?
6. How do you think that using English helps you to express who you are?
7. How do your friend or followers respond when you use English?
8. Do you often mix English and Indonesian?
9. Why do you mix language instead using just one?
10. Do you think using English makes you seem more modern or trendy?

Follow up question

1. Have you ever used Acehese in your Instagram or Tiktok posts? In what situation?
2. When you mix English and Indonesian, do you sometimes also mix with Acehese? How u feel?
3. Do you ever feel that using Acehese on social media is 'less cool' or 'too traditional' compared to using English?
4. Are there any of your fellow Acehese Gen Z friends who actively use Acehese on social media? What kind of content do they usually post?

Appendix F

Sample of Interview Transcript

Interview: Alifa M. Zahra

Participant 1

A	Thankyou for agreeing to participate in my research. This interview will take arround 10-15 minutes. Your answer will only be used for academic purpose, and your identity will remain confidential. Is it okay if I record this interview?
P1	Okay, with pleasure.
A	Okei, we going to the first question. Do you use social media?
P1	Yes, I do.
A	Wich social media platform do you use most frequently?
P1	Okay, I mostly use TikTok because I feel more comfortable there, and I open it almost everyday to watch the videos, follow the trends, and sometimes share content. And I like the TikTok because it feels more fun and less formal, so I can just be myself without thinking too much. And I still use the Instagram, but I spend more time on the TikTok.
A	How often do you use English in your social media posts?
P1	And I use English quite often, especially in my Instagram story captions, and sometimes on TikTok too. And I would say maybe around 50% of the time? And it depends on the mood and the content I post.
A	Can you describe some situations where you choose to use English?
P1	: If I'm sharing a quote, some lyrics, or something aesthetic, I usually prefer English. But if I'm talking about something more personal or serious, sometimes switch back to Indonesian, of course. I usually use English when I post some lyrics or write captions on my Instagram stories. And I feel like using English makes the vibes look more classy or aesthetic. And that is why I use English when I post on my Instagram stories.
A	Why do you choose English on social media instead of Indonesian?
P1	I choose English because it sometimes feels more expressive and simple. Some words in English sound more natural or trendy for social media. And I also use English to practice and improve my English skills.
A	How do you feel when you post in English versus in Indonesian?
P1	Okay, when I post in English, I feel more confident and expressive. But when I post in Indonesian, I feel more comfortable and closer to my local friends.
A	How do you think using English helps you express who you are?
P1	Using English helps me show that I'm open-minded and interested in global culture. So, especially in this era, I think being good at English is important because it makes many things easier. Like accessing information, connecting with people, and

	following trends.
A	How do your friends or followers respond when you use English?
P1	Most of them responded normally, some also replied in English, and sometimes they just reacted normally. No one was being sarcastic.
A	Do you often mix English and Indonesian?
P1	Yes, of course, I often mix both languages in one caption or story, I love it.
A	Why do you mix languages instead of using just one?
P1	Because mixing languages feels more natural and flexible, sometimes Indonesian explains feelings better but English makes it sound more stylish and concise. And at the same time, it helps me improve my English while I'm just casually posting on my social media.
A	Do you think using English makes you seem more modern or trendy?
P1	Yes, I think English has a strong influence in today's modern and trendy culture. Using English on social media can make posts look more up to date and stylish, and honestly, I really like that.
A	Alright, that's all for the question. Thankyou so much for participating in this interview.
P1	You are welcome.

Follow up Questions

A	Have you ever used Acehnese in your instagram or your tiktok post?
P1	Honestly, I never really used Acehnese on my Instagram or Tiktok before, and I usually use indonesian or sometimes english because it feels more natural for social media and more people can understand it. And also the people around me are more used to speaking indonesian or english too so I naturally use those languages more often online
A	Hmm when you mix english and indonesians do you sometimes also mix with Acehnese?
P1	Hmm honestly, I don't really mix Acehnese with english because most of the time I just mix Indonesian and English, and I usually only speak Acehnese with my family or close friends from Aceh, so I'm not really used to combining all three languages.
A	Do you ever feel that using Acehnese on social media is less cool or too traditional compared to using english?
P1	Uh... I don't really think Acehnese is less cool or too traditional but I think social media trends kind of influence the way people use language online, and a lot of Gen Z's content is dominated by Indonesian slang or English, uh.. so sometimes people naturally switch to those languages to fit in or reach more audiences, and for me personally it's more about habit and the environment not because i'm in the race to use Acehnese
A	Okay i see, for the last questions is are there any of your fellow Acehnese gen Z friends who actively use Acehnese on social media? and if they're in what kind of content do they usually post?
P1	Yeah.. i know some Acehnese gen Z friends who still use Acehnese on

	social media, and usually they post funny videos, daily life content, or random conversations in Acehnese, and some of them also make content about Acehnese culture and honestly i think it makes their content more unique. That's all.
A	Okay, thank you for your answer and for your time see you next, bye bye.
P1	Thank you.



Appendix G

Research Documentation

