NEGOTIATING LOCAL DIALECT IDENTITY AND CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH PUBLIC SPEAKING: A CASE STUDY OF MIGRANT STUDENTS

Solikha Nur Dzulfiani[1]
[1]*English Education Department, Faculty of Cultures and Languages, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia*
Corresponding author: 246121051@mhs.uinsaid.ac.id

Abstract

The English language learning environment at Indonesian universities naturally brings together students from diverse regional dialect backgrounds. In an academic context, native dialects are often assumed to be the primary trigger of language anxiety when students engage in public speaking. This study aims to examine how students from outside their home regions negotiate their local dialect identities with self-confidence in the practice of public speaking in English. Using a qualitative approach through a case study method involving interviews with English Language Education students, the results of this study reveal findings that differ from the initial assumption regarding excessive anxiety. The data indicate that students do not experience a significant crisis of self-confidence. On the contrary, they view local dialects as a distinctive feature of cultural identity that is commonly encountered on campus. Although concerns sometimes arise, students have proven capable of maintaining their focus and preventing a loss of concentration during presentations through thorough preparation strategies. Furthermore, this study found a dynamic of identity negotiation: students expect instructors to be tolerant of local accents at the beginning of the semester, yet remain conscious of the need to continuously improve their pronunciation to ensure effective communication. This article concludes that an academic environment that is inclusive of linguistic diversity does not hinder student performance; rather, it helps them balance the preservation of local cultural identity with the development of foreign language skills.

Keywords: public speaking, local dialects, language anxiety, cultural identity, multilingual education

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of higher education in Indonesia is characterized by rich linguistic and cultural diversity. Universities often serve as melting pots where students from various regions converge, bringing with them their distinct cultural heritages and local dialects. In English Language Education programs, this diversity presents a unique intersection between the target language (English), the national language (Indonesian), and the students' mother tongues (regional dialects). Historically, dominant pedagogical paradigms have emphasized native-like pronunciation, inadvertently positioning local dialects as phonetic interferences to be eradicated (Jenkins, 2000). This expectation frequently engenders psychological distress, particularly language anxiety, among students engaging in public speaking tasks.

Migrant students face a dual challenge navigating both the geographical transition and the linguistic pressure of academic English speaking. Previous scholarship has extensively documented the correlation between foreign language anxiety and speaking performance (Horwitz et al., 1986). In the Indonesian context, studies have repeatedly

shown that students experience heightened anxiety during classroom participation due to fear of negative evaluation (Fauzi & Asi, 2023). However, anxiety is frequently framed simply as a cognitive deficit related to grammatical competence, largely overlooking the socio-linguistic dimension of local identity negotiation (Daflizar, 2024).

While some traditional perspectives argue that non-standard accents inherently reduce speaker credibility (Saddhono & Sulaksono, 2018), emerging decolonial viewpoints advocate for the valorization of local identities within global languages (Setiawan, 2023). Therefore, a critical gap remains in understanding how migrant students internally process and negotiate their distinctive local dialects when performing high stakes English public speaking. Do these dialects strictly serve as sources of insecurity, or can they be reimagined as unique markers of identity?

This article investigates how migrant students negotiate their local dialect identities and self confidence in English public speaking. By analyzing the lived experiences of these students, this study challenges the deficit-model of local dialects and contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive multilingual education. The findings offer practical implications for creating pedagogically tolerant environments that empower marginalized voices without compromising communicative intelligibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Anxiety and Public Speaking

Language anxiety is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, and feelings related to language learning arising from the uniqueness of the learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986). In the context of public speaking, this anxiety is often exacerbated by the fear of negative evaluation. Students with strong regional accents frequently anticipate harsher judgments, which can lead to cognitive overload and mental blocks during presentations. Cultural factors also heavily influence this anxiety, particularly in collectivist societies like Indonesia where public self-expression is often daunting (Fitriana, 2020)

Identity Negotiation in Multilingual Settings

Identity Negotiation Theory posits that individuals in intercultural or diverse linguistic settings continuously assert, modify, or defend their self-images (Ting-Toomey,

2015). For migrant students, the local dialect is a profound emblem of cultural belonging. Decolonial literature suggests that forcing students to abandon their local accents in favor of a Western standard is a form of linguistic imperialism. Instead, a focus on "intelligibility"—the degree to which the speaker's intended message is understood—is advocated over strict native-like pronunciation (Derwing & Munro, 2015)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the contextualized experiences of migrant students. The qualitative approach allows for a nuanced understanding of identity negotiation, which is vital when addressing complex socio-linguistic challenges in EFL contexts (Abrar et al., 2018). The research setting was the English Education Department at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, a multicultural academic environment that attracts students from various regions across Central Java.

The participants were purposively selected based on two criteria: (1) they were migrant students originating from regions with prominent local dialects, and (2) they had completed at least one semester of intensive English public speaking courses. Two students participated in this preliminary study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews focusing on awareness of dialect interference, feelings of insecurity, cognitive disruptions during presentations, and pedagogical expectations. The responses were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dialect as a Unique Identity Marker, Not a Source of Insecurity

Contrary to the hypothesis that a distinct local dialect causes severe insecurity, participants demonstrated a high degree of acceptance regarding their linguistic backgrounds. One participant noted that during their initial period in Surakarta, their

dialect naturally bled into their English speech. However, this did not translate into a lack of confidence. As Participant 1 explained:

> *"I never felt insecure because I wasn't the only one whose dialect felt thick. Some of my friends also had noticeable Javanese accents when they spoke. So, I felt normal at the time (maybe because I felt I had companions in it)."*

Participant 2 echoed this sentiment, framing the dialect not as a deficit but as an asset:

> *"I never feel insecure because our language dialect is unique and actually becomes our own distinctive characteristic."*

This finding aligns with the decolonial framework of embracing local identities. When the classroom environment contains a critical mass of diverse dialects, the stigma of non-standard pronunciation is diluted, fostering a sense of communal solidarity rather than isolation.n

Preparation as a Buffer Against Cognitive Disruption

The literature frequently cites anxiety as a cause of cognitive blockages during public speaking. While participants acknowledged experiencing minor apprehension, it did not escalate to the point of losing focus or experiencing a "mental blank." The primary coping mechanism employed was rigorous academic preparation. Participant 1 emphasized:

> *"I prepare first before activities that require me to speak. Because I have prepared beforehand, I know better what I will convey, and what is still lacking and needs improvement."*

Participant 2 confirmed that while slight overthinking exists,

> *"it is not a serious problem so it doesn't cause a loss of focus or blanking out."*

This indicates that high self-efficacy, achieved through meticulous preparation and mastery of the content, effectively overrides the peripheral anxiety caused by accent-related self-consciousness

Dynamic Identity Negotiation: Pedagogical Tolerance vs. Professional Growth

The data revealed a sophisticated negotiation between maintaining cultural identity and striving for academic excellence. Participants strongly advocated for pedagogical

tolerance from lecturers, particularly during the transitional early semesters. Participant 1 stated:

> *"Yes, lecturers must absolutely be understanding of the students' innate dialects... But we as students, especially English Education students, must also improve, so it's not forever that when we speak in English our dialect remains thick."*

Participant 2 noted that while the dialect is deeply ingrained,

> *"it can be slightly concealed so that when speaking with people of different dialects, they can listen to us well."*

This reflects a mature understanding of 'intelligibility' (Derwing & Munro, 2015), where the goal is clear communication across cultural boundaries without entirely erasing one's linguistic roots.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explores how migrant students negotiate their local dialect identities and public speaking confidence. The findings demonstrate that a strong local dialect does not inherently dictate low self confidence or trigger debilitating public speaking anxiety. By reframing their dialects as unique cultural markers and relying on thorough material preparation, students successfully circumvent potential cognitive disruptions. Furthermore, students engage in dynamic identity negotiation; they desire inclusive pedagogical environments that tolerate local accents in the early stages of learning, while independently striving to improve their pronunciation for broader intelligibility. This study contributes to the decolonization of language education by highlighting the resilience of marginalized voices. Future research should expand this qualitative inquiry to a larger demographic and incorporate observational data to further understand the interplay between local identity and global language performance

REFERENCES

Abrar, M., Mukminin, A., Habibi, A., Asyrafi, F., Makmur, M., & Marzulina, L. (2018). "If our English isn't a language, what is it?" Indonesian EFL student teachers' challenges speaking English. The Qualitative Report, 23(1), 129–145.

Daflizar, D. (2024). Out-of-class speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL students and its relationship with self-perceived speaking skills, vocabulary proficiency, and gender. Journal of Languages and Language Teaching, 12(1), 240–253. https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i1.9342

Fauzi, I., & Asi, N. (2023). Examining speaking anxiety of Indonesian learners of English: A case of university students. Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 7(2), 263–275. https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i2.1338

Fitriana, R. (2020). Cultural influences on speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL learners. Journal of English Language Studies, 5(2), 150–165.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. The Modern Language Journal, 70(2), 125–132. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.xDigital

Saddhono, K., & Sulaksono, D. (2018). Sociolinguistics approach to the Indoglish phenomenon: The interference of Indonesian into English. International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature, 7(3), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.7n.3p.1

Setiawan, D. (2023). Localising English language teaching in Indonesia: Students' identity negotiation in multilingual settings. Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 13(1), 112–124.

Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). Pronunciation fundamentals: Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Jenkins, J. (2000). The phonology of English as an international language. Oxford University Press.

Ting-Toomey, S. (2015). Identity negotiation theory. In J. M. Bennett (Ed.), The SAGE encyclopedia of intercultural competence (pp. 418–422). SAGE Publications.