

## Language Contact and Cultural Heritage: Exploring Multilingualism Among University Students

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to explore the phenomenon of multilingualism among college students with a focus on the relationship between language use and cultural heritage. Language use among college students serves as an interesting lens to explore. The study involved 4 respondents who were culturally and linguistically diverse. Through questionnaires we were able to infer patterns of language use as well as students' personal experiences in maintaining cultural identity. The results showed that 100% of the respondents favored the language and traditional cultural activities of their home region. 75% stated that they had experienced difficult situations when switching languages, and 25% had never found it difficult. 50% felt that the experience of language and cultural contact was very influential and the other 50% did not feel influenced. This shows the richness of diverse cultures and we also found that language use is not only a reflection of linguistic aspects, but also involves consideration of their identity.*

**Keywords:** *Language Contact; Cultural Heritage; Multilingualism; University Students.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In this era of globalization, linguistic and cultural diversity is becoming increasingly important in the university context. Students from different cultural backgrounds often bring into their environment, this serves as an expression of diverse cultural identities (Maarif & Fakhriyyah, 2022). The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of multilingualism among university students with a focus on language users in a university setting. Language is an inseparable component of human life, so there is a view that language is part of a genetically inherited cultural heritage. According to (Mamontov S.P. Fundamentals of culturology.) as cited in (Tadjibaevscientifictextu & Таджибаева, 2020) As a mirror, language faithfully reflects the intricacies of a culture. It goes beyond the surface level, capturing not only the tangible aspects of the real world but also the intangible elements such as character, way of life, traditions, customs, and morals. Thus, language is something that must exist in the human community, where their lives in one community or tribe understand each other. The presence of language as an important instrument in carrying out human life, both as individuals and groups and the use of language is not only a reflection of linguistic aspects, but also involves considerations of personal identity (Izzatin Nisa'(1), 2020).

The concept of multilingualism in this study is to encourage university students' understanding of ongoing cross-culturalism, as well as to highlight the importance of appropriate language application to facilitate diverse conversations and overcome linguistic barriers that will arise. In education, multilingualism is recognized as a process that values the diversity of regional languages. Multilingualism itself means speaking more than one language. According to (H. Bussmann. Rout ledge Dictionary) as cited in (Okal, 2014) multilingualism is derived from two Latin words namely "multi" that means many and "lingua" that means language. Thus multilingualism is referred to as the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native like proficiency. In book (Aronoff & Rees-miller, n.d.) common definition of "multilingualism" would then be the use of more than one language or competence in more than one language. Multilingualism plays an important role in facilitating communication across languages, it not only enriches the language itself but also illustrates dynamic cultural flexibility.

With the variety of language multilingualism, the role of education is very important in realizing a place of unity. This happens because Indonesian society has different diversity (Dina Rizkia Fitrillah1), 2021). In addition, education also provides opportunities to learn languages, thus encouraging students to

become multilingual within the scope of education. According to (Bianco, 2010) It is crucial to emphasize the value of safeguarding the diverse cultural elements present in multilingualism for educational purposes. In essence, education aims to form individuals who have tolerance and accept cultural and linguistic diversity.

## METHOD

This research is descriptive qualitative research with a questionnaire as the main instrument in collecting the necessary data. According to (Fitria, 2023) qualitative emphasize more on observing phenomena and examining the substance of the meaning of these phenomena. Data collection through questionnaires containing questions that must be answered by respondents. The questionnaire is an instrument used to collect information from participants by presenting a series of questions and the main purpose is to obtain the necessary information from respondents in a structured and systematic manner. According to Taylor (2005, p. 236) as cited in (Fitria, 2021) states that qualitative draws certain assumptions, the assumptions are based upon the individuals . According to (Afidah et al., 2021) Descriptive qualitative research is a problem solving procedure investigated by describing the state of the subject or panel object (someone, institution, community and other). Descriptive qualitative research in this study is used to understand social phenomena or someone's behavior based on facts. The main focus is on data collection.

This study took the subjects of four 8th semester students from the University of K.H A. Wahab Hasbullah Jombang who had different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There are ten questions that must be answered by the respondent by stating "yes" means agreeing and "no" means disagreeing and the respondent answer will be interpreted by the researcher based on the data obtained.

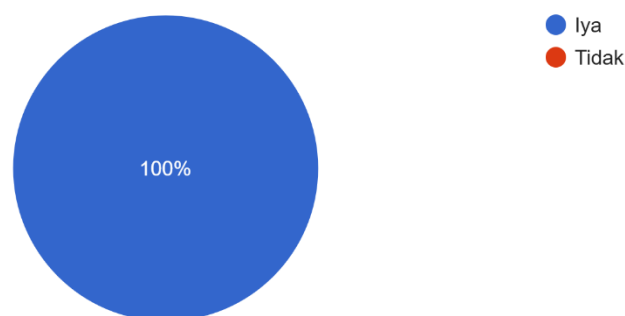
## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire is distributed to the students consist of ten questions, and the researcher find the issues and describes the students' responds as follows:

**“You see your university role in supporting multilingualism and cultural diversity in the campus environment, do you agree? “**

Anda melihat peran universitas Anda dalam mendukung multibahasa dan keragaman budaya di lingkungan kampus, apakah Anda setuju?

4 jawaban



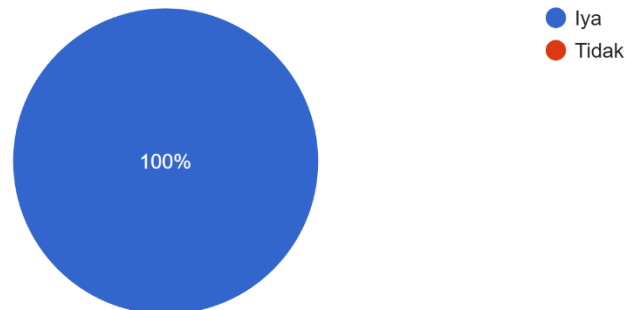
**Figure 1. Result of question 1**

Based on the data in the figure above, all respondents (100%) agreed that their university plays a role in supporting multilingualism and cultural diversity on campus. There were no respondents who disagreed with the statement. This shows that the university is considered very supportive of language and cultural diversity by the respondents.

**“Do you like the language and traditional cultural activities of your home region?”**

Apakah Anda menyukai bahasa dan kegiatan budaya tradisional dari daerah asal Anda?

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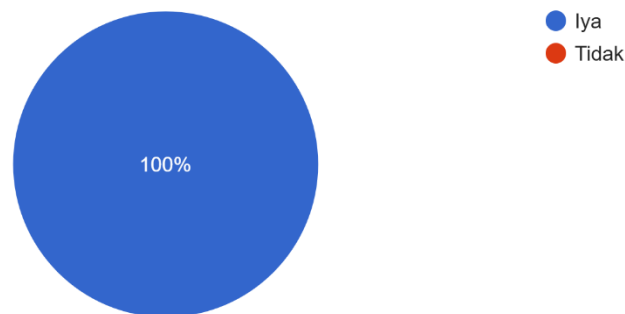
**Figure 2. Result of question 2**

Based on the data in the figure above, all respondents (100%) stated that they liked the language and traditional cultural activities of their home region. There were no respondents who disliked the language and traditional cultural activities. This shows that there is a strong appreciation of traditional language and culture among the respondents.

**“Do you agree on the importance of preserving and promoting regional languages and cultures among students?”**

Apa anda setuju tentang pentingnya melestarikan dan mempromosikan bahasa dan budaya daerah di kalangan mahasiswa?

4 jawaban



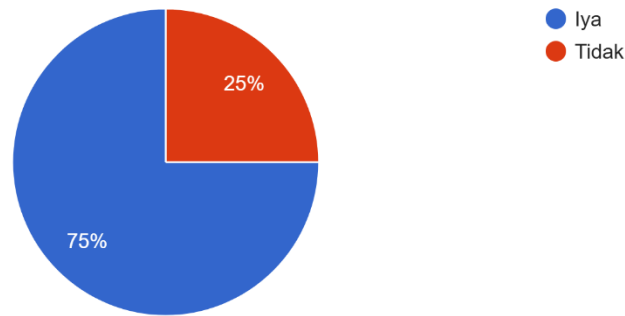
**Figure 3. Result of question 3**

Based on the data in the figure above, all respondents (100%) agreed that it is important to preserve and promote regional language and culture among students. There were no respondents who disagreed with the statement. This shows that all respondents understand and support the importance of preserving and promoting regional languages and cultures in the academic environment.

**“Have you ever been in a situation where it was difficult to switch between the language you speak on a daily ?”**

Apakah Anda pernah mengalami situasi di mana Anda merasa sulit untuk beralih di antara bahasa yang Anda gunakan sehari-hari?

4 jawaban



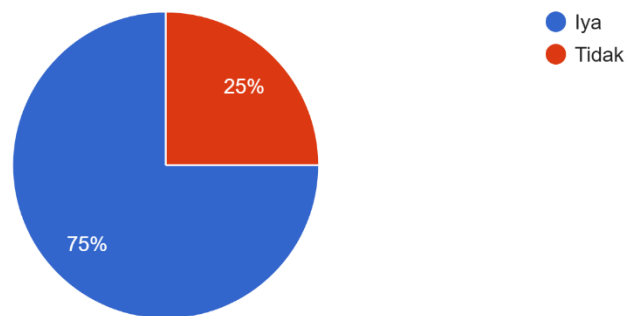
**Figure 4. Result of question 4**

Based on the data in the figure above, most respondents (75%) stated that they have experienced situations where they find it difficult to switch between the languages they use daily. And a small proportion of respondents (25%) who have never experienced a situation where they find it difficult to switch between the languages they use daily.

**“Do you feel there is a difference in the way you communicate when studying with classmates who speak another language?”**

Apakah Anda merasa ada perbedaan dalam cara Anda berkomunikasi ketika belajar dengan teman sekelas yang berbicara bahasa lain?

4 jawaban



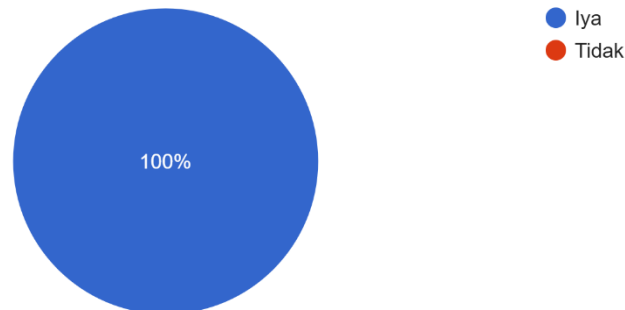
**Figure 5. Result of question 5**

It can be concluded that the majority of respondents (75%) felt there was a difference in the way they communicated when studying with classmates who spoke another language. In contrast, 25% of respondents did not feel any difference in communication. This shows that most respondents are aware of changes or adjustments in the way they communicate when interacting with friends who speak a different language.

**“Do you often interact with languages other than your primary language?”**

Apakah Anda sering berinteraksi dengan bahasa selain bahasa utama Anda?

4 jawaban



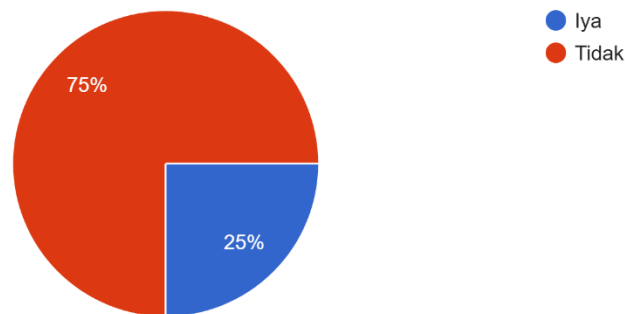
**Figure 6. Result of question 6**

The conclusion that can be drawn is that all respondents (100%) frequently interact with languages other than their primary language. There were no respondents who never interacted with other languages. This shows that all respondents have experience and involvement in the use of languages other than their primary language in their daily interactions.

**“Do you experience a sense of dual identity or conflict between your cultural identity and the dominant culture of the university environment?”**

Apakah Anda mengalami perasaan identitas ganda atau konflik antara identitas budaya Anda dan budaya dominan di lingkungan universitas?

4 jawaban



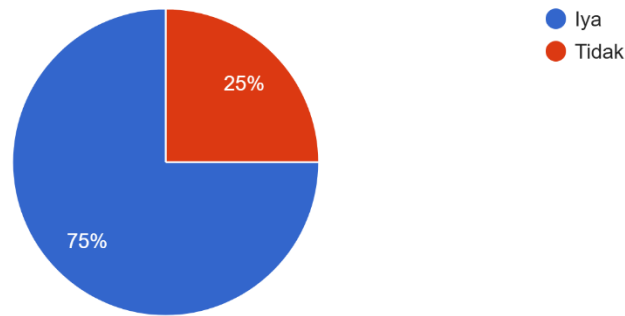
**Figure 7. Result of question 7**

It can be concluded that the majority of respondents (75%) did not experience feelings of dual identity or conflict between their cultural identity and the dominant culture in the university environment. In contrast, 25% of respondents felt that they experienced feelings of dual identity or cultural conflict. This shows that most respondents feel comfortable and do not experience a clash of cultural identities in the university environment, while a small percentage feel a conflict or duality of cultural identity.

**“Do you have any interesting experiences or success stories in introducing your local language or culture to friends or colleagues on campus?”**

Apakah Anda memiliki pengalaman menarik atau kisah sukses dalam memperkenalkan bahasa atau budaya lokal Anda kepada teman atau kolega di kampus?

4 jawaban



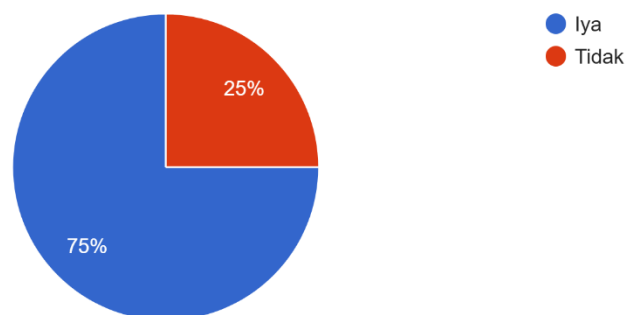
**Figure 8. Result of question 8**

It can be concluded that the majority of respondents (75%) had interesting experiences or success stories in introducing their local language or culture to friends or colleagues on campus. In contrast, 25% of respondents did not have such experiences. This suggests that most respondents were successful and enjoyed sharing their local culture or language in the campus environment, which may also reflect the interest and acceptance of their friends or colleagues.

**“Do you feel that belonging to the same culture or cultures affects the way you interact with others?”**

Apakah Anda merasa bahwa memiliki budaya atau bahasa yang sama mempengaruhi cara Anda berinteraksi dengan orang lain?

4 jawaban



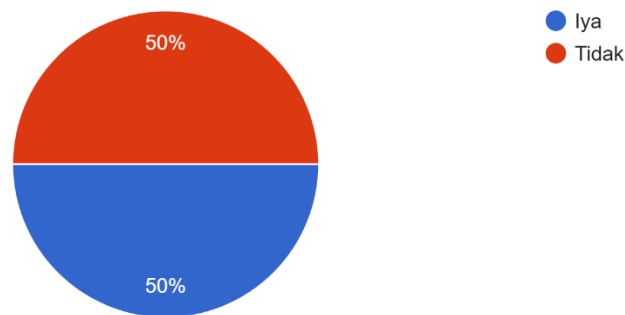
**Figure 9. Result of question 9**

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the majority of respondents (75%) feel that having the same culture or language affects the way they interact with others. In contrast, 25% of respondents did not feel that having a common culture or language affected their interactions. This shows that most respondents believe that there is a significant influence of cultural or linguistic similarity on the way they interact with others.

**“Do you feel that the experience of language contact and the maintenance of your cultural heritage affects your future academic or professional career?”**

Apakah Anda merasa bahwa pengalaman kontak bahasa dan pemeliharaan warisan budaya Anda mempengaruhi karir akademis atau profesional Anda di masa depan?

4 jawaban



**Figure 10. Result of question 10**

The conclusion that can be drawn is that respondents were evenly divided in their opinions. 50% of the respondents felt that their language contact experiences and the maintenance of their cultural heritage influenced their future academic or professional careers, while the other 50% felt no such influence. This suggests that there are mixed views among respondents regarding the impact of linguistic and cultural experiences on their future career.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this to explore the phenomenon of multilingualism among college students with a focus on the relationship between language use and cultural heritage that involved 4 respondents who were culturally and linguistically diverse.

There are some students who often bring their cultural and linguistic differences in their environment. One of them is multilingualism which makes a driver of understanding in the application of culture and language as a process of appreciating their diversity. Based on the respondents in this study, 100% liked the language and traditional cultural activities of the region of origin. 75% stated that they had experienced difficult situations when switching language, and 25% had never found it difficult. 50% felt that language and cultural contact experiences were highly influential and the other 50% did not feel influenced. This shows that multilingualism plays an important role that cannot be separated from culture and language.

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