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"I'm like *kentang*": Bilingual Indonesians construction of identity in the era of transnationalism

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Abstract

This study looks at bilingual Indonesians who experienced living abroad as sojourners. The study aims to explore their identity experiences and struggles as influenced by their interactions with other language(s) and culture(s). An open-ended questionnaire and interview questions were used to obtain information on the respondents' short biodata and experiences abroad. Nineteen respondents participated in an online open-ended questionnaire, and a few respondents volunteered to be interviewed. The findings reveal that these bilinguals Indonesian sojourners find it challenging to explain themselves from the monocultural essentialists view of identity. They identify themselves strongly with both their home and host countries and cultures but remaining staying open to new possibilities of identities. Yet, there are also traces of contradicting and conflicting selves of belonging in both cultures.

Keywords: language and identity, transnational identity, nationalism, transnationalism, Indonesia

Introduction

The phenomenon of living across two or more countries is becoming prevalent due to globalization which has lower down the unseen boundaries between the countries and brought people around this globe closer through the support of the rapid development in technologies (Garrett, 2011; Stiglitz, 2002; Vertovec, 2001). Though 'transnational' was first introduced in 1916 by Randolph S. Bourne, it was only in the early nineties 'transnationalism' and 'transnational migration' was frequently found in the literature to label this postmodern phenomenon that refers to practice of shifting countries where the individuals still maintain meaningful various social relationship in both home country and host country (Schiller, Basch and Blanc, 1995). The experiences that allow an individual to reside in more than one country will

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involve the exposures to host country's language and culture that will influence one's perspective of home, language, and identity in a global context (Garrett, 2011). Language, national identity, connection to the home country's culture are considered to play crucial roles in constructing one's identity in the context of transnationalism.

This small-scale study aims to explore how language usage, national identity, and relation to the home country had influenced one's identity. The study particularly works with Indonesians with international experiences and looks at how they would describe themselves and how those experiences have some influences on their identity. It explores their language usage, their international experiences (challenges and benefits), and their connection to their heritage language and culture concerning how they describe themselves as Indonesians. The respondents involved in this study are Indonesians who had a minimum of one-year living experience overseas. Since Indonesia consists of diverse ethnicities with their own unique values, ethnicity background might be another aspect worth investigating to provide a more holistic view of one's identity. Through this study, I hope to investigate the following research questions:

1) How do bilingual Indonesian sojourners and returnees see themselves as Indonesians?
2) How do they (re)construct their identities?

Literature Review

Multilingualism as part of the transnationalism process is a double edges sword where on one side it will make connection or association with a certain community. On the other side of the blade, it separates one from the rest. Robyn Giffen has discussed this phenomenon in TED talks titled 'Identifying yourself through language' by showing that one's choice of vocabulary or accent might be used by others to read him or her. Being a multilingual who converses more in L2 will make one ponder on the notion of 'beloved language' proposed by Joshua Fishman (1996), which usually refers to one's L1. Fishman (1996) indicated that one's beloved language is closely tied to his or her ethnolinguistic identity since it is intimate and has historical, psychological, and sentimental bonding to one's origin. However, from the perspective of multilingualism, Espaillat (1998) and Gerrett (2011) argue that the world of two different languages or more can co-exist. The two or more characters of the language users live together in one person though they are presented in different ways (Espaillat, 1998; Gerrett, 2011).

Countries which are ethno-linguistically diverse like China, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia developed the necessity of national language as

lingua franca to govern the unity and to maintain a national identity (Lopez, 2014; Simpson, 2007). For example, Hindi was nominated as the lingua franca in India for official use due to the large population, and it has been formerly used as the official language during British colonization. In addition to Hindi, English was introduced as the co-official language in 1967. Unlike Hindi, Indonesia's national language which is known as *Bahasa Indonesia* or Indonesian was adapted from the Malay Creole which was the second official language during Dutch occupation and minority language (compare to Javanese which was spoken by a majority of Indonesia population) (Simpson, 2007). This has resulted most if not all populations in those countries are bilinguals - they speak the national language and their ethnical dialect. Additional foreign language as a compulsory subject in the curriculum has created a multilingual individual across the nations. Access to modern education (and its language of instruction) has influenced each individual to be multilingual without the need to move to another country. Therefore, being multilingual, in this context, may connect and associate an individual to more than one community. Moreover, access to other languages will give access to literary works in the original text or language, which might influence an individual's way of thinking (Gill, 2014). Being multilingual, hence, enriches one's linguistic and cultural repertoire and conceptual knowledge.

In many cases, transnational migration did not wipe the first generations' national identity due to the easy access to relate with their home country community. It might influence the second generation on how to conceptualize their 'home' since they do not have an intense connection to it (Peacock, 2015). Garrett (2011) classifies the notion of home into four concepts: home as relation, home as identity, home as freedom, and home as symbol. Home as identity was divided into 'Little Home' and 'Big Home'. Magat (1999) defines 'Little Home' as a place where they run their daily routine and 'Big Home' as the ultimate sanctuary which equates with national identity. In many cases, the first generation of transnational migrants will refer to 'Big Home' as their home while the locals will consider 'Little Home' to be their home (Garrett, 2011). According to Kastoryano (2000), home country is the key factor in identifying one's identity since it is the source of identity in the context of transnationalism. Therefore, having a strong and clear national identity of the home country will have a big influence on shaping one's new identity in the context of transnationalism.

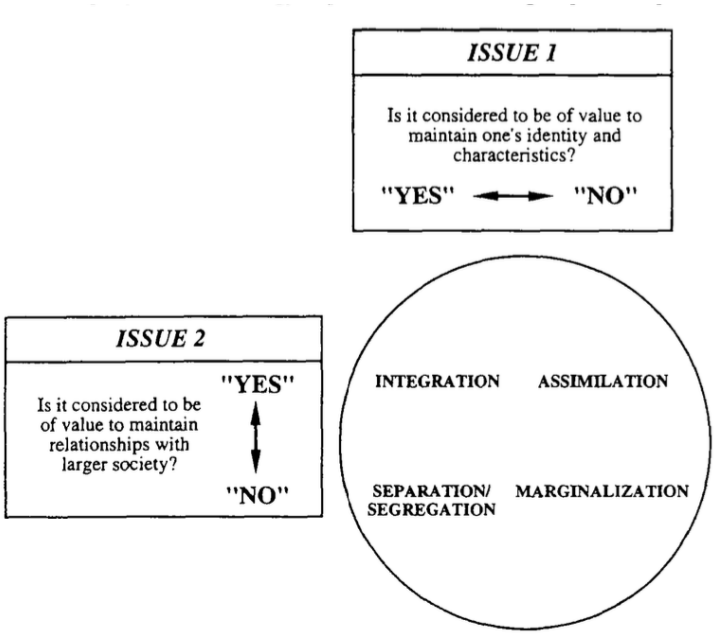
Berry (1997) suggested a model of acculturation process that analyzes emerging behaviours as one of the effects of transnationalism to one's identity. Integration happens when personal values are maintained together with the values of the host country. Assimilation is the strategy

adopted by an individual whose personal identity does not need to be maintained, instead immerse fully into the host country's culture. This strategy might be associated with "melting pot" (when people choose to assimilate) or "pressure cooker" (when they are forced to assimilate). Separation or segregation occurs when people view their home culture is more superior and reject the host country's culture. This group has a strong relationship with its own culture and not open to other cultures. Marginalization describes individuals who are not connected to their home country nor their host country (Berry, 1997, p. 9-11).

Sayegh and Lasry (1993) found that the term assimilation and acculturation were often used interchangeably in the society through the impacts of those processes that were significantly different. Figure 1. is Berry's bidimensional model of acculturation strategies where both identification and attitudes towards the heritage and host country cultures were evaluated (Berry, 1997).

Figure 1

Berry's acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997, p. 10)



Sociocultural and poststructuralist perspectives of identity, however, views identity as dynamic, multiple, and complex. Norton (1997) explains that identity is emergent and deals with "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and spaced, and how people understand their possibilities for the future"

(cited in Alsagoff, 2012 p, 107). Weedon (1987), working within a poststructuralist framework, highlights agency as part of identity work in the theory of subjectivity. Within this framework, as Norton explains, subjectivity is seen as 1) multiple; 2) a site of struggle; and 3) changing over time (p. 411). Individuals (the subjects) will take up specific "subject position" (e.g. as a student, teacher, mother, etc.) in a specific social context. Within this specific context, each individual is interacting with various relations (including power) and has the agency to create changes.

The Study

The basic design of this study is qualitative research through the use of an open-ended questionnaire that consisted of a substantial number of open-ended questions. This online questionnaire was distributed to the respondents, Indonesians who had experienced living overseas or are still living overseas at the moment. There were follow-up questions posted to several respondents based on their responses to the questionnaire through personal communication using emails.

A non-random / probability convenience sampling design was adopted as the basis for selecting the respondents before the distribution of the questionnaire. At the initial stage, Indonesians who formerly lived overseas or are still living overseas at the current state were contacted. The respondents were not selected due to the country where they are living now nor due to their background in an attempt to get a more homogeneous or heterogeneous sampling. The respondents were selected purely due to their consent to be part of this research as well as their availability to complete the questionnaire. A total of nineteen respondents who were able to submit their responses within the given time frame were chosen. The makeup of the respondents varied in-country, background, and age. The countries that the respondents had lived in are ranging from America to Australia. The status of the respondents is students who are still pursuing their studies overseas, teachers, managers, business persons, and a housewife with age ranging from twenty-one to fifty years old. A few selected respondents who volunteered to be interviewed were then contacted for more detailed responses based on their answers in the initial questionnaire.

The data in this study are the responses collected through the online open-ended questionnaire as well as the responses from the follow-up questions to a few selected respondents. An online questionnaire was developed to collect the necessary data due to the locations of the respondents who live across the globe. The questionnaire was developed to collect information on their living abroad experiences, challenges they faced while living there, strategies of coping with those challenges, and issues

related to their cultural and linguistic identities while living abroad. The first part of the questionnaire was a combination of closed questions and open-ended questions to capture the respondents' biodata. The second part was mainly constructed by open-ended questions to capture the unique overseas living experience of each individual which varied from one to another. Then, a list of questions was constructed, unique to each individual, and sent by email to several respondents as a follow-up communication to clarify their responses.

A list of possible respondents was identified. Indonesians who had had living experiences abroad or those who are still living abroad were contacted and asked for their consent to participate in this study. They were informed on the topic of the research and the procedures where they would be required to complete a questionnaire through the given link. They were also asked to provide contact details only if they would agree to accept further queries to clarify their responses. The questionnaire was distributed to thirty respondents who had agreed to participate, and a one-week timeline was given to complete the questionnaire. Nineteen respondents were able to submit their responses within one week, and their data were tabulated and analyzed. During this process, some questions were constructed to delineate certain responses. Hence, the list was unique to each individual due to the nature of their personal experiences, where the aim was to clarify their answers by obtaining a few more details. The follow-up questions were posted to a few respondents who agreed to be contacted through email.

All nineteen respondents are Indonesians who used to live abroad to pursue their studies or who are still living abroad at the moment. Out of nineteen respondents, only one respondent (R 11) who was not born in Indonesia. The rest of the respondents were born and raised in Indonesia by Indonesian family. In general, the respondents can be categorized into two main groups of age, early adulthood (68.75%) and middle adulthood (31.25%).

Early adulthood is the stage where they just graduated from university and tried to build their careers, get married and start a family (Santrock, 2011). Eleven respondents in this study who are in their 20s are still singles. Some of them are still in university to pursue their graduate studies, and some are already returned to Indonesia to settle. This group of respondents had the privilege to be exposed to other languages, in this case, are English, officially during their studies in Indonesia as early as the primary level. They were enrolled in schools that offered English, not as a subject in the school but English as a medium of instruction. Then later on for they pursued their further (undergraduate and graduate) studies overseas. The period of staying overseas was usually less than ten years, and the host countries for this group of respondents varied from various countries in

Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia. At the end of their studies, all of them decided to return and to start their career in Indonesia, by either starting a new business, continuing their parents' business or working at the multi-national companies.

Middle adulthood, in this study, is the stage where people are quite stable in their careers and start to broaden their "involvement and responsibility" by contributing back to society (Santrock, 2011, p. 17). Five respondents who are in their 40s all married with children. This group was exposed to English as lingua franca only when they were grown up in pursuing their undergraduate studies or graduate studies overseas or when they migrated to the host countries. Three respondents finished their studies and worked in Indonesia before they migrated overseas. This group has a longer timeline staying overseas, and most of them are still there. The main purpose of living overseas is to have a better future and opportunities; opportunities for better living conditions and better education for their children. This age of group is fond of countries in North America and Australia. Detailed background information of each participant is presented in Appendix A.

Findings and discussions

Being newcomers abroad

Both groups had some form of challenges when they were first exposed to the unfamiliar environment of the host countries. Though the first group of respondents who had received their formal education in English at a young age are proficient and do not have challenges conversing in English, they still faced or experienced some form of language barrier (e.g. fast speech rate, unfamiliar local terminologies, local accent, knowing the topic, script, and jokes) and were excluded by the local at the beginning. However, they did not consider this as their primary challenges and were able to manoeuvre around to make themselves more accepted by "copying the local behaviours". Their strategies to copy the behaviours were to expose themselves more often to the locals and made friends with them. Their strategies reflected Berry's (1997) model of acculturation. Most of the participants assimilated themselves to the dominant culture to minimize their feelings of being "too" different. This assimilation strategy seems to be the most common survival strategy adopted by most participants.

Some participants also experienced treatments of differentiation by the locals due to language barrier. R19 explains this experience of being

treated differently during his early childhood schooling in Germany as follows:

> *The challenges were basically the language barrier. And I pretty much realized that I'm different when I looked around everyone was "bule". Everyone has white skin, and I was the only one, in class, that is Asian. Because it was a public school, I went to a public school. I recalled that there was a big boy who bullied me by pushing me around in the bus on the way in a school trip. To him probably like, "Hey you're different! Why are you here!" I remembered it was my first year there, no friends at all. At that time, I did nothing and then later I was able to make friends, and then he stopped bothering me. And then maybe because I was able to speak German. He's not my friend, but he didn't bother me anymore.*

The ability to speak the way the locals speak seems to be a vital mean for R19 to gain access to membership in his immediate environment. He, therefore, made an effort to quickly acquire the language in order to be accepted in his school.

Identity (re)constructions: Being an Indonesian abroad

When asked what being an Indonesian means to them, some respondents (R1, R2, R7, R9, R10, R14) identified being Indonesian as holding the green passport (Indonesian passport) and being born and raised in Indonesia, hence, a citizen of Indonesia. In addition to the legality of being Indonesian, eight respondents (R3, R5, R6, R9, R11, R15, and R16) mentioned that being Indonesian is about having particular mindset; mindset of being proud to be Indonesian and have Indonesian values and culture to anchor their identity. The Indonesian values that they often referred to were being communal, prioritizing family first, respecting elders and accepting diverse society bounded by *Pancasila* (the national ideology). Being communal, however, can be seen as both negative and positive. Some respondents (R1, R2, R4, R11) expressed the sense of communal as "caring too much about others", "tendency to group" and "not inviting to new people". Others referred it to *gotong royong* – working together to achieve a common goal (communal work). R5 explains that she has very different experiences when attending funeral or wedding abroad compared to Indonesia. From where she came from, West Java, those two events are very communal where the whole village or *kampong* are busy offering helps in any ways they (the community member) can contribute. R16 mentions that she experienced a

culture shock and was somewhat surprised by how individualistic the local people where she stayed abroad. As her coping mechanism, she tried to connect closely towards Indonesian communities in general, and especially to Indonesian students' community in her university.

Both groups of respondents felt that their overseas experiences had broadened their perspective to be more open-minded, tolerant, and being grateful and proud that Indonesia is actually blessed in various ways: natural resources, fertile soil, rich cultures, and diverse society. One respondent (R9) described himself as "Indonesian at heart but global in mindset", where he is proud of "being part of an incredibly diverse society in Indonesia" and being educated overseas provide him "opportunities to interact with even more diverse people worldwide". Another respondent (R7) put it as "an Indonesian with a slightly better world view" in expressing how his experiences living overseas have shaped their identity by being "more accepting and less bias".

Several respondents, however, expressed their uneasiness of having to associate themselves to one culture strictly. This phenomenon was well illustrated by three respondents (R17, R18, R19) who spent most time of their lives abroad (ranging from 10 – 24 years). R18, for example, describes himself as "potatoes". He used this analogy to express how his dynamic thoughts and selves (the yellow flesh of the potato) were trapped within the unattractive brown spotty potato skin (himself) as a result of living in the home country where the cultural expectations are different.

> *After I finished my studies and returned to Indonesia, I just feel different when I interacted with other Indonesians. I'm like "kentang", like potatoes, dark and brown on the outside white on the inside. It's a bit like I am visibly Indonesian, but at the same time inside I may not be like what stereotypical Indonesian would be. ...I'm visibly Indonesian, but I don't feel like other Indonesians, not that I don't feel I'm Indonesian. Many times when I talked to people here, when I watched the news, when I read something, I don't feel very Indonesian at all. For example, I see things happening on the news that I find to be distressing, stressful, cause me grief and oftentimes to people around me, sometimes to my parents, they act as if it's normal! Identity wise, I'm Indonesian but then when things like that happened [when I feel differently from the rest of Indonesian] I ask like "what am I? Am I an Australian? Am I an American? Or am I just . . . nothing?" If everyone is insane, but you are sane. Aren't you actually the person who is insane? You are the insane*

> *person right out of all these people? The insane becomes the norm, and the sane become insane! When that happened, when the realization comes when you are doing something, when you are talking to someone, it really distressed me and made feel "yeah, I'm not very Indonesian at all".*

Different from his parents, R18 who had been educated abroad (and in exclusive private secondary schools in Indonesia) felt unconnected with some realities in Indonesia. When there were distressing news on television, other Indonesians including his own parents reacted as if it was normal to happen whereas he had a different reaction towards the same situation since he spent most of his life distant (or being compartmentalized by his parents) from the realities in his home country. He was quite distressed by his home country's fellow reaction that seems to be immune to disturbing events that happened in Indonesia. Therefore, his mindset of the situation occasionally has made him does not feel that he belongs to his home country. He even thinks that he "tried too hard to be Indonesian" for trying to understand other Indonesian's ways of thinking or mindset.

Similar emotion was also expressed by R17 and R19. R19 had been living in several contexts abroad (Nigeria, Austria, Germany, and Australia). He was born in Nigeria and spent his infant years there. Being the son of a diplomat, he had to move with his parents every 4 or 5 years to a new country. When his parents were assigned to Japan, he decided to study in Australia for his higher education. Having spent his early childhood (primary school) in Australia and acquired English, he felt more comfortable with this language use and culture and decided to go to Australia to further his study.

> *…being going in and out too much, I just wanna go to the country that I'm comfortable with. So, I chose Australia also because of the language that I'm more comfortable with. When I was in university in Australia, I started to mingle with other Indonesians, because there's the PPIA (Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia Australia) [Indonesian Students Association in Australia]. So, I joined there. They usually conduct activities, events. So, I hang out with Indonesians more when I was in university. … I still feel that I strongly connected to Australian culture. I think in terms of the behaviour, the mindset, ... the easiest would be after I came back here from Australia to Indonesia is the culture of lining up, queuing, the cleaning up after. So you see outside, the people do that. I still have it. So, if I go to a restaurant, I usually clean the table, I gave the plates back, and people*

> *were asking "why were you doing that?" so, it's embedded in me (R19).*

R19 explains that his strong relation to Australia was also due to the fact he had not had much experience living in Indonesia since his parents moved a lot. He learned to know about Indonesia when he was in Australia at a time where he was the one who was in control of his own settlement. It was during this time that he began to explore Indonesian culture in a foreign land. This re-acquaintance with his Indonesian heritage experience abroad helps to explain why R19 feels more connected to Australian than Indonesian "mindset".

R17 was born in London and spent the first 24 years of his life in England before moving back to Indonesia to take a teaching post in an international school. Having spent most of his life in England, it is expected that he would feel more connected to his host country's culture.

> *I would say, at this point of time, I am more strongly connected to British culture, mainly because I have maintained the British culture in my job (as an English teacher at an international school). In terms of my teaching, if I relate more to the understanding of British culture, kids will sort of learn the language through it. So, I'm taking this approach (R17).*

His close and deep relation to British culture was reinforced when he accepted a teaching job as an English teacher in which he believed that teaching English also involves teaching the English (British) culture. Despite his close connection to the host country's culture, he also explains that he sometimes feels like an outsider in both his home and host countries.

> *You are a foreigner everywhere you go. In England, I'm also a foreigner even though I was born there; I was seen as a foreigner. Come to Indonesia, "oh, you're from London!" You are a foreigner. So, it's hard that's why we can't identify, because on paper (legally), yes, I'm an Indonesian nationality, my passport, Indonesian. But culturally, I'm British. It's hard we're not third culture kids, because third culture kids are different. We probably forth culture kids I would say, but I wouldn't be able to give you a definitive answer because I'm proud of both what I have been brought up in. Unless you have experienced that, I can't really explain that. I think being Indonesian is a lot to do with my family, proud of where my parents come from, proud of my grandparents and my family. I'm proud of that. But at the*

> *same time, I'm very proud of the fact that they moved abroad and chose to raise my sister and me in the UK. I feel that it's fair that, it should be allowed that I have equal or sort of room for me to love both Indonesia and the UK. I can't give you what it is to be Indonesian. I would probably say besides from my heritage I think it's like my family. It's more about respect and honour for my family.*

R17 talks about the various relations in his stages of life – from his birth, early childhood, teenagehood, and early adulthood that he spent in England as a child, a student, a teenager, and a resident with his Indonesian parents and sibling. He struggles with his strong connection with England as his first home and his legal status as an Indonesian as well as his physical appearance that does not fit the common assumption of a British person. He uses the term "fourth culture kid" to explain this condition. His description of (England and Indonesian) home includes the dynamic and sometimes conflicting and contradicting interrelation of the two countries at their geographical, historical, cultural, psychological, emotional, and ideological dimensions as he experienced them. He values them equally important in his identity work.

"Isn't it better there?": The unseen reality of living as sojourners

Most respondents, while living abroad experienced some treatments of differentiation that the local Indonesians who have never been in their shoes often fail to notice nor to understand. Those who have never live as sojourners abroad tend to assume that living abroad means a perfect, smooth, and flawless life. A question like "Isn't it better there?" can never be answered casually and smoothly by the respondents. R19, for example, talks about his living in Australia in the time when there was political tension between Indonesia and Australia at the end of the 1990s, regarding Australia's interest in the separation of East Timor from Indonesia.

> *In grade 7, I was big enough. I see that people at that time, the Australian, in Canberra, were not so friendly towards Asian, especially if you know that you are Indonesian. I think, back then, there was this conflict between Indonesia and Australian regarding East Timor. That's why my parents said, "if someone asks you where you from, don't say Indonesian, say the Philippines or Malaysian." At the embassy, at that time, they threw eggs. In school, there were bullies. But I didn't react. I handled it as when I was in*

> *primary [school]. With a mindset that if there's a bully, the bully will go away by itself if I ignore him. (R19)*

R19 describes that he stayed in a time where it was dangerous to live like an Indonesian in the host country. There were demonstrations at the embassy. There were also several incidents of identity profiling and targeting by some irresponsible people that were taking the opportunity to use violence towards Indonesians. Realizing this potential danger, his parents suggested him to repress, deny, and mask his Indonesian identity when he happened to be confronted by the locals as a survival strategy.

R17 also shared his experience of being treated as an outsider in London. He explains the experience as one of the most obvious treatments of racism he encountered.

> *I have experienced racism in my life. In London, yes. I was in the hospital. My mother was hospitalized. The area where the hospital is located in, it's really right in the middle of a very different class of people. So, if you go a bit more north, it's a very sort of white suburb area. If you go a bit more south, it's a bit more multi-cultural intercity. My mom was appointed to a hospital in that area. So, we were there. This was like 2000, 2001? So, we just finished visiting my mom, and me, my sister, my dad was waiting for the lift. And around us were, I remembered, was a black woman and a child, Indian family, and 4 British white people, two men and two women. And from what I can remember, was this, the woman said, "yeah, we really need to move to another hospital. I don't think this hospital is up to the standard." That's what I overheard. And the man as they were walking into the lift, they were going up, and we were going down, the man looked at us and said, "yeah, cause this hospital is just full of…", I apologize for my language, "full of fucking Nigers, Pakis, and Chinese people." And he purposely said that out loud while looking at us with disgust and walked in the lift before anyone could do anything. And you can see by the way the men dressed; it was very much conservative white person, probably wealthy. As he left with the last person he looked at was me, because I was closest to him. And that was the most obvious form of racism that I ever experienced. (R17).*

Being treated as different based on their skin colour, race, and political tension was sometimes overlooked by those who had never lived abroad. The idea and imagination of living abroad have often been

romanticized by the pop culture in Indonesia that often portray a made-up imagination of grandiose, perfect, smooth, and flawless life abroad. R17 and R19 narrative of discrimination have often been ignored by the mythicalisation of living abroad. R17 further problematize this "isn't it better there?" type of question by differentiating the experience of a sojourner and a tourist as follows:

> *I think it's quite naïve for someone to say like "bukan lebih enak di sana?" [isn't it better there?]. Oh, depending on how you feel and how you like it. [they said] "but when I went there it was so nice" You went there as a tourist, you didn't have to live your life there, you didn't have to go through racism and discrimination, start from the bottom, paying tax, dealing with drunk people at night on the bus. Things like that, you didn't have to deal with that. I feel people have the right to move and live where they want. But I just think that it's quite naïve for people to say "isn't it nice there?". I said, "No". And when I go there [London] "oh you live Indonesia! Oh my god, you're so lucky, the weather is so nice, everything is cheap, oh it's beautiful, near to the beach, you can walk to everywhere". I was like, "That's very true, but unless you live there and experience that then you can understand the real situation." (R17)*

R17 feels that this "isn't it better there?" type of question refuse to take notice of the real complex realities that were often based on raw assumptions, shallow observation, and ignorance. Entering a new culture as a tourist whose only purpose is to enjoy the culture in a very short time is incomparable to sojourners who stay, interact, and function in a new community and its system and practices for a longer-term. As Byram (1997) puts it, sojourners and societies "have no alternative but proximity, interaction and relationship as the conditions of existence" (p. 2). Sojourners, therefore, have to learn to live within their social conditions that are very different than their home country.

Conclusion

The era of globalization has increased the crossing border activities, and the internet and the World Wide Web has brought people closer than ever. Any kind of information can be accessed at one's fingertips. More opportunities are available for wider people to access. Studying abroad, working overseas, and migrating across continents are more and more common in recent years.

Language and culture contacts are expected, and so is the possibility of individuals to be multilingual and multicultural as what the respondents have shared in this study.

As can be seen from the data, cultural assimilation is a common strategy for the respondents to adopt when entering new and often foreign environment as sojourners. The respondents in this study have shown that talking about their identities is uneasy. The uneasiness came from some social contexts that still work under the monocultural purist view, which expect the respondents to associate and root themselves to one "Culture". The struggle of having two homes in mind (as well their relations with the social structure, beliefs, values, systems, political, economic, and power dimensions in each home) is often gone unnoticed by the monocultural community. Through the respondents' narratives of struggle, we can see how each individual has their own understanding and (re)construction of selves in a different situation, phase of life, time, and context. Weedon (1987) states that social identity is a site of struggle which is changing over time. Yet, we also learn how the purist monocultural society fails to see their struggle of being a multilingual and multicultural individual and the evolution of selves as part of their interactions within the social, historical, political, economic, and situational dimensions of the places that they lived. Hence, questions like “how do you identify yourself as Indonesian?” and “isn’t it better there [living abroad]?” seem to patronize their complex, dynamic, and multiple selves.

The author

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Appendix A

Participants biodata

	Age range	Length of stay (years)	Current place of residence	Other place(s) of residence and period of time (if any).	Current career field & position	Ethnic-ity	Languages
R1	**21-25**	**6**	**Indonesia**	**Seattle (6 years)**	**Retail (Founder)**	**Indonesian**	**Indonesian, English**
R2	**21-25**	**6**	**Australia**	**Sydney (5 years), Saga Prefecture (1 year), Sydney (2017 - present)**	**Student (Graduate diploma of management)**	**Chinese - Indonesian**	**Indonesian**
R3	**21-25**	**2**	**Indonesia**	**Perth, Australia**	**Property Developer (Management Associate)**	**Javanese**	**Indonesian / English**
R4	**21-25**	**4**	**Indonesia**	**Beppu, Japan (4 years), Steyr, Austria (6 months)**	**Manager**	**Indonesian**	**English, Bahasa Indonesia, Japanese**
R5	**46-50**	**18**	**Singapore**	**Kuala Lumpur (2 years)**	**Chemical (marketing)**	**Chinese**	**English**
R6	**21-25**	**3**	**Australia**	**Brisbane**	**Non Profit (Marketing Specialist)**	**Indonesian**	**English & Bahasa Indonesia**
R7	**21-25**	**5.5**	**Singapore**	**Jakarta (18 years)**	**Research Engineer / PhD Candidate**	**Chinese**	**Bahasa Indonesia (First Language), English**
R8	**41-45**	**12**	**USA**	**San francisco (1 year), sydney (5 years), singapore and**	**Registered nurse**	**Chinese - Indonesian**	**English and indonesian**

				hongkong (4 years), houston (2009-present)			
R9	**21-25**	**7**	**USA**	**Singapore (3 years)**	**Undergraduate Student**	**Indonesian (Batak and Java-nese)**	**Indonesian, Malay, English, Spanish, Russian (Elementary), Mandarin (Elementary)**
R10	**21-25**	**7**	**Indonesia**	**Ningbo (2 years) Nottingham (5 years)**	**Power Engineer**	**Asian**	**English, Indonesian, Chinese**
R11	**21-25**	**7**	**Indonesia**	**USA**	**Marketing (Events Specialist)**	**Indonesian**	**English**
R12	**46-50**	**16**	**Canada**	**None**	**Baker**	**Chinese**	**Indonesian, English**
R13	**46-50**	**6**	**Indonesia**	**Oklahoma**	**Sales manager**	**Asian**	**Indonesian**
R14	**21-25**	**5**	**Holland**	**Delft**	**Intern**	**Chinese**	**Indonesian**
R15	**41-45**	**8**	**Australia**	**none**	**Housewife**	**Chinese**	**English**
R16	**21-25**	**4**	**Indonesia**	**Seattle**	**Teacher (Lead teacher)**	**Chinese - Indonesian**	**English, indonesian, mandarin**
R17	**30-35**	**24**	**Indonesia**	**England**	**Teacher**	**Indonesian, Java-nese**	**Indonesian, English, Javanese**
R18	**21-25**	**10**	**Indonesia**	**USA, Australia**	**Teacher**	**Indonesian, Java-nese**	**Indonesian, English, Javanese**
R19	**35-40**	**18**	**Indonesia**	**Nigeria, Austria, German, Australia**	**Teacher**	**Indonesian, Java-nese**	**Indonesian, English, German**