

Received: August 28, 2024
Accepted: October 25, 2024
Published: November 25, 2024

Communication Gap: A Case Study on the Use of Indonesian and English by International Students at IPB University Bogor

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Abstract

This study focuses on the challenges faced by international students at IPB University Bogor in using a mixed language, namely English and Indonesian, in both academic and social contexts. The aim of the research is to understand how the use of mixed language affects communication and social interaction among foreign students from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Ghana at IPB University. The research method employed is qualitative analysis based on in-depth interviews with these students. The findings indicate that the use of mixed language creates confusion and difficulties in maintaining smooth communication, impacting their academic participation and social interactions. The foreign students demonstrated effective adaptation strategies, such as simplifying language and seeking social support. In conclusion, cross-cultural communication challenges require additional support and better adaptation strategies. Developing intercultural competence, including language skills, social skills, adaptive attitudes, and emotional competence, as well as institutional support, is crucial to enhancing the experience of international students in a multicultural environment

Keywords: *mixed language, cross-cultural communication, international students, adaptation strategies, intercultural competence*

Introduction

In the context of educational globalization, universities in Indonesia, including IPB University Bogor, are increasingly enrolling international students (Widiasih & Hermayanti, 2020). These students come from various countries with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uganda, and Ghana. One of the main challenges faced by international students is communication difficulties, especially when the language used in academic and social settings differs from their native language.

At IPB University Bogor, international students often use a combination of Indonesian and English in their daily communication. This mixed language usage, although often necessary for adaptation, can lead to communication gaps. These gaps can affect their comprehension, social interactions, and even academic achievement. Therefore, it is important to understand how this mixed language usage impacts communication and the adaptation of international students at IPB University Bogor.

Research on cross-cultural communication concerning international students studying in Indonesia has been widely conducted by previous researchers. For instance Safi et al.(2022) the study titled *Intercultural Communication between Indonesian and International Students at Universitas Padjadjaran* revealed that communication gaps are inevitable due to differing backgrounds and varying levels of language proficiency. Another Al-Mabrok & Andriyanti (2022) study titled *Communication Challenges Faced by Libyan Students in Indonesia* found that Libyan

students felt challenged to improve their Indonesian language skills by engaging in direct communication with local students. The difference between these previous studies and our research on *Communication Gap: A Case Study on the Use of Indonesian and English by International Students at IPB University Bogor* lies in the theoretical analysis employed.

Based on the above background, the objective of this research is to explain how the use of mixed languages (Indonesian and English) affects communication gaps among international students from Afghanistan and Ghana at IPB University Bogor.

This research will employ a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data will be collected through in-depth interviews with international students from Afghanistan and Ghana currently studying at IPB University. These interviews will explore their experiences using mixed languages and how this affects their daily communication. In addition, participatory observation will be conducted to understand the context of language use in daily interactions on campus. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns in the communication gaps that occur.

The expected benefits of this research are to provide insights to IPB University Bogor regarding the communication challenges faced by international students and how mixed language usage plays a role in this. The research will also generate recommendations to improve communication strategies and support programs for international students, helping them better adapt to academic and social environments. Additionally, it will contribute

to the scientific study of cross-cultural communication, particularly concerning the dynamics of mixed language use among international students in Indonesia.

With this structure, your journal article will have a clear flow, starting from the problem introduction, literature review, focused research objectives, to the methods and expected benefits.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the communication gaps experienced by international students from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uganda at IPB University. According to (Creswell & Poth, 2018), a qualitative approach is capable of exploring subjective experiences and the complexities of social interactions. In this context, the researcher has the flexibility to uncover the conditions of communication gaps in a multicultural academic environment. Participants were selected purposively, with the main criterion being international students who actively use both Indonesian and English in their daily lives. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation related to academic support programs for international students at IPB University.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researcher to explore the students' views and experiences regarding the use of mixed languages. Additionally, participatory observation was carried out in various situations, such as in classrooms and social activities, to directly understand the context of language use. Supplementary documentation from official IPB University

materials provided a more comprehensive overview of the support given to international students. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, where key themes were identified, categorized, and analyzed to reveal emerging communication patterns and their implications for student adaptation.

Results and Discussion

Informant Descriptions

1. Walid Qarar is pursuing a Master's degree in Agribusiness and has been studying at IPB University for about 4 semesters. Prior to studying in Indonesia, he completed his undergraduate degree in Kabul, Afghanistan. His English proficiency is quite good, but his understanding of Indonesian is limited to basic phrases.
2. Armah Desiy is enrolled in a Master's degree program in Economics. He has completed both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in the same field in Ghana. Although he has good English proficiency, her knowledge of Indonesian was very minimal before his arrival in Indonesia.
3. Arslan Arshad from Pakistan is pursuing a Master's degree in Agriculture. He possesses good English skills and has begun to master Indonesian, though his proficiency remains limited.
4. Arsharf Kitaka from Uganda is currently enrolled in a Doctoral program in Nutrition Science. He is quite fluent in Indonesian.



Figure 1: Hasballah Atiqi (Author, Second from the left) with international students at the IPB University campus.

Theoretical Framework

In exploring communication gaps among international students, this research delves into several crucial areas: Mixed Language Usage in Communication, Challenges Faced, Gaps in Social Interaction, and Interpretation Based on the Intercultural Competence Model (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017) Mixed language usage, where students alternate between Indonesian and English, represents a significant factor influencing communication dynamics. Understanding how this bilingual or multilingual approach affects communication can reveal underlying issues and challenges faced by students adapting to a new academic and cultural environment(Mannion, 2014).

The research will also examine the challenges that arise from this mixed language usage, including misunderstandings, reduced interaction

quality, and potential social isolation. These challenges are pivotal in assessing how well students are able to integrate and interact within their academic and social communities. Furthermore, the study will address gaps in social interaction that may result from language barriers and how these gaps impact students' overall experience and academic success (Hofstede, 2001).

To provide a comprehensive analysis, this research will employ the Intercultural Competence Model (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory(Bandura, 2014). The Intercultural Competence Model will help interpret how students' intercultural interactions and language skills affect their ability to communicate effectively (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

Meanwhile, Bandura's Social Learning Theory will offer insights into how students learn and adapt their communication strategies through observation and interaction with others in a multicultural setting (Bandura, 2014). By applying these theoretical frameworks, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the communication gaps experienced by international students. This analysis seeks to identify the underlying issues and challenges that affect their interactions and academic performance.

Additionally, the study proposes strategies for improving the experiences of international students at IPB University Bogor. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing effective support mechanisms, the goal is to enhance both their academic and social integration in the multicultural environment of the university.

1. The Use of Code-Switching in Communication

Walid Qarar and Armah Desiy demonstrate a pattern of mixed language usage in their daily communication at IPB University. In academic contexts, both predominantly use English, which serves as the primary medium of instruction at the university. This preference for English arises because it is used in lectures, assignments, and interactions with peers.

"I often use English when discussing technical terms in lectures. However, when talking to local friends, I tend to use more Indonesian for everyday conversations" (Interview with Walid Qarar, 2024).

"In class, I use English for academic topics, but when explaining agricultural concepts to local friends, I often mix languages to make it easier to understand" (Interview with Armah Desiy, 2024).

However, this mixed language usage presents several challenges. Arshaf frequently experiences confusion when his classmates do not understand the technical terms he uses in English. He mentioned that sometimes his classmates struggle to grasp the technical terms he mentions in English, requiring him to find alternative ways to explain them. Similarly, Armah Desiy finds it difficult to switch between English and Indonesian within the same conversation, which sometimes disrupts the flow of communication. When Armah Desiy speaks in a mix of languages, her occasionally

struggles to maintain the conversation's flow, especially if the listener is not accustomed to the language mix.

Arslan Arshad from Pakistan faces unique language challenges in the academic environment at IPB University. He tends to use English with a distinct Pakistani style when interacting with international friends or faculty, but switches to his native Pakistani language when conversing with fellow students from Pakistan. His use of Indonesian is limited to the vocabulary he has already mastered, often leading to misunderstandings or difficulties in expressing complex ideas.

On the other hand, Arsharf Kitaka faces even greater challenges in mastering Indonesian, the primary language of instruction at the university. Despite his minimal proficiency in the language, Kitaka feels fortunate that some of his international friends are more fluent in Indonesian and can assist him in understanding academic material. Despite these difficulties, Kitaka remains optimistic that over time, he will be able to improve his Indonesian language skills, which will ease his adaptation to the academic and social environment at IPB University

The use of code-switching by international students at IPB University can be understood through Code-Switching Theory (Muysken, 2020), which suggests that speakers often switch between languages depending on the context and audience to enhance understanding (Myers-Scotton, 2017). Although this strategy allows them to adapt to various communication situations, it also poses challenges such as confusion and difficulty in maintaining the flow of communication, consistent with findings in

the literature on communication errors in multilingual contexts (Yuan et al., 2013).

The difficulties they face in communication reflect the concepts from the Intercultural Competence Model (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017), which suggests that inadequate language proficiency can hinder social and academic interactions. Additional language support and better adaptation strategies could help reduce communication gaps and improve the academic experiences of international students (Tian et al., 2020).

2. Challenges Faced

Initially, international students at IPB University experienced significant challenges due to the use of code-switching in their academic environment. Although they had studied Indonesian before starting their studies in Indonesia, they had not yet practiced it extensively. They reported difficulties, especially when technical terms in English were not understood by classmates who did not speak Indonesian. This situation led to confusion in group discussions, where misunderstandings could affect the productivity and outcomes of group work. These difficulties highlight clear communication barriers between students speaking different languages in technical contexts.

On the other hand, they faced similar challenges when switching between English and Indonesian. This transition sometimes caused communication to become disjointed, adding discomfort to interactions. The inability to seamlessly switch between the

two languages often added cognitive and emotional strain, which could negatively impact their academic and social experiences on campus. They felt that frequent language shifts could affect their confidence in communicating with their peers.

The analysis of the challenges faced by international students at IPB University reflects issues identified in the literature on misunderstandings in multilingual communication. According to Gazzola et al.(2020), multilingual communication often encounters obstacles due to differences in language use and understanding of terms, which in turn can affect the effectiveness of communication and social interaction.

Furthermore, difficulties in switching between different languages can disrupt the flow of communication and add stress to the individuals involved, as highlighted by (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017)B. This research underscores the importance of adjustments in multilingual communication and how proper management of language differences can enhance interaction and learning experiences in an international environment.

The presence of code-switching in academic contexts can also create situations where students feel marginalized or overlooked, especially if they cannot follow discussions or material presented in a language they do not fully master. This can hinder their social and academic integration on campus.

Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to understand and address these challenges by providing appropriate support, such as additional language training or communication tools, to help international students overcome the barriers they face. This support will not only

improve communication effectiveness but also facilitate better integration within the academic community.

Overall, the challenges faced by international students at IPB University highlight the need for a more holistic approach to addressing language issues in the context of international education. This approach should include strategies to reduce language confusion and enhance communication skills in a multilingual environment.

3. Gaps in Social Interaction

The communication gaps caused by code-switching have had a significant impact on the social interactions of Walid Qoror and Armah Desiy with their classmates and lecturers. For instance, Walid often feels less confident in group situations involving a language he does not fully understand. His inability to follow discussions using mixed languages frequently leads to feelings of isolation from his group, which in turn affects his participation in class discussions. This discomfort can exacerbate feelings of alienation and negatively impact his engagement in academic activities.

Armah Desiy and her fellow international students face similar challenges, where difficulties in switching between English and Indonesian affect their involvement in class discussions and social interactions with classmates. These challenges often result in an inability to effectively convey their opinions or follow the flow of discussions, impacting the quality of their participation in academic and social activities. Arslan also feels the emotional toll of these language challenges, which can decrease his motivation to interact with peers and contribute actively to group work.

The analysis of the impact of these communication gaps aligns with Social Interaction Theory, which suggests that gaps in communication can affect social relationships and the level of individual engagement within a group. According to Indriyani et al. (2021), effective social interaction is crucial for the learning process and individual development. When communication is hindered, whether by language differences or other factors, social relationships and group involvement can experience significant disruptions.

The communication gaps they experience illustrate how language barriers can create limitations in social interaction, hindering their opportunities to build strong and productive relationships with their peers. These barriers not only affect their academic experience but can also impact their social and emotional well-being in the campus environment.

In this context, it is important to identify and address the factors contributing to communication gaps. Strategies such as providing additional language support, communication skills training, and facilitating collaborative learning can help mitigate the negative impact of these communication gaps. These approaches have the potential to improve social integration and enhance the quality of the academic experience for international students.

Furthermore, it is essential to create an inclusive environment where language differences are valued and recognized as a positive aspect of academic diversity. By raising awareness of the challenges faced by international students, educational institutions can design more effective support

programs and promote better social interactions within the academic community.

4. Adaptation and Coping Strategies

To address the communication difficulties they face, Walid and his fellow international students at IPB University have adopted several effective adaptation strategies. He makes an effort to use simpler language in daily interactions and is taking Indonesian language courses to improve his proficiency in the language. In this way, they hope to reduce misunderstandings that may arise from the use of overly complex or technical language. Additionally, he frequently checks his classmates' understanding to ensure that his messages are clearly comprehended (Bandura, 2014).

This strategy also involves ongoing efforts to improve his communication skills. Walid actively seeks feedback from his peers to evaluate the effectiveness of his communication methods and makes adjustments as needed. This demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing communication difficulties and striving to enhance the quality of his social interactions in the academic environment.

Meanwhile, Armah Desiy, Ashlan, and Kitaka are addressing language challenges by improving their Indonesian skills through more frequent practice and seeking support from local friends. They also periodically check their interlocutors' understanding to ensure that communication is effective and free from misunderstandings. Social support from local friends plays a crucial role in their adaptation process, providing Armah Desiy with opportunities to

learn the language in more natural and practical contexts (Heller, 2007).

The approach taken by Armah Desiy reflects an active and participatory language learning strategy. By practicing consistently and engaging in social interactions with native speakers, they can overcome some of the language barriers they face. Support from local friends also provides a useful context for learning and using the language in real-life situations, accelerating the adaptation process.

Analysis of these adaptation strategies shows that active and participatory language learning approaches are highly effective in overcoming communication challenges. Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Bandura (2014) supports the importance of direct experience and social interaction in the language learning process. Direct experiences and active engagement in social contexts offer opportunities for deeper and more applicable language learning (Johnston, 2018).

These four international students demonstrate that their efforts to improve their language skills through planned strategies and social support can help them overcome communication difficulties. This indicates that adaptation and strategic adjustments in communication are crucial for enhancing the quality of their interactions and participation in the academic environment.

5. Interpretation Based on the Intercultural Competence Model

The Intercultural Competence Model emphasizes the importance of developing cross-cultural communication skills, which include understanding, skills, and attitudes

that support effective interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Based on the data obtained from their experiences, we can analyze how they address language difficulties and adapt to their academic environment.

Firstly, linguistic competence is a crucial aspect of the Intercultural Competence Model. Walid Qarar and Armah Desiy strive to use simpler language and take Indonesian language courses to improve their proficiency. These efforts demonstrate awareness and the ability to adjust language according to communication needs, which is part of linguistic competence. By regularly checking their classmates' understanding, they also show skills in managing two-way communication to reduce misunderstandings (Kent & Lane, 2021).

Meanwhile, Arslan Arshad and Asharf Kitaka enhance their Indonesian skills through practice and seek support from local friends. This social support reflects social competence and cross-cultural interaction skills. Armah Desiy's ability to check his interlocutors' understanding shows awareness of the importance of clarification in communication to ensure that messages are accurately received (Gani et al., 2018).

Both strategies also illustrate the adaptive attitude required to interact effectively in a multicultural environment. Adaptive attitudes include readiness to adapt to different cultural norms and practices, as well as the ability to handle uncertainty and challenges in cross-cultural communication. They demonstrate this attitude by proactively seeking to understand and overcome their language difficulties.

The Intercultural Competence Model also highlights the importance of

communication skills that are sensitive to cultural contexts. These four students show that they are not only relying on language knowledge but also striving to understand their social and academic contexts. This includes seeking feedback and utilizing social support to improve their communication skills.

In this regard, emotional competence also plays a significant role. The difficulties experienced by international students at IPB University impact not only their communication but also their confidence and comfort in social interactions. Both aspects demonstrate that addressing language difficulties requires managing emotional aspects to reduce discomfort and enhance their social engagement.

Through their adaptations, the international students at IPB University demonstrate that developing intercultural competence encompasses more than merely acquiring language skills. It involves cultivating attitudes and skills necessary for effective interactions across different cultural contexts. Their efforts in improving their linguistic abilities, seeking social support, and adopting adaptive strategies reflect a comprehensive approach to overcoming communication barriers.

These strategies underscore the significance of a holistic approach in tackling cross-cultural communication challenges. By addressing not only linguistic proficiency but also social, adaptive, and emotional aspects, the students highlight the multifaceted nature of intercultural competence. This approach helps in fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment, essential for successful integration into diverse academic and social settings.

Table 1: Application of Intercultural Competence Aspects to International Students at IPB University.

Aspect	Student Analysis
Linguistic	<p>Armah Desiy: Improving Indonesian through practice and support from local friends.</p> <p>Walid Qarar: Using English as the primary language, with gradual efforts to improve Indonesian.</p> <p>Arslan Arshad: Taking additional language classes, developing Indonesian skills through daily interactions.</p> <p>Arsharf Kitaka: Prioritizing English, with emphasis on technical and academic Indonesian.</p>
Social	<p>Armah Desiy: Seeking social support from local friends, practicing language in social contexts.</p> <p>Walid Qarar: Seeking help from fellow international students, adapting to local culture through observation.</p> <p>Arslan Arshad: Connecting with the local community, actively participating in campus activities to expand social network.</p> <p>Arsharf Kitaka: Participating in study groups and social activities,</p>

	<p>using Indonesian in informal interactions.</p>
Adaptive Attitude	<p>Armah Desiy: Adjusting communication approach with local support.</p> <p>Walid Qarar: Adapting language use depending on the situation, balancing between English and Indonesian.</p> <p>Arslan Arshad: Applying bilingual communication strategies, adjusting to the audience.</p> <p>Arsharf Kitaka: Flexible in language use, choosing language according to social and academic context.</p>
Emotional	<p>Armah Desiy: Managing discomfort in communication, striving to be more comfortable in interactions.</p> <p>Walid Qarar: Addressing homesickness by regularly contacting family, avoiding isolation by joining the international student community.</p> <p>Arslan Arshad: Managing academic pressure by seeking support from friends and faculty, working to maintain emotional balance.</p> <p>Arsharf Kitaka: Managing stress through physical activities and sports, maintaining contact with</p>

family and friends in home country.

Contextual Armah Desiy: Utilizing social support to understand language and cultural context.
Walid Qarar: Adapting to the local academic environment, striving to understand campus customs and social rules.
Arslan Arshad: Leveraging available academic and social support, adjusting to a multicultural environment.
Arsharf Kitaka: Using previous international experience to navigate academic and social contexts at IPB.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research has significant implications for intercultural communication theory and institutional practices in addressing cross-cultural communication challenges. International students often face difficulties that impact their interactions in academic environments. Based on the experiences of international students at IPB University and the application of the Intercultural Competence Model, we can explore the theoretical and practical implications of their adaptation strategies. These implications include how intercultural communication theory can be applied to understand and address language and cultural difficulties, and how educational institutions can design more effective support to enhance

the integration and engagement of international students.

Theoretical Implications:

1. Intercultural Competence Model: The experiences of international students affirm the relevance of the Intercultural Competence Model in understanding how students adapt to multicultural environments. This model highlights that effective cross-cultural communication relies on the development of linguistic abilities, social skills, adaptive attitudes, and emotional understanding. The study reinforces the idea that interacting effectively in diverse cultural settings requires comprehensive competence across various aspects of communication and social interaction.
2. Social Learning Theory: The data shows that direct experience and social support play a crucial role in language learning, consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory. International students rely on interactions with native speakers and feedback from peers to improve their language skills. This underscores how experiential learning involving active social interaction can enhance language learning and communication skills.
3. Cultural Context Impact: The findings from this study emphasize the importance of understanding cultural and social contexts in cross-cultural communication. Contextual competence, which involves understanding different cultural

norms and practices, proves essential in overcoming communication challenges. This indicates that the effectiveness of communication is greatly influenced by how well individuals can adapt to varying cultural contexts.

Practical Implications:

1. **Development of Language Support Programs:** Given the strategies employed by students like Walid Qarar and Armah Desiy, it is crucial for educational institutions to provide better language support programs. These programs should include additional language training and social support, such as study groups or local mentors, to help international students overcome language difficulties and adapt to new cultures. Such support can reduce communication barriers and improve students' social integration.
2. **Facilitation of Social Interaction:** Institutions should create an environment that supports inclusive social interaction. Orientation programs and social activities involving international students can help them feel more connected to the academic community. By facilitating these interactions, students can reduce feelings of isolation and increase their involvement in academic and social activities.
3. **Provision of Feedback and Clarification:** Providing opportunities for students to check and ensure understanding during communication will improve interaction quality.

Institutions can offer training on effective communication skills and strategies for checking comprehension in multilingual contexts. This will help students enhance their linguistic and emotional competence.

4. **Emotional Support:** Addressing the emotional aspects of language difficulties is also crucial. Psychological support and counseling can help international students manage discomfort and stress related to language challenges. With this support, students can feel more confident and engaged in the academic community.
5. **Development of Adaptation Skills:** Training programs focusing on developing adaptive attitudes and cross-cultural communication skills can enhance international students' ability to handle multicultural situations. Such training can include simulations, role-plays, and interactive exercises that allow students to practice adaptation skills in a safe context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of code-switching by international students at IPB University Bogor reflects significant challenges in cross-cultural communication that affect their academic and social interactions. While code-switching allows for adjustment in various situations, it also leads to confusion and difficulties in maintaining smooth communication. These challenges

highlight the importance of additional support and effective adaptation strategies. This approach underscores the need for developing intercultural competence that encompasses linguistic, social, adaptive, and emotional skills, as well as institutional support to enhance the experience of international students in a multicultural environment.

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