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Identity and Psychological State in Multilingual and Multimodal Posts: Insights from Indonesian Students Abroad

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ABSTRACT

Identity is fluid, negotiated, and complex produced socially through self-consciousness, interpretation, and projection. This fluidity and complexity can be studied from language choice and mode selection performed by networked multilinguals on their Social Networking Sites, including Facebook. This study aimed to analyze to what extent Sasak students overseas project their multilingualism and identity (including psychological state) through language use and multimodality on Facebook. To answer the research question, this study collected 80 data corpora of participants' Facebook posts (20 posts for each participant) posted during their study abroad. To strengthen the data gathered from the screen-based, a semi-structured interview designed based on the work of Androutsopoulos (2015) was also addressed with all participants. For multilingualism projection, all data collected were analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis based on the theory proposed by Androutsopoulos (2015). To explore the multimodality projection, this study also employed Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and was thematically analysed by referring to van Leeuwen's theory (2008). This study showed that all participants projected their multilingualism through various language resources. This projection also represented their identity as a part of their local community (Sasak community),

Indonesian people, and the global community; academic professionals; international students; Muslims, and creative and humorous language users. This study also found that all participants projected their identity, including their Spatial, Relational, and Functional identity using various modes. Furthermore, the semiotic and mode choices also served as a psychological strategy to manage psychological state: stress, homesickness and emotional needs.

Keywords: Identity; Multilingualism; Multimodality; Networked Multilingual; Psychological State

1. Introduction

Some studies focusing on writing in an online network system by multilingual users have led scholars to consider the idea that identity is fluid and dynamically created [1]. Block argued that multilingual identity is produced socially through self-consciousness, interpretation, and projection [2]. Block also stresses that multilingual identity is negotiable and could be presented depending on the subject's position, in this context, the multilingual person [2]. It is in line with Harmers and Blanc's statement [3], seeing this phenomenon from a social context, that multilingual people can present themselves as more open-minded and tolerant language user than monolinguals. This open-mindedness might lead multilingual people to show their identity as multilinguals in unique and various ways, including through online spaces.

The online space has provided its users to fit and re-imagine the use of language that is inextricably linked to their identity formation [4,5]. Social Network Systems has provided a fundamental connection across borders and a multilingual and multicultural community that leads them to develop meaning and employ multiple languages [1]. Facebook, as a communication space and the most widely used site, is often used by multilingual users to project their multilingualism. Written language in a digital site (i.e., Facebook) is creative and rich in linguistic and semiotic modes, which might index the projection of multilingual identity and bending to address the diverse interlocutors [6], providing space for the networked interlocutors to build their identity [7]. And the features provided by Facebook also facilitate users to utilize their linguistic resources in various modes to communicate, interact, present themselves and build their identity [5,8–10]. It entails what Veum et al. state that the discourse presented in various languages and modes (i.e., images) contributes to the identity construction [11].

The use of various languages and multimodality is never neutral [1,3]. Numerous dynamic dimensions probably impact how a bilingual represents their bilinguality [3]. In multimodal and networked communication context, Androutsopoulus added that various discourse functions had been recorded across modes and languages, providing proof that online written practice is contextually motivated and not arbitrary [1]. Hence, it might be safe to say that everyone has their agenda of identity projection behind the colorful picture or images of their status updates projected through multilingualism and multimodality. Besides, the use of multiple languages and various modes is not only related to their identity projection but also to their psychological projection. Therefore, this research not only examines identity projection, but also how the process relates to students' psychological state possibly expressed through the identity (spatial, relational and or functional identity).

We may study several research studies exploring linguistic sources and multimodal projection related to identity construction, yet, the notion of international multilingual students from peripheral areas has not been explored significantly. As overseas students, they might reflect on themselves as a minority needing to negotiate their identity through intercultural communication and interaction. Minority is often portrayed as a community that lacks individual or self-identity [11]. However, Honeyford proved that foreign students could represent their power and identity in unique ways using multimodal [12]. It is reasonable to agree that identity text is an alternative type of discourse used to devalue minority's identity, culture, and language [11]. In addition, states that migration and mobility have affected how one sees their language and identity. As overseas students, Sasak students are required to acquire English, leading them to be multilingual, which is expected to facilitate them in multicultural communication and interaction, including through digital communication [13]. And, being networked-multilingual engages with identity construction and negotiation [1,10]. Thus, studying to what extent the Sasak students choose a particular language and mode for

their status updates during their study abroad might enrich the study related to this topic.

Despite the growing body of literature on online multilingual identity projection or construction, few studies have examined how students from peripheral, indigenous linguistic backgrounds use language and multimodal resources in digital platforms to negotiate and their identity during their overseas studies. This gap raises the need to investigate how their unique sociocultural and psychological positioning informs their digital linguistic behavior and identity performances. This study is therefore important to understand the nuanced experiences of underrepresented multilingual populations in global education and digital spaces. This study addresses the following research questions:

- How do Sasak multilingual students construct their identity in their Facebook status updates during their overseas studies?
- What linguistic and multimodal resources do they use to negotiate identity?
- How is psychological projection expressed through linguistic and multimodal resources?

1.1. Multimodality and Networked Resources

Multimodality is grounded in the notions of modes and modality. According to Kress, as cited in Shin and Cimasko [14], a mode is an element socially constructed and culturally offered to develop meaning. The mode is represented in various forms, including "image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, and soundtrack" [15]. These modes are called semiotic sources (2013). Shin and Cimasko categorize modes into various types, such as linguistic, audio, visual, and spatial modes [14,15]. According to Hawkins, modality is the integrated group of semiotic resources employed for meaning-making in language production that are culturally inserted and recognizable [16]. Thus, it can be concluded that multimodality is the combined use of two or more semiotic resources (modes and language) in conveying and constructing meaning through communication.

To successfully convey the pragmatic function of spoken language that is poured into written language, the networked interlocutors utilize the written sign, orthography, and graphic shape of languages [17]. Androutsopoulos states

that the multilingual networked-interlocutors employ this strategy for signaling code-switching representing their multilingualism [1]. In terms of scripts and orthographies, he argues that the more scripts or orthographies available in an SNS, the broader potential the users will have to explore their multilingual ability [1]. It is supported by Blommaert [13], pointing out how advanced multimodal and multilingual literacy skills might be used as the media to understand how language users access, control, and share their own spaces globally. Previous researchers have conducted several studies highlighting the importance of *re-entextualization* and *semiotization* [18,19]. Re-entextualization deals with how language users reconstruct the position of discourse repertoires as meaningful material in a new context. These meanings are constructed and articulated through various modes and modalities, then so-called semiotization [19]. They also pointed out that the features provided by Facebook provide spacious space for its users to rebuild their position in a certain context. This statement has been echoed by some scholars [1,5,10]. Besides language production, Facebook has become a rich and colorful space for users to present their images, identity, interests, and other variables through different modes provided by the platform. It indicates that the multiple modes Facebook provides can be utilized for participatory culture or identity construction. Facebook offers a digital practice or activity that facilitates the flow of thought, culture, discourse, and materials globally accelerated, repurposed, and appropriated by the user. And, through the modes and materials Facebook provides, the individual user of Facebook can picture their colorful intentions in accelerating, repurposing, and appropriating the mode they choose to use. Therefore, as a part of network resources, scripts and modes provided on Facebook enable the networked interlocutors to escalate the projection of their multilingualism. Facebook has updated its features by providing various modes for its users. They can embed written language in the form of multiple modes. The cultural code wrapped in images can bring certain cultural values, meaning, identity, and dynamic dimensions to share across the spaces [13]. Networked-interlocutors may use modes to convey specific values and to present their multilingual identity and dimensions along with the language use.

1.2. Networked Multilingualism and Language Choice

Internet users become the producers of discourse practice, social interaction, and cultural production [18]. All language producers become a community called a "Network society" [20]. The Network Society is a newly configured global social structure and identity shaped by the revolution in advanced technology. The society utilizes the technology revolution that enables them to connect and interact globally, and the members of this community are incredibly diverse. They are diverse in terms of culture, language, ideology, needs, interests, attitudes, beliefs, and social and educational backgrounds. These diversities are coloring the images of their SNS, especially Facebook. In the context of multilingualism, it might lead the network society to engage in what Androutsopoulos calls networked multilingualism [1].

Networked-multilingualism activity can be categorized into intercultural communication, for the networked interlocutors (addressors and addresses) are diverse in terms of language, culture, identity, and other dynamic dimensions (gender, ethnicity, ideology, age, and other dimensions). There are power relations in intercultural communication (including in SNS) where the values and ideology negotiation appear and where the dynamic dimensions are potentially constructed along with the consideration of the cultural, historical [21], and political aspects. Through social networks, we can understand how one establishes interpersonal relations with others [3].

Beyond the diverse members of the society and the merit of SNS as the media of communication, in the context of multilingualism study, linguistic activities in SNS, such as Facebook, are a networked-multilingualism activity, multilingual projection constructed by two intertwined processes, namely being *networked* and *in the network* [1]. Networked multilingualism relates explicitly to how language users use the whole range of linguistic resources by considering three main controls: mediation, access (network sources), and orientation (networked audiences). It spotlights how linguistic repertoires are produced in different forms and genres by Facebook users related to their audiences. The use and production of linguistic repertoires will be affected by numerous factors, including the diversity of the members and other dynamic dimensions of interpersonal communication. Therefore, judging one's language production is no longer necessary before observing the agenda behind it.

SNSs, including Facebook, cover three principal characteristics: (1) they can produce a public or semi-public profile, (2) they may list others with whom they interact, and (3) they view and navigate both their list of connections and those created by others [22]. In this context, Facebook is accessed by networked individuals to share histories, images, experiences, knowledge, and linguistic repertoires [1]. Through Facebook features, publicness and semi-publicness can be manifested. Publicness leads to the distinction between private and public concepts. Yet, the more interesting discussion is about semi-publicness defined by Boyd & Ellison as in which the histories, experiences, knowledge, and linguistic repertoires are somewhat shared [22]. This condition may cause the users to decide the publicness degree based on the addressee (whether directed to the specific addressee or the whole networked audience). Facebook users with a mother language other than English and who have international friends sometimes choose English to update their status to convey their messages to the networked audience. For responsive status, they often appear in their first language or other languages to convey their messages to a specific addressee. Code-switching or translanguaging to address specific addresses is called for in this context. It is significant to examine the notion of code-switching and code-mixing from the perspective of bilingual discourse (the study of bilingualism) used for communicative strategies) [23]. The code-switching and code-mixing provide a discursive space called a third space [24], where two systems of identity representation merge as a response to local and global conflicts and dialogically produced identities that are created via appropriation and resistance. The third space, a meeting point of geographical distances representing various forms of interaction (i.e., asynchronous communication for networked communication context) that Androutsopoulos mentioned [1], has also been shown to feature poetic and whimsical uses of languages. In short, multilingual communication is produced through various language choices, and creative and whimsical language use might represent the speakers' identity. It supports Boyd and Ellison stresses: the network concept in internet research refers to emerging online social spac-

es that support self-presentation and the construction of identity practices [22]. Indicates that Facebook can be used to identify how multilingual speakers represent themselves through networked communication in social networking systems.

Multilingual people are often involved in the online space (i.e., Facebook) by utilizing various languages they acquire, and it has represented their identity construction [25]. As previously stated, identity is socially constructed, including by language production. Articulated a notion of "identity as position," a concept that concerns how various discourse and narrative interactions, space, time, and images could project a multilingual's identity [26]. Through multiple languages, they can negotiate their identity in networked communication practices. It is also strengthened Malik's theory, proposing how the use of language could represent and show one's identity [27]. In this study, language choice relates to multilingual students' choices among their L1, L2, and other languages (English or other languages) on their social network as a process of identity construction. It is also supported by Abdulhay explicitly positioning the use of foreign name in EFL classroom as an act of identity negotiation and cultural tactic [28].

1.3. Multilingualism, Multimodality, and Identity Projection

Identity is complex, contested, negotiated, and ever-changing [28,29]. One major reason for the shift of observing the complexity and fluidity of identity to a multimodal perspective, then, has been the advancement of technology used for communication tools by the users. Through the communication process where language and modes are employed, the networked multilingual may negotiate and construct their identity [1,5,10,30].

In a networked system, intercultural communication and interaction are often performed by multilingual networked interactants. This interaction happens between individuals affiliated with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Some researchers have highlighted the considerable involvement of language in empowering intercultural communication, and its impact on one's identity, as language users [3,5,10,31]. This phenomenon might indicate that being multilingual will allow interactants to access and choose more expansive linguistic resources and reach a wider scope of audiences in intercultural communication.

With its various features, accessing social network systems such as Facebook also becomes the eminence that supports the users, in this context, the multilingual interlocutors, to articulate their language resources in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication conducted by multilingual people can lead them to be in the options, whether being a segregated group or standing on equal footing with other cultural and linguistic groups [21]. In this context, they claimed that it is challenging for them to negotiate and construct their identity. They suggested seeing how the complexity of the identity construction might be experienced by multilingual people who live and interact in diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In studies conducted by researchers through language choice and mode selection, scholars can investigate identity fluidity and complexity [1,5,10,31,32].

In addition to reflecting the users' agency and project-specific identities, the deliberate language choices made in postings and comment threads (i.e., multilingual repertoires), shared pictures, links, emoji and acronyms in SNSs [33]. Through Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), scholars can study how these identities, including multilingual identity, are projected through the modes posted [34]. This approach can be applied using various frameworks of analysis. As this study focused on the screen-based data seen from the social semiotic and MCDA, the theoretical framework used to analyze the multilingual identity construction in multimodality projection was a framework proposed by van Leeuwen categorized into three types: spatial identity, relational identity, and functional identity [32].

Spatial identity is how a participant visually represents and emphasizes their connection and affiliation to a certain place [32]. Critical Discourse Analysis highlights that internal and external space is built socially and contains symbols with meaning [11]. Site and location might contribute to one's identity construction regarding their role and feeling in a certain place, and it might symbolize meanings and messages. Sometimes, networked users post an image without any humans; in this case, the object in the picture brings essential value, especially for the users [11], as it symbolically brings connotative values and affiliation.

For relational identity, van Leeuwen defines that mul-

timodality can visually emphasize a participant's connection with other people such as friends, colleagues, family, and other partners [32]. Relational identity is presented when participants depict one or some people in their posts. In updating their posts, the users often share a post that involves other people in an image or even as the main object. This phenomenon can be identified as it can represent how the user builds a connection to people in the image that indicates their relational identity [11,32].

Networked multilingual can also project what van Leeuwen calls functional identity by visually emphasizing themselves as a part of an activity showing what they are doing. In a post, the user often shares how they are involved in an activity or action. In this case, van Leeuwen believes it brings diverse symbolic meanings) [32]. For Functional identity, the participant might be involved in narrative and static representations. In narrative portrayal, the user acts as the agent or "doer," and in static or passive representation, the user is involved in an activity but not as the doer or agent. These categories of identity that may be constructed through multimodal posts in this study were employed to analyse the participants' posts (see methodology).

Although there are several measurements of bilingualism or multilingualism, the writer assumes that it is still acceptable to use a common understanding of multilingualism [3]. Through this common understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism, it can be said that the language diversity in Lombok may shape its people to be multilingual language users who can speak more than two languages, namely, Sasak language (L1), Bahasa Indonesia (L2), and other languages. This multilingual ability is projected to potentially be used in various communication contexts, including networked multilingualism activity. The networked-multilingualism activity can be coloured by how the multilingual speakers choose the language to be used, in this context, on Facebook status update.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study is a qualitative study aimed at discovering the multilingual and multimodal projection of students from Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, who are studying abroad. Sasak students were selected as Sasak people are multilingual and multicultural. A qualitative approach was used to allow in-depth analysis of identity construction and psychological expression. This design is suitable for capturing the nuanced, contextual meanings embedded in digital texts and social interaction. Facebook was chosen as the digital site of study due to its broad user base, multimodal features, and common use by multilingual users to express identity, as discussed in the introduction.

2.2. Participants

This study involved four Sasak students studying in Australia, Japan and North Carolina (**Table 1**). Sasak people are known for their multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. Participants were purposively selected based on these criteria: 1) studying abroad 2) being multilingual (able to speak Sasak as their L1, Bahasa Indonesia as their L2, and English or other languages such as Japanese); and 3) published status updates (minimum 20 status updates during their residence abroad), given comments and shared the status during their study abroad.

Table 1. Participants' Profile.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country of Study	Field of Study	Bilinguality	Length of Residence
AJ	M	34	Australia	English Education	Sasak, Indonesia, and English	3 years
AM	M	30	USA	Animal Science	Sasak,Indonesia andEnglish	3.5 years
LM	F	29	Australia	Accounting	Sasak,Indonesia, andEnglish	1 year
VF	F	32	Japan	Bioorganicchemistry	Sasak,Indonesia,English andJapanese	4 years

2.3. Data Collection

To answer the first and second research questions, twenty posts from each participant (80 posts in total, excluding comment sections) posted in a different period (See **Table 2**) were analysed. It focused on the status updates reflecting multilingualism and multimodality. The comment sections were also included to study their multilingual identity. An online semi-structured interview designed based on Androutsopoulos (2015) was also addressed with all participants (26-34 minutes for each participant) to explore the intentional language or mode choice [1], their reflections on audience and self-representation, and emotional and psychological meaning embedded in their posts. The questions were addressed in Bahasa Indonesia, and the researcher allowed the participants to answer in any language they were comfortable with (See **Table 2** to see the number and period of status postings).

Table 2. Number and Period of Status Posting.

Pseudonym	Number of Posts Collected and Analyzed	Period of Status Posting
AJ	20 posts	16 July 2021–1 September 2022
AM	20 posts	27 January 2022–31 July 2022
LM	20 posts	15 February–23 Nov 2022
VF	20 posts	25 June 2017–1 November 2022

2.4. Data Analysis

A framework proposed by van Leeuwen was employed to analyze the multimodality projection [21]. To analyze the data (screen-based), this study used Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) [12,21]. This framework could provide detail exploration of how meaning is constructed through :1) linguistic form (language choice); 2) multimodal elements (images, emojis, features, layout, and other elements); and 3) psychological cues (affective, expression, tone, self perception). The data were qualitatively described and thematically presented including the projection of participants' multilingualism and the identity construction through multimodality (Spatial, Relational, and Functional identity).

3. Results

Table 3 shows the distribution of the linguistic practices on participants' status updates. The analysis found that all participants projected their multilingualism using L1, L2, L3, and multiple languages. The use of full L1 written was not found in their public status but in the comment section. For the use of L2 and L3, it was found that participants almost equally performed their L2 and L3 in their Facebook timeline, namely 21.25% and 27.5%, respec-tively. The participants presented the practice of multiple languages frequently, with the highest percentage of the use of multiple languages, 51.25%. One of the participants posted 4 (5%) status updates in the form of pictures only without text. This data shows that all participants tended to project their multilingualism using L1, L2, L3, and multiple languages in their public status updates.

Table 3. Participants' Projection of Multilingualism.

Pseudonym	Language Used				
	L1	L2	L3	ML	Total
AJ	0	7	4	9	20
AM	0	5	7	8	20
LM	0	2	3	15	20
VF	0	3	8	9	20
Total	0	17	22	41	80
Percentage	0	21.25%	27.5%	51.25%	100%

3.1. Behind the Projection of Multilinguialism

3.1.1. The Use of L1

As presented in **Table 3**, the use of L1 (Sasak language) was not found in the participants' public status. Although they said that the majority of their followers were Sasak people, they admitted that they rarely used

L1 to update their public status. The participants expressed several reasons, but the most considered aspect was the accommodation of L1 to develop audiences' understanding and accommodate the concept, context, and topic. AJ, AM, and VF assumed that using the Sasak language in public settings could exclude their target audience. LM added that although FB has provided translation features, she lacks Sasak writing skills. AJ and VF also admitted that for some topics of status, it was challenging to find the equivalent terminology in the Sasak language.

Although the use of L1 was absent on their status updates, Sasak language was frequently found in their comment section. AJ, AM, and LM considered their target commenting on the use of L1 in their status. They used Sasak language with those who understood Sasak language. AJ and AM also considered the context of locality in using L1 (See **Figure 1**).


Figure 1. The Use of L1 in the Comment Section.

This picture represents Sasak tradition during the rice growing season. He replied in Sasak language to show his identity that he knew the tradition and confirmed indirectly that he also belonged to Sasak ethnic group. AJ, AM, and VF added that they used Sasak language to communicate with family, relatives, friends, or others who understand Sasak language. LM said using L1 enabled them to feel and build intimacy with their relatives.

3.1.2. The Use of L2

In using the L2, all speakers articulated the target consideration; most of their Facebook friends understand Bahasa Indonesia. AJ considered using L2 for some topics regarding Indonesian issues or local aspects (Indonesian context).

Both LM and VF experienced the eminence of using L2 to express their ideas easily, especially regarding the important information they wanted to share with their relatives in Indonesia (**Figures 2** and **3**).
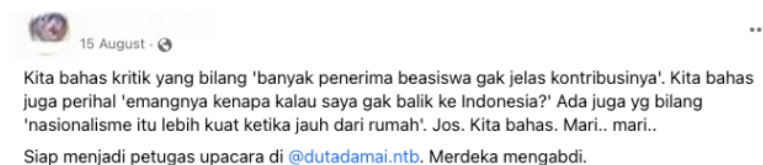
[Translation: "We discuss criticism that says 'many awardees do not give contribution'. We also talk about 'what if I don't want to return to Indonesia'. Some people also say 'our nationalism feels stronger when we are far from home' Let's talk about it. Come on.. come on..
Ready to serve as a flag ceremony officer at @dutadamai.ntb. independent service"]
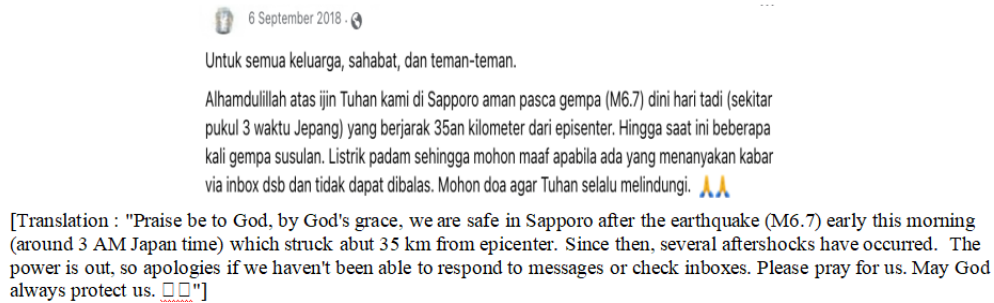
Figure 2. The Use of L2.

[Translation : "Praise be to God, by God's grace, we are safe in Sapporo after the earthquake (M6.7) early this morning (around 3 AM Japan time) which struck abut 35 km from epicenter. Since then, several aftershocks have occurred. The power is out, so apologies if we haven't been able to respond to messages or check inboxes. Please pray for us. May God always protect us. 🙏🙏"]

Figure 3. The Use of L2.

AM admitted that the target audience was not his prior consideration. Using L2 in his public status is part of his pride of being Indonesian (see **Figure 4**). The picture also represents how AM manifested his feelings of nationalism by using Bahasa both in this video and caption bringing Indonesian tradition, namely Indonesian Teachers' Day, although he was not in Indonesia.

Here is the picture screenshot from AM's facebook. Hope this picture is better.

Figure 4. The Use of L2 by AM in a Video Caption.

3.1.3. The Use of L3

In the use of L3, AJ, LM, and VF put target audiences on the top consideration in choosing their L3 in their public status and comment section. As a lecturer, AJ considered that his status in English would provide a reference for his students to help them improve their English. Yet, AM, in some cases, shared his personal life and identity using English (see **Figure 5**).

He confirmed that the status was very personal and emotional, and using English helped him express those feelings easily. Moreover, the status also represents his identity as a Muslim. It brought out the value of Islamic tradition and how valuable the moment was in his life (see excerpt 1). And using English would make the status easily understood by his friends.

Excerpt 1:

"Oh ya, this picture, at that time, I wanted to share my personal life that was very emotional for me, so I preferred English. Although it was also about my religion tradition, I am oke with it. Besides, my friends here (in Carolina) would know my tradition, that I think brings positive value." (AM, Carolina)
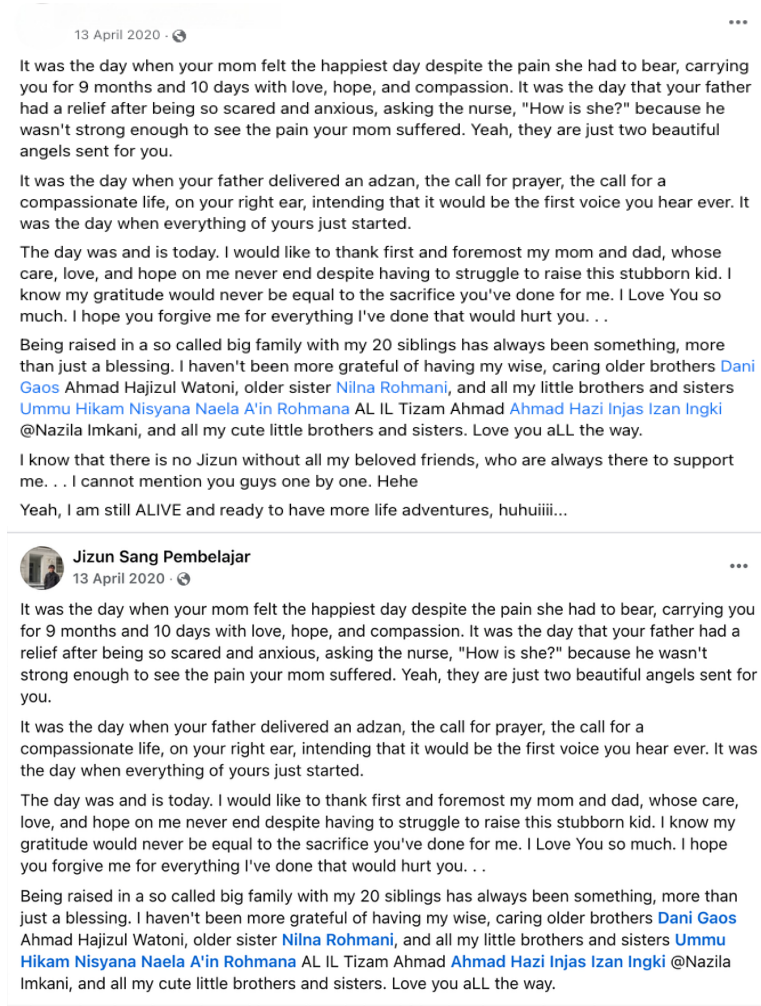
Figure 5. The Use of L3 by AJ.

3.1.4. The Use of Multiple Languages

The participants articulated their multilingual resources by using multiple languages on one post (**Figure 6**).

The caption translation:"Just pretending like I'm checking the invitation while actually just posing for a photo"

AJ posted his picture of being well-dressed and put a caption in Sasak language with the hashtag "ngecekpesilaan." He utilized the *Hashtag* feature to point out the tradition and the value of *Pesilaan* (invitation). Besides, *Pesilaan* is a tradition of Sasak people usually conducted to celebrate a momentum moment such as death, marriage, and thanksgiving. People invited to the celebration typically dress well. This finding accentuates how AJ valued his community, home, and identity as a Sasak person. It also shows how they use social media to establish their connection with Sasak community. AJ added that using multi-language in his social media was his mechanism to make the interaction more enjoyable, exciting, and intimate. As presented in the data above, he used L1 and L2 to express humor. It shows that he practiced his language creativity to make the interaction more attractive [23].

Excerpt 2:

"I use different languages as the comical expression, to build warm atmosphere with the audience. So, this is my way to make the conversation more enjoyable, exciting, and more intimated" (AJ, Australia).

In **Figure 7**, VF shows her Japanese and English resources. Instead of using "Halo!" she used Hiragana こんにちは！to greet her friends, especially in Japan. She also claimed that Hiragana was used to attract others to participate in her university's social activities. This finding echoes Androutsopoulos's observation about the eminence of Facebook features, in this context, the Japanese alphabet, supporting its users to actualize their multilingualism [1].

The caption translation:"Just pretending like I'm checking the invitation while actually just posing for a photo"
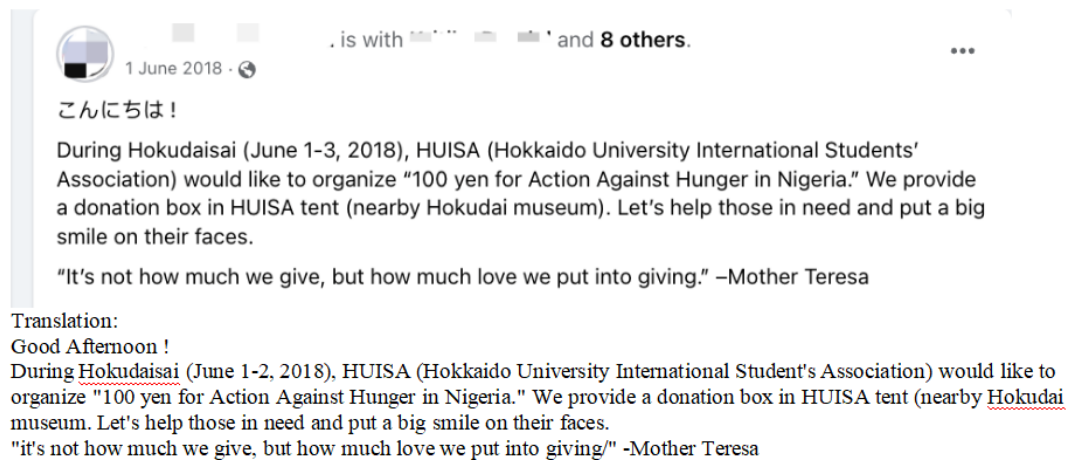
Figure 6. The Use of Multiple Languages.

Figure 7. The use of Multiple Languages.

The projection of multilingual identity was also found in her comments section (**Figure 8**). As projected in the picture above, she employed three languages for three people with different linguistic backgrounds. She replied to her Japanese friend using the Japanese language, her international friend (JPU) using English, and her Indonesian friend (LR) using Sundanese and Bahasa Indonesia. She confirmed the use of Multilanguage in the comment section was to address her friends and to build connections with her friends from different cultural backgrounds.
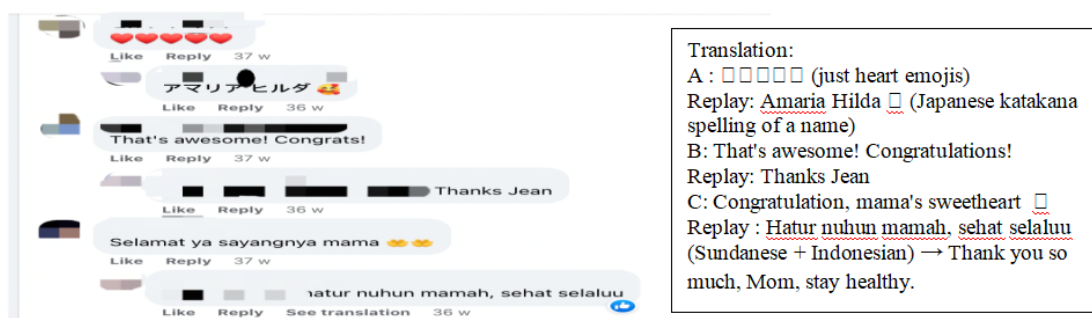

Figure 8. The Use of Multiple Languages in the Comment Section.

Excerpt 3:

"In my comment section, yes, I used different language with different friends. In this status, I replayed using Japanese because my friend commented in Japan, and this one (pointing to JPU's comment) used English, so I replayed in English the last one was my Sundanese friends, so I replayed in Sunda and Bahasa... it was to get closer to them" (VF, Japan)

3.2. The Projection of Multimodality

Table 4 shows a significant difference in the participants' use of text-only and multimodality, namely 6,25% and 93.75%, respectively. LM and VF employed multimodality in their public status with a percentage of 100%. This datum articulates the participants' tendency to use more than one mode [11]. All multimodal posts were identified for identity construction (based on Van Leeuwen's theory). More than one-third (33,3%) of multimodal status updates were observed to represent the participants' functional identity, and 32% were also identified to represent multiple identities in one post. For spatial and Relational identity, the participants' multimodal status projected their spatial and relational identity in 18.7% and 16% of the total number of multimodal status updates, respectively.

Table 4. The Use of Multimodality in Participants' Posts.

Pseudonym	Posts	Number of Use (%)	Spatial	Relational	Functional	Multiple
AJ	Text-only	2 (10%)				
	Multimodality	18 (90%)	0	4	11	3
AM	Text-only	3 (15%)				
	Multimodality	17 (85%)	1	2	8	6
LM	Text-only	0 (0%)				
	Multimodality	20 (100%)	7	2	5	6
VF	Text-only	0 (0%)				
	Multimodality	20 (100%)	6	4	1	9
Total	Text-only	5 (6.25%)				
	Multimodality	75 (93.75%)	18.7%	16%	33.3%	32%

3.2.1. The Use of Text-only

The use of text-only was performed by the male participants, AJ and AM. AM said that he used text-only to ease his delivery of the messages. AJ supported that he used text-only only if the text-only was representative enough to help him express his ideas.

As presented in **Table 4** above, this study did not reveal text-only use in the LM and VF's public status. VF stated that during their studies abroad, she was motivated to share her moments, and using text-only could not provide a more comprehensive visualization to her followers. LM also strengthened that the upgrade using text-only sometimes could make the audience misinterpret the messages she was delivering. These interview results also show that the use of text-only did not accommodate the speakers to express their thoughts and feelings, and it possibly failed the meaning-making (see the excerpt below **Table 5**).

Table 5. Excerpt 4.

Reasons for Using Text-Only
I used text-only to share information, or something abstract such as a concept or idea that I think it does need detail explanation (AJ, Australia)
I used text-only when I want to emphasize on reading, so I don't need picture or other mode. (AM, Carolina)
I never used text-only mode (LM, Australia)
I never used text only, I guess because every moment I have her is too valuable not to be captured and shared (VE, Japan)

3.2.2. The Use of Multimodality and Identity Projection

(1) Spatial Identity

Through **Figure 9**, LM shared her Spatial identity by presenting two different contexts of her personal life unified in one status update. Mount Rinjani is Lombok's indexical icon, and the other one is the picture of the Australian National University in Can-

berra. These unified pictures showed her affiliation as a member of Sasak community in Lombok where she is originally from, and her identity as a student studying abroad, indexing her as a part of the international student engaging in a global context. Through the interview, she confirmed that she created and posted this picture to tell her audiences that these two pictures were her icons of life.

Figure 9. Spatial Identity in Multimodal Post.

Excerpt 5:

"I did not use long captions because I think this picture is enough.. for me picture speaks louder HUthan words.. to tell my friends that these places are important for me." (LM, Australia)

This finding confirmed Veum et al.'s statement that bringing out an image without any human means that the object in the image has important value, especially for the users [11].

(2) Relational Identity

Figure 10 shows that VF focused on her interpersonal relationship with her friends in the picture. In the picture, VF and her friends showed a banner representing their identity and relationship as student community members. The image also represents that VF has a warm relationship with her diverse friends, but they become unified under one community flag.

(3) Functional Identity

Two posts identified to contain functional identity were identified from AJ and LM's posts.

In **Figure 11**, AJ also depicted himself in a shopping activity. In this context, he represented functional identity as he acted as the doer choosing a trouser to buy) [32]. The caption "Satuan International" while demonstrating how to measure it, indicates that he was trying to represent himself as a part of the global community. As a member of the global community, he was sharing and introducing to his friends, especially local friends, how to measure the size internationally.

Figure 10. Relational Identity in Multimodal Post.

Figure 11. Functional Identity in Multimodal Post (AJ's Video).

Another Functional identity was identified in LM's timeline (**Figure 12**). In this self-recorded video, the caption explained that she was participating in a religious activity. This activity emphasized her functional activity as an active person and represented her agency through the attribute and religious activity, praying and celebrating her religious celebration Eid-Al-Fitr. This post shows her functional identity as a Muslim celebrating her religious celebration with other Muslims. This post symbolically projected LM both as a narrative representation ('doer') and static representation (recorder) in this activity [21].

Figure 12. Functional Identity in Multimodal Post (LM's Video).

(4) Multiple Identities Projection in a Multimodal Post

This study found that more than one identity might be identified from one multimodal post. One of the examples is AM's status updates in the form of a video (**Figure 13**).

The finding shows that AJ was constructing spatial identity, relational identity, and functional identity at the same time. Spatial identity was observed when AM's video showed some places, including his rented house where he was living, emphasizing his identity as a temporary resident living in a rented house. Spatial identity was also presented through the object of the video, namely his university. This object has projected his identity and affiliation as a student, specifically an international student. For functional identity, this post projected AM's role as an international student doing several activities in his 'a day in my life' multimodal post, such as cooking, exercising, riding a

bike, studying, and having a regular class. It indicates AM as an active person symbolized as the doer [11,21]. And in the video, he also projected his relational identity and kinship when he depicted his classmates and some other international friends around his university. English caption was used in the caption to highlight the point of his messages in his video and confirm himself as an international student member.

Figure 13. Functional, Spatial, and Relational Identity in AM's Video.

4. Discussion

4.1. RQ1: Identity Construction in Digital Space

This study reveals that Sasak multilingual students constructed multifaceted identities on Facebook reflecting the dynamic and situated nature of their experiences. The identities are not fixed but rather flexible and strategically projected depending on audiences. Context and communicative purpose. These identity constructions span local (Sasak), national (Indonesian) and global (International student) affiliations, showing how digital platforms facilitate layered identity projection.

Participants' use Sasak language (L1), Bahasa Indonesia (L2) and English or Japanese (L3) was central to how they navigate these identity positions. Their public posts predominantly employed L2 and L3, often leaving L1 to the more intimate spaces of comment threads. Despite this, the presence of L1, even if in code-switched or translanguaged forms-signalled deep emotional and cultural ties. For instance, Sasak identity was most often indexed in comment thread or hashtags with culturally marked words (e.g., #ngecekpesilaan), while Indonesian language served as a bridge to national discourse and English or Japanese projected professionalism, cosmopolitanism or academic presence. This supports Blommaert and Varis's theory of layered identities where individuals draw from multiple semiotic resources to align with different scales of belonging from micro-level affiliation (ethical, familial) and macro-level affiliations (global or academic networks) and Gomzina's theory of Multi-layered cultural identity [35,36].

These findings also echo De Fina and Georgakopoulou's theory of identity as interactionally emergent and

narrative-based, where users perform multiple identities through discourse practices embedded in particular moments [37]. The participants' status updates, often combining narrative text, images, and emotive content, function as digital identity narratives, where past (home culture), present (study abroad) and future (career/professional goals) selves are juxtaposed. This is further confirmed in their use of temporally marked images such as posts referencing both Lombok (represented by the image of Mt. Rinjani) and host cities Canberra, Tokyo (represented by University picture).

This finding is also in line with Androutsopoulos who revealed that multilingual users on Facebook personalize their discourse through genre-shaped, creative and layered linguistic practices [1]. The participants exhibit similar tendencies, constructing identities that are individualized and attuned to their varied audience expectations. Just as Androutsopoulus found that networked multilingualism re-textualizes identity through dialogic and socially shaped discourse, this study shows that Sasak students strategically engage with both public and private audiences to align with community, institutional and peer norms. Moreover, our findings extend Solmaz's work by highlighting that for students from peripheral or indigenous linguistic communities like Sasak, identity construction also involves an emotional negotiation of minority representation [10]. Participants reported feeling the need to de-emphasize their L1 in public posts to avoid misinterpretation even as they value it in private interactions. This negotiation illustrates the psychological and symbolic weight of linguistic choice, reinforcing that identity in digital spaces is simultaneously an act of inclusion and exclusion.

Finally, this study adds to the work by Veum et al. [11], identifying spatial, relational and functional identity construction among immigrant students in Norway through multimodal texts. Similarly, our findings showed students performing spatial identity by referencing places of origin and destination, relational identity through tagging friends or using group photos, and functional identity through captions and visual content illustrating their roles (e.g., student, volunteer, doer). However, unlike Veum's immigrant participants, our participants were found to be transnationally mobile, and their identities are marked not only by adaptation but by cross-border negotiation and lin-

guistic agency, often resulting in overlapping or hybridized self-constructions.

4.2. RQ2: Linguistic and Multimodal Resources for Identity Negotiation

The projection of multilingualism was conducted by considering the linguistic and cultural background of networked audiences. In this study, intimacy and relationship-building were the primary considerations; as Oliver and Nguyen highlighted [31], these relationships played the primary role in identity creation. Linguistic creativity presented through multilingual projection was also revealed in this study. This creativity served to amuse and attract their audiences (i.e., humorous text). This linguistic creativity indicates a multilingual identity that is difficult to find in a monolingual speaker [22,31].

The projection of multimodality in Facebook was found in a highly significant number compared to monomodal text. The use of multimodal posts consisted of three categories Ou and Gu were discovered [21], namely Spatial, Relational, and Functional identity. Through spatial identity, participants expressed their power by presenting and emphasizing their affiliation to their community, both as members of Sasak and Indonesia and as members of the global and international community. Participants also expressed their admiration and excitement about being integrated with the places [11]. The participants shared their self-portraits from relational identity with their friends, lecturers, educational community, and religious community. The interpersonal relation projected in the post also pictured their identity as a member of a certain community as well as a member of their vernacular ethnicity and nationality; it supports Shin and Cimasko's finding [17]. Furthermore, some posts representing the participants as doers in a certain activity were identified, indicating functional identity. The multimodal posts showed that they were involved in various activities that valued them as a student, teacher, Muslims, Sasaknese, Indonesians, and a part of the global community.

Besides confirming van Leeuwen's theory of identity construction [32], the findings were also in line with previous works [15,38], arguing that modes are socially and culturally created and shared to convey the meaning of specific messages and to construct identity. The various modes

supported the participants in building their local and global identities. This finding entails [1], who stated that multimodality and intertextuality are fundamental tools for identity projection. The features provided by Facebook also facilitated the participants to project their multilingualism with multimodality. The advancement of technology provides space for networked interlocutors to employ various modes that help them accelerate their digital communication [14].

This finding also revealed several considerations affecting the projection of multilingual identity by using multiple modes: networked audiences, topic, and context, entertaining purposes, feeling, and mood expression [1,21,29]. It was revealed by participants keeping languages compartmentalized, blending Sasak, Indonesian language and English/Japanese in fluid ways, sometimes across sentences, sometimes within single posts to accommodate audiences, express emotion or mark belonging. This reflects definition of translanguaging as the deployment of full linguistic repertoire to make meaning and perform identity [39].

Participants made distinctions between when to use which language depending on their intended readership and the function of message. For instance, L3 (English/Japanese) was used when projecting a professional, academic or international persona; L2 (Indonesian Language) was employed for national discourse or to express cultural pride of being Indonesian (e.g. on teacher's day); while L1 (Sasak language) was selectively used to enhance intimacy and shared cultural understanding. This supports the argument that code-switching is a strategic resource rather than a communicative gap, used to signal social alignment or boundary drawing [29]. This also confirms Abdulhay's findings, pointing out that socially, the use of a foreign name streamlines communication, builds rapport, and signals community membership [28].

Multimodal elements such as images, emojis, symbols, captions, video and layout were also central to identity work. The participants used visual references to culture, religion, geography or activities to express meaning that language alone could not convey. These choices align with Van Leeuwen's theory that identity is constructed not just linguistically but through a full semiotic landscape where modes like image, space, gaze and design are integrated into self-performance [32]. Spatial identity (place-based belonging), Relational identity (social networks)

and functional identity (roles or activity-based identity) emerged clearly in the data. This supports Shin and Cimasko's finding that multilingual students often use multimodal compositions to construct nuanced identities that are context-sensitive and audience-aware [14]. In this study, multimodal blending allowed participants to bridge the gap between emotional authentic and global indelibility; for example, combining a caption in English with a cultural symbol to make the post relevant to both international and local friends. These multimodal practices were not only expressive but constitutive, shaping how students came to understand and perform themselves in multicultural and digital environments.

The findings also resonate with Schreiber's analysis of Aleksandar [5], a Serbian student projecting his multilingual identity through translingual practices and multimodal representation. Like Aleksandar, the participants blurred the linguistic boundaries and integrated visual and stylistic elements to align with community norms, whether projecting themselves as Muslim, Sasak people, Indonesian and International students. As Schreiber notes, this form of digital identity-making is not accidental but grounded in genre expectations, audience design and self-affiliation with both local and global cultures.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that multilingual identity expression on screen is not only shaped by language but also affected by visual discourse and posture [40]. The participants similarly displayed affective expressions (smiles, national flags, religious attire, emoji) as part of their meaning making toolkit. The integration of these resources reflects an understanding that in digital spaces, meaning and identity are co-constructed through multimodality, as also emphasized by Lee et al., who call for greater attention to how multimodal design reflects multilingual needs and user environments [9].

In short, the participants in this study negotiate using a range of semiotic resources that are contextually grounded, audience-oriented, and emotionally expressive. These practices reflect broader patterns of digital multilingualism but are distinctively shaped by their positionality as peripheral, indigenous students studying abroad. As such, this study fills a key gap in previous research by showing how students from periphery use Facebook not just for expression but as a site of cultural affirmation, identity negotiation and

self-empowerment.

4.3. RQ3: Linguistic and Multimodal Resources for Psychological Projection

The data suggests that multilingual identity construction on Facebook is not only as sociolinguistic projection or semiotic act but also a psychological projection. The participants' digital use, through multimodal posts and strategic language use, often reveals deeply personal expressions of emotion, belonging, alienation and resilience [41–43]. This supports the notion that identity work online carries psychological functions, particularly among overseas students navigating cultural transitions and stress. Our findings show that participants used different languages and semiotic resources to regulate emotion and manage psychological states. For instance, using English to express vulnerability, or Sasak in comment section to feel culturally grounded and connected to home, reflects on emotional mechanism of identity projection. These patterns align with those who note that self-presentation and social comparison on social networking sites influence young people's psychological well-being and identity formation [44]. The author underscores that online environments provide "a safe space" where identity can be explored and performed with greater control over impression, a theme echoed by Sasak students' strategic self-styling to align with both peer or strategic self-styling to align with both peer expectations and inner psychological needs. Abdulhay also confirmed that psychologically, the use of foreign semiotic source reduces teacher anxiety around cultural address norms, mediates learner identity coherence and enables cultural identification with target language [28].

Additionally, the use of idealized multimodal content—such as curated photos, international experiences, or symbolic icons—supports the notion of constructing the "ideal self" as a psychological coping strategy. Participants of this study often curate happy, successful or culturally rich versions of themselves, likely reflecting both genuine self-pride and desire for positive feedback and affirmation, a phenomenon discussed as linked to mood regulation and self-esteem enhancement [45]. However, this projection also exposes students to emotional contradictions. While projecting a cosmopolitan or successful identity may boost self-confidence, it can also produce cognitive dissonance when it masks underlying struggles. This aligns with findings that international students' psychological satisfaction is mediated by cultural adjustment, and that satisfaction depends not merely on competence or expression but on how well these are integrated into one's daily life [46]. In our study, the inability or unwillingness to use L1 in public—despite its emotional salience—suggests a tension between maintaining authenticity and presenting a desirable self-image to global audiences.

Moreover, model of "competence acquisition-application-satisfaction" offers a useful framework for interpreting the psychological dimensions of our findings [46]. Students acquire digital and linguistic competencies, but it is the successful application of these culturally meaning ways that contributes to a sense of emotional stability and satisfaction. In our data, multimodal identity projection served as a psychological buffer against academic stress, homesickness, and feelings of marginalization. For example, the choice of imagery, tone, and audience-addresses language was often linked to mood or motivation showing the psychosocial function of multilingual Facebook use. Taken together, these insights confirm that digital identity work is not neutral act but a complex interplay between social interaction, cultural context, and inner psychological states. This study finds that the online space serves as a double-edged arena: as supportive environment for creativity, but also one that can amplify feelings of inadequacy due to comparison and performance [47,48]. Similarly, emphasize that emotional well-being is not a direct result of competence but of culturally embedded adjustment resonating with the nuanced emotional expressions (found in the Sasak students' posts) [46].

In conclusion, identity projection in multilingual and multimodal Facebook Posts acts as both a form of cultural negotiation and psychological self-regulation strategy. It supports identity resilience in an intercultural environment but may also reflect internal tensions. Recognizing these dual roles can help educators and institutions better support international students not only linguistically but also psychologically, acknowledging that digital spaces are central arenas for emotional expression, social survival and mental well-being.

5. Conclusions

All participants projected their multilingualism with various modes. The projection of multilingualism shows that these participants did not resist expressing their identity as multilingual people. They utilized their diverse linguistic resources to construct their identity as a member of Sasak community and Indonesian people as well as a part of the global community, especially international students. The multilingualism projection also bridged the participants to show their personal life and identity (i.e., as a teacher, student, Muslim, and as humorous or emotional persons). Through multimodality projection, they also represented their spatial, relational, and functional identity [11]. Thus, this study provided evidence of how multilingual project their multilingualism and multimodality as one of the ways to show and manage their performance and identity as stated by Boyd and Ellison that language users may manage how they see themselves and how they want to be seen using language and language style [22]. This finding also exemplified statement related to people with multiple memberships in language communities who control and manage their affiliation with local and global language communities by considering the context and situation demands [29]. This study has also pointed out that one can understand how multilingual identity is fluid and negotiable through social networks [3].

Furthermore, the projection of identity also served as a psychological strategy to manage stress, homesickness and emotional needs. Multilingual and multimodal choices were not only cultural markers but also emotional regulators. This dual role reinforces how digital spaces enable identity resilience while revealing internal tensions. Thus, phycological dimensions are integral to understanding multilingual identity in global digital context.

However, as this study only focused on the projection of multilingualism and multimodality, for further research, it would be beneficial to study how male and female multilingual people project their multilingual identity and multimodality. It is because this study found an indication of the different projections of multilingualism and multimodality between male and female participants.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Ade Windiana Argina ; methodology, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati & Asdar Muhammad Nur; data collection, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi, formal analysis, Ade Windiana Argina and Anna Ayu Herawati.; investigation, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, and Puspita Dewi, and ; resources, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi ; data curation, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi.; writing—original draft preparation, Ade Windiana Argina and Anna Ayu Herawati.; writing—review and editing, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi.; visualization, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi.; supervision, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi.; project administration, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi.; funding acquisition, Ade Windiana Argina, Anna Ayu Herawati, Asdar Muhammad Nur, Puspita Dewi, and Muhammad Reza Pahlevi. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects in-

volved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting reported results are available upon reasonable academic request. Due to privacy or ethical restrictions, the interview transcripts and related materials cannot be made publicly accessible. Researchers interested to discuss this topic should contact the corresponding author to discuss potential access, subject to appropriate privacy and ethical consideration.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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