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NEGOTIATING ENGLISH ABILITY BELIEFS IN THE ELF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: This study explores ability beliefs among international students in speaking English as Lingua Franca (ELF) in Indonesia. While many studies focus on Inner Circle contexts, less attention has been given to English use and learner experiences in non-native, multilingual settings. Therefore, this research aims to investigate how students negotiate their beliefs in speaking English, particularly in academic and social settings in Indonesia. Using a qualitative design, the researchers employed case study with in-depth interview and reflective journals to collect the data. The participants were seven international students from different countries who were studying at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. Thematic analysis revealed five key themes: (1) redefining English proficiency, (2) shifting from deficient learners to legitimate users, (3) navigating academic and social contexts, (4) developing resilience, and (5) understanding English as a global communicative tool. The results of this study showed a significant shift in the participants' perspectives in redefining English proficiency from grammatical perfection to communicative effectiveness. Furthermore, students changed from deficit learners to legitimate users of English. This research concluded that the ELF environment in Indonesia fosters a growth mindset which allows students to claim ownership of English as a global tool for communication. Educational institutions should foster psychologically safe, ELF-aware environments that prioritize communicative effectiveness over native-speaker norms and strengthen students' confidence in using English.
Keywords: *English ability beliefs, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), expanding circle, growth mindset, identity negotiation, international students, study abroad*

INTRODUCTION

In today's international world, English now serves as a global lingua franca (Crystal, 2020; Jenkins, 2009). It plays an important role in global interactions in academic and social settings. English is especially important in areas like scientific research, technology, and higher education, where success often depends on knowing the language. For instance, more than 80% of academic articles are published in English, no matter what language the researchers speak (Bekmurodova, 2025). Given this trend, it is crucial to understand English's communicative role. In contrast to the conventional notion of the language in which one's proficiency is strictly determined by the particular roles played by native speakers, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is characterized by its functional role in cross-cultural communication (Alisoy, 2025).

The evolution of English has significantly influenced international student mobility. (Kusumaningputri et al, 2022; Zeng et al, 2022). Nowadays, when seeking higher education, students are no longer limited to studying in English-speaking countries anymore and the number of those who choose to pursue an education in countries where English is not the official language increases significantly (Jenkins, 2013; Tsai, 2025). Indonesia has emerged as a significant host of international students, reflecting the country's broader efforts to internationalize higher education through initiatives such as the World-Class University (WCU) and PTN-BH policies (Rachman et al., 2024; Wachyunni et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of English as a Lingua Franca has emerged in Study Abroad (ELFSA), where English functions as the language of communication in a community of non-native speakers (Budzinska, 2025; Heinzmann et al., 2024). The rise of ELF is challenging conventional views of English language learning and native-speaker norms (Boonsuk, 2026; Kim & Cha, 2017). Many international students feel pressured to meet native-speaker standards, which may contribute to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety (Jenkins, 2013; Lee & Kim, 2020; Marina & Xu, 2018). In Indonesia, this issue may be further complicated by educational practices that emphasize grammatical accuracy, potentially affecting learners' confidence in using English (Larasati et al., 2026; Sholichah et al., 2025). Previous studies have examined international students studying in predominantly English-speaking countries such as the US and UK (Heinzman, 2024; Situmorang, 2021). However, less attention has been given to international students studying in Indonesia, particularly in culturally diverse settings such as Yogyakarta, where English often functions as a lingua franca (Gallagher, 2024). Indonesia stands out as a unique context for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) due to its rich variety of language and cultures (Ahmed & Shahzed, 2024).

Many Indonesians regularly communicate in different languages, so they are quite accustomed to working through language barriers in their daily conversations. In international settings, English often serves as a common tool for communication, rather than being owned by native speakers (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026). With no single group holding linguistic power, many ELF interactions allow international students to explore and assert their identities as valid users of English (Situmorang et al., 2021). Unlike contexts where native speakers constitute the dominant English-speaking group, ELF interactions in Indonesia may provide international students with opportunities to use English without direct comparison to native-speaker norms. This context may therefore enable learners to reconsider their beliefs about English ability and negotiate their identities as legitimate English users.

When international students enter the Indonesian ELF environment, they bring their expectations and varying levels of confidence regarding their English proficiency, shaped by years of native-speaker-oriented education and beliefs about what it means to be a competent English user (Adiantika et al., 2025; Boonsuk & Fang, 2026; Hafiz, 2014). These beliefs encompass self-efficacy, language mindsets, native-speaker ideology, and confidence in using a second language, especially the negotiation of linguistic identity. Nakata et al. (2025) defined ability beliefs as an individual belief in his or her own potential to learn or perform successfully, especially in the context of language use. These beliefs play a crucial role in motivation, ways of coping with challenges, and the level of effort of the learner. In theory, ability beliefs are often explained through two complementary frameworks.

Self-efficacy is about how confident learners feel in their ability to complete certain tasks (Bandura, 1997), while mindset deals with whether people believe their abilities are fixed or can grow (Dweck, 2006). Instead of seeing these as separate concepts, combining them gives us better understanding of how beliefs change over time. A growth mindset helps learners view challenges and mistakes as chances to improve, while self-efficacy boosts their confidence and determination to communicate effectively. Recent studies highlight a positive link between having a growth mindset, self-efficacy in learning a second language (L2), and success in that language (Zhang et al., 2024). This study builds on existing psychological ideas by including Norton's (2013) Investment Theory to examine how people shape their identities in the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Indonesia. According to this theory, learning a language is like making a strategic investment in one's identity to gain both symbolic and practical benefits. In an ELF setting, where there isn't a focus on native speakers, students can 'invest' in becoming recognized users of English. This shift allows them to redefine their linguistic identities and challenge the usual expectations surrounding native speakers. (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026).

Therefore, beliefs about one's ability are not only about general confidence, but also about a belief system that shapes how learners interpret failure, success, and their potential (Nakata et al., 2025). These beliefs undeniably have a fundamental impact on learning language and adapting skills. When learners encounter experiences in ELF contexts, these existing beliefs are challenged and reshaped through interactions. Students gradually shift their perspective from being a deficient learner who uses English as a second language to assess their abilities based on native-speaker norms (Fiedler, 2022), to being a "legitimate user of English" who values mutual understanding and communicative effectiveness more than clinging solely to native-speaker

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standards (Sung, 2022). Therefore, negotiating these beliefs is complex and exists in two main contexts, namely academic and social. In the academic context, evidence from the existing literature (Boonsuk, 2026; Sung, 2022; Panggabean et al., 2023) demonstrates that students have to negotiate between expectations of language accuracy standards and the need to communicate to achieve learning objectives (Boonsuk, 2026). Panggabean et al. (2023) and Sung (2022) reveal that academic contexts are often associated with assessment, pressure, and native-speaker ideologies, which affect language users' confidence and identity. In social contexts, all three studies above (Boonsuk, 2026; Panggabean et al., 2023; Sung, 2022) agree that communication emphasizes flexibility and mutual understanding more than grammatical accuracy.

Students feel more psychologically safe, are willing to take risks in using the language, and gradually see themselves as legitimate language users through interactions with peers in more equitable environments. Although contemporary research confirms the role of growth mindset and self-efficacy in language success, there remain significant gaps both in contextual and conceptual terms. While studies have examined identity negotiation in Inner Circle settings, less is known about how international students in Expanding Circle ELF contexts where power differences are minimized negotiate their beliefs across academic and social domains. Conceptually, although Zhang et al. (2024) point to the effect of mindset on language learning, there is still a lack of in-depth explanation of how learners negotiate and adjust their beliefs about their potential when facing differences between academic and social contexts.

Therefore, a significant gap in the literature is the study of the dynamics of belief negotiation and identity transformation of international students in the ELF context of Expanding Circle countries (Boonsuk, 2026; Hafiz, 2024; Situmorang, 2021). This study contributes to the literature by examining the dual-context negotiation of ability beliefs in a previously under-researched Expanding Circle ELF setting. This study aims to explore how international students navigate these tensions and negotiate their ability beliefs in English through their experiences in both academic and social contexts in Indonesia, particularly at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. One research question is formulated in this study: How do international students in Indonesia negotiate their English ability beliefs in academic and social contexts?

To address this broadly, two sub-questions are explored: How do international students redefine their conceptualization of English proficiency and their identities as English users within the Indonesian ELF context? How do the distinct demands of academic and social contexts influence students' negotiation of their ability beliefs and the development of a growth mindset? It is expected that this study will provide insights into how the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) environment in Indonesia helps students change from seeing themselves as deficient learners to viewing themselves as legitimate users who genuinely own the English language, without being limited by native speakers. This study adds value in several areas: theory, practice, and policy. It expands on self-efficacy and mindset theory by demonstrating how a smaller power imbalance can encourage the development of growth-oriented communication beliefs in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contexts. Additionally, it underscores the need for psychologically safe learning environments that are aware of ELF and advocates for more inclusive strategies in the internationalization of higher education in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2023). It was used because the researchers aimed to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of negotiating English language ability among international students within the specific context of using English as a lingua franca. The negotiation of English ability was connected to personal meaning, social interaction, and contextual factors, which require in-depth information from the experiences and perspectives of participants to provide a comprehensive explanation. Under this approach, this research employed a qualitative case study design because it aimed to study a specific phenomenon within a clearly defined context, namely international students living and learning in the English as a Lingua Franca environment in Indonesia (Schlunegger, 2024). The case study approach allowed the researchers to explore the complexity of participants' experiences, changes in beliefs, and negotiation of identity in a holistic manner under the actual conditions of the academic and social contexts they faced.

Table 1. *Participants' demographics*

	Country	Age	English proficiency	Length of stay (self-reported)	Academic major
P1	Egypt	30	B1	11 months	Master of Management
P2	Madagascar	27	B2	11 months	Master of International Tourism
P3	Thailand	25	B2	11 months	Master of International Tourism
P4	Pakistan	19	B2	11 months	Bachelor of Management
P5	Bangladesh	19	B2	11 months	Bachelor of Management
P6	Madagascar	18	B1	11 months	Bachelor of Management
P7	Pakistan	25	B2	11 months	Master of English Education

The study involved seven international students from the 2025 batch at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, representing different majors and five countries — Bangladesh, Egypt, Madagascar, Pakistan, and Thailand. All had arrived in Indonesia in August 2025 and had lived in the country for 11 months by the start of data collection. Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024) based on their experience living and studying in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) setting and their willingness to reflect on their English use across academic and social contexts. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, allowing for ethical reporting and encouraging more open disclosure (Heaton, 2022). Ethical approval was obtained from Sanata Dharma University's Research Ethics Committee.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and reflective journals. Interviews, conducted 11 months after participants' arrival, elicited rich, mature reflections on their identity negotiation and evolving beliefs about their English ability, offering insight into how participants used and interpreted English in academic and social settings (Osborne & Smith, 2021). Reflective journals complemented the interviews by capturing shifts in participants' beliefs and identities as they navigated the ELF context over time (Boonsuk, 2026; Ye, 2025). Together, the two methods functioned as a triangulation strategy, strengthening the trustworthiness and validity of the findings (Meydan & Akkas, 2024).

Data from interviews and journals were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework (Figure 1), ensuring a rigorous and transparent process. The researchers first familiarized themselves with the data by transcribing interviews and repeatedly reading journal entries, then generated initial codes related to ability beliefs and identity negotiation. These codes were grouped into potential themes and checked against both the coded extracts and the full dataset, then refined, defined, and named to capture key patterns. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature.

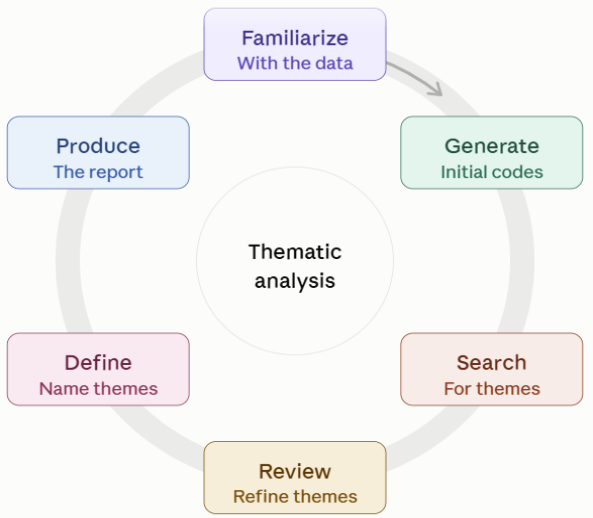


Figure 1. *Thematic analysis - Braun and Clarke 2006. Note: This figure summarizes the six-step iterative process used to identify and refine the themes regarding international students' English ability beliefs*

To enhance the reliability and thoroughness of the qualitative study, several strategies were used in addition to data triangulation. Member checking was conducted by sharing interview transcripts and initial findings with participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Peer debriefing was undertaken through discussions of the emerging themes and coding process with an experienced researcher (the second author). This helped reduce potential researcher bias and bolstered the credibility of the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will explore findings from the in-depth interviews and reflective journals of seven international students studying at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to answer the research question: How do international students in Indonesia negotiate their English ability beliefs in

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academic and social contexts? The findings are summarized in Figure 2, which visualizes the overall thematic structure of the participants' experiences (1) redefining what it means to be good at English, (2) shifting from a deficient learner to a legitimate user of English, (3) navigating differences between academic and social contexts, (4) developing coping strategies and resilience, and (5) understanding English as a global tool for communication. These themes illustrate how participants negotiated their identities as English users and developed confidence through their experiences in a multilingual and multicultural environment.



Figure 2. Thematic map of international students' English ability beliefs in an ELF context

Figure 2 presents a thematic map illustrating the dynamic process of how international students negotiate their English ability beliefs. The diagram highlights the transition through five interconnected themes: (1) redefining what it means to be good at English, (2) shifting from a deficient learner to a legitimate user, (3) navigating academic and social contexts, (4) developing resilience, and (5) understanding English as a global tool. This visual representation shows how students move away from native-speaker norms toward a focus on communicative effectiveness and identity reconstruction as valid English users within the Indonesian ELF environment.

Challenging existing ability beliefs

Before coming to Indonesia, the participants had a perspective on being good at English. They had to be perfect grammatically, demonstrate flawless pronunciation, and speak like a native speaker. Participants 5 and 6 have a similar agreement.

> "I knew grammar, reading, and writing through my previous education, but I felt nervous about speaking, especially with fluent speakers. I also thought that being "good at English" meant speaking perfectly without mistakes." (Participant 5 - In-depth interview)

> "I often felt nervous when speaking and was afraid of making mistakes. I thought that being "good at English" meant speaking perfectly without errors." (Participant 6 - in-depth interview)

However, after experiencing it firsthand, this perspective has shifted to the idea that communicating ideas effectively is more important than accuracy.

> "I thought my English was not good enough. But after many conversations with people from different countries, my feelings slowly changed. (Participant 1 - reflective journal)

Another participant added her thoughts about being good at English:

> "My beliefs have changed. Initially, I thought being fluent in English only meant speaking flawlessly without making any mistakes. But now I believe that being good at English means being able to communicate our thoughts clearly, adapt to any kind of condition, and interact confidently with other people from different backgrounds" (Participant 7 - in-depth interview)

The results show that the participants view English as a way to communicate, adapt to different situations, and connect with people from various backgrounds, rather than just focusing on speaking perfect grammar. The key to effective speaking is mutual understanding.

> "One experience I remembered was during a classroom discussion where we discussed and worked together with international friends. We didn't share a similar mother tongue, so we had to use English. Initially, I felt nervous, of course, and I thought too much about the grammar and pronunciation. But as time went by, I realized that most people focused only on sharing their ideas, not perfect English. This environment made me comfortable and confident" (Participant 2 - reflective journal)

These reflections illustrate a fundamental shift in the participants' conceptualization of English proficiency, moving away from narrow grammatical accuracy toward a broader focus on

mutual understanding. At first time, it was a narrow way of thinking because they believed that being good at English meant solely good grammar and speaking skills. Nevertheless, because of their real-life experiences, they realized that sharing ideas and understanding each other are actually more necessary than perfection. It is the heart of communication. They now see the English language as a tool to communicate, adapt to situations, and build relationships with people from different backgrounds. As mentioned earlier, International Students pursuing a higher degree in Indonesia came with predetermined beliefs about their abilities related to language usage, based on the education systems in their countries (Boonsuk, 2026; Zeng et al., 2022). Experiences in a different culture encouraged them to challenge and change some of those beliefs.

The previous data analysis indicates that, historically, Participants 5 and 6 considered "proficiency" as perfection, as native speakers' competence, and as focusing on flawless grammar and correct accents. Theoretically, this concept is called "native-speakerism," which glorifies native speakers as the sole possessors of the correct standard (Fitria et al., 2025; Hafiz, 2024). However, in real-world interaction within the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context, this definition changed drastically, with students beginning to prioritize Communicative effectiveness and intelligibility over accuracy. The transformation in Participant 7's perspective, where she moved from valuing "flawless speaking" to "communicating thoughts clearly and interacting confidently, reflects the core principles of a growth language mindset (Hoorie et al., 2026; Lou & Noels, 2020). By viewing English proficiency not as a fixed trait defined by native-speaker perfection but as a developable skill focused on mutual understanding (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026; Zhang et al., 2024), Participants 7 demonstrated enhanced resilience in the face of communication barriers (Mahendra et al.,2026). As argued by Lou and Noels (2020), students who adopt such a flexible mindset are better equipped to cope with linguistic challenges, as they perceive mistakes as opportunities for growth rather than signs of deficiency (Hoorie et al., 2026; Larasati et al., 2026). This shift on mindset directly contributed to her reconstructed identity as a legitimate user who claims ownership of the language within the Indonesian ELF setting (Adiantika et al., 2025; Boonsuk & Fang, 2026).

Negotiating ability beliefs across academic and social contexts

Research data clearly reflect the difference between the use of English in academic and social contexts, which affects the negotiation process of learners' ability beliefs. These data in Table 2 below highlight some differences in language usage between the two situations.

Table 2. *Comparison of participants' experiences in academic and social English communication contexts*

Dimension	Academic Context	Social Context
Focus of communication	"Actually, academic English is more difficult, because it contains a lot of vocabulary and requires correct grammar" (Participant 1 - in-depth interview)	"Socially, it's been easier. When I talk to my friends, it's more relaxed, and no one really cares about perfect grammar. We just communicate." (Participant 2 - in-depth interview) "Being good at English means being able to communicate our thoughts clearly, adapt to any kind of condition, and interact confidently with other people." (Participant 7 – in-depth interview)
Psychological State	"In an academic context, I often feel more pressure because of the expectation of formal language." (Participant 3 - in-depth interview)	"At first, I struggled to express myself confidently, but the friendly and relaxed environment helped me feel more comfortable." (Participant 4 - reflective journal)
Perceived Barriers	"The academic setting made me more self-conscious because I thought everyone would judge my English ability based on how fluently I spoke" (Participant 5 - reflective journal) "I often felt nervous when speaking and was afraid of making mistakes. I thought	"There is less pressure, but it requires quicker responses and cultural understanding." (Participant 5 - in-depth interview)

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	that being good at English meant speaking perfectly without errors." (Participant 6 – in-depth interview)

The perceived "pressure" and "anxiety" reported in academic settings contrast sharply with the "relaxed" atmosphere of social interactions, highlighting how context-specific expectations shape students' self-efficacy beliefs (Mahendra et al., 2026; Wachyunni et al., 2023). While the demanding academic context requires significant effort to meet formal standards. However, the social environment offers a more relaxed space where building friendships takes precedence over perfect grammar. This focus on effective communication allows people to connect naturally (Ahmed & Shahzed, 2024; Boonsuk & Fang, 2026). What's interesting is that the confidence gained from these social successes often spills over into academic life. Students who feel more secure in their interactions are more likely to embrace a growth mindset and engage actively in class discussions, even if they don't feel their language skills are perfect (Zhang et al., 2024; Mahendra et al., 2026).

The majority of participants indicated that academic English is more complex and daunting. As Participant 1 mentioned, "Academic English is harder because it's full of specialized vocabulary and requires correct grammar". This is consistent with Participant 3, who felt pressured by the high expectations of the institution regarding formality of the language. The surroundings sometimes create pressure for learners. For instance, Participant 5 shared that the academic context made her anxious about the judgement from her surroundings because of her fluency. Furthermore, Participant 7 added that paying too much attention to details made her more nervous and unable to speak naturally. From the insights, it can be concluded that their concerns are related to Boonsuk (2026), who claims that in an academic setting, native speakers standards are very important and create a tension between "correctness" and "effective communication." Additionally, Zakiya et al. (2022) reveal that presentations in class can cause significant anxiety because of getting negative feedback.

On the other hand, Indonesia offers a friendly and relaxed social setting which helps students increase their confidence. Participant 4 expressed, "At first, I struggled to express myself confidently, but the friendly atmosphere made me feel more at ease. "Students were encouraged to make mistakes because the main aim is to build friendships and communicate well. Participant 2 explained, "Social context is easier because when I talk to my friends, it is relaxed, and nobody cares about perfect grammar; we just talk. The friendly and laid-back atmosphere in Indonesia helps international students feel confident using the language (Ahmed & Shahzed, 2024).

In this context, English is seen as a flexible tool that everyone can use, rather than something set in stone (Adiantika et al., 2025). Because both local and international students are learning, there's no dominant group that dictates how English should be spoken (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026). This lack of a hierarchy makes it easier for students to view English as something they can develop over time, rather than a skill they need to perfect. Without the pressure to conform to native-speaker standards, learners can focus on improving their communication skills rather than just mimicking others (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026). While Situmorang (2021) talked about creating a "safe space," recent research highlights how important it is for campuses to be inclusive and welcoming (Ahmed & Shahzed, 2024; Mahendra et al., 2026). This acceptance lowers stress levels and supports students as they navigate their new identities.

As Situmorang (2021) suggests, this condition creates a safe space where no single group holds the power to judge others' language proficiency, thereby fostering the confidence needed to engage in academic discourse. This notion uniquely aligns with Heinzmann et al. (2024), who found that studying in an EFL context allows students to reduce their anxiety, which creates a safe space for discussion. This condition allows learners to see themselves as successful language users. These findings reveal that the social context acts as a crucial "testing ground" where international students can build their L2 self-efficacy without the fear of formal evaluation (Mahendra et al., 2026; Wachyunni et al., 2023). In this relaxed environment, the focus shifts from linguistic accuracy to communicative effectiveness, allowing learners to reclaim their ownership of English (Boonsuk & Fang, 2026). Interestingly, the confidence gained from successful social interactions where the emphasis is on mutual understanding often transfers back to the academic setting (Ahmed & Shahzed, 2024). This transfer of confidence enables students to adopt a growth mindset, encouraging them to participate more

actively in classroom discussions and academic discourse despite their perceived grammatical imperfections (Mahendra et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2024).

Reconstructing English ability beliefs

When international students interacted with the English language in Indonesia, they experienced a major shift in how they viewed their abilities. They moved from a fixed mindset, where they measured their performance against native speakers, to a growth mindset, which emphasizes ongoing improvement and the intension to communicate. Theoretically, this concept is called "native-speakerism", which glorifies native speakers as the sole possessors of the correct standard (Fitria et al., 2025; Hafiz, 2024). This change wasn't just about altering their attitudes; it fundamentally reshaped their identities. For example, Participant 6 shared that witnessing fellow international students facing challenges and learning together helped her realize, "We are all still learning every day".

This realization gave her the confidence to speak up, even if she made mistakes. In a similar vein, Participant 1 began to see English not as a rigid skill but as something that can be improved through practice and effort, easing her initial fears of being judged. To understand this transformation better, we can look at Norton's Investment Theory (2013): when learners commit to studying a language, they are strategically investing in their own identities while seeking both symbolic and tangible benefits. In the Indonesian ELF context, students felt encouraged to invest in becoming valid users of English because the environment allowed them to step away from the pressure of meeting traditional native-speaker norms. Participant 7 showed this shift by prioritizing "clarity and adaptability" over "flawless speaking". She recognized that effective communication was far more important for her global interactions than perfect grammar.

The data reveal that as students embraced their new communicative identities, they stopped seeing themselves as deficient learners and started identifying as legitimate users. For instance, Participant 3 mentioned that he no longer considered himself a weak learner; instead, he felt capable of building relationships and engaging with a global community. Similarly, Participant 5 described herself as a "more confident and active English user" able to navigate both academic and social settings. This active negotiation allowed students to reclaim ownership of their language skills, viewing English as a global resource that belongs to everyone, not just native speakers. By adopting a growth mindset, they broke through mental barriers and started seeing communication challenges not as failures but as vital steps in their personal growth and identity development.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study offers valuable insights into how beliefs about English ability are negotiated, but there are a few important limitations to consider. First, it was conducted at just one institution—Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta. Although Yogyakarta is a major center for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Indonesia, the results may not accurately represent the practices or cultural contexts of other universities throughout the country.

Second, the research involved a small group of seven participants. While this allowed for detailed qualitative analysis, it may not encompass the full range of experiences and language backgrounds found among the wider international student population in Indonesia. Third, the data was mainly based on self-reported methods such as interviews and reflective journals. These tools are helpful for exploring personal beliefs and identity but tend to reflect what participants think about their own abilities rather than their actual language skills. This discrepancy might be highlighted if we relied on objective standardized tests.

Lastly, the study was conducted over an 11-month period. While this timeframe was enough to notice some significant changes in attitudes, it might not reveal lasting shifts in students' language identities as they progress in their studies or return home. To build on these findings, future research could look at longer-term studies that track identity development over several years or include multiple institutions across different regions of Indonesia to make the results more widely applicable.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) environment in Indonesia offers international students a valuable opportunity to change how they view their English abilities. Instead of seeing themselves as "deficient learners" who must conform to native-speaker standards, they can start to identify as "legitimate users" who prioritize effective communication. This transformation is supported by developing growth mindsets and self-efficacy through successful ELF interactions, positioning English as a shared communicative resource rather than just a sign of native-speaker status.

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To put these insights into practice, educators should embrace teaching methods that focus on mutual understanding, effective communication, and strategic skills. Additionally, universities can help by creating peer-mentoring programs and providing low-pressure environments for genuine English conversation. Looking ahead, future research could benefit from long-term and comparative studies across Indonesia and other regions where English is expanding. This would help us understand how different institutional practices and ELF interactions influence students' self-confidence, growth mindset, and sense of identity as English users over time.

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