

LINGUISTIC RACISM IN INDONESIAN CLASSROOM CONTEXT: HOW STANDARD ENGLISH MARGINALIZES DIVERSE VOICES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated linguistic racism in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where Standard English dominated and marginalized regional linguistic identities. Employing Critical Race Theory, raciolinguistics, and postcolonial applied linguistics, it analyzed observations, interviews, and discourse from three junior high schools in Medan. Findings revealed that regional accents and non-standard grammar were policed, corrected, and ridiculed, fostering internalized hierarchies that equated fluency with whiteness and global prestige. English-only policies and Anglo-American curricular content further silenced diverse voices, perpetuating colonial language gatekeeping. Emotional harm, identity suppression, and peer surveillance exacerbated students' withdrawal and conformity pressures. Nevertheless, students resisted through translanguaging, code-switching, parody, and peer support, asserting hybrid identities and challenging hegemonic norms. The study called for pedagogical reforms embracing culturally responsive and inclusive approaches that validated multilingualism, dismantled linguistic hierarchies, and promoted equitable English learning. This shift was vital to transform classrooms from sites of exclusion to spaces where diverse linguistic identities were empowered.

Keywords: *Critical Race Theory, Cultural Marginalization, Indonesian EFL Classrooms, Linguistic Racism, Standard English.*

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, linguistic racism appears through the “racialization of language” (Gunawan, 2025; Stevani et al., 2025), where certain English varieties are linked to intelligence, discipline, or modernity. While BIPA focuses on teaching *Bahasa Indonesia* to foreign learners and celebrates accented Indonesian as a sign of intercultural effort, EFL classrooms are often the opposite: they penalize or erase local identity markers in English students. This reflects

postcolonial ideology, not just pedagogy, that is an internalized belief that Westernness equals correctness. For example, students using localized English may be told to “speak properly,” while those mimicking Hollywood speech, even if inaccurate, are praised as “natural.” This reveals that language is judged less on clarity or grammar, and more on how well it aligns with whiteness and Western prestige.

An overlooked form of linguistic racism in Indonesian EFL classrooms is the marginalization of local epistemologies when conveyed in English. Students incorporating indigenous knowledge such as *adat* laws, oral traditions, or spiritual beliefs into essays or presentations are often subtly redirected toward “global” topics like climate change or tourism. For example, discussions on traditional healing or land disputes may be reframed as inappropriate or irrelevant. This redirection reflects not just thematic preference but an ideological bias that privileges Western-centric knowledge. As a result, only certain worldviews are legitimized in English, reinforcing epistemic hierarchies and silencing culturally rooted perspectives within the classroom.

This practice reflects postcolonial anxiety over the legitimacy of local knowledge in English-language contexts. Indonesian students writing about cultural values like *gotong royong* or *cerita rakyat* are often asked to “restructure” their narratives to fit Western academic norms such as objectivity, linearity, and thematic detachment to make it more “formal.” These revisions are not due to language errors but because their culturally embedded forms are seen as incompatible with Anglo-centric academic genres, which prioritize rationality and formal structure. Unlike in BIPA settings, where foreign learners are encouraged to explore Indonesian culture, local students are subtly discouraged from expressing indigenous knowledge in English, suggesting such knowledge is invalid or untransferable into English-medium discourse.

This form of epistemic gatekeeping often goes unrecognized as racialized because it operates not through phenotype but through a hierarchy of knowledge: Western ideas are seen as universal and translatable, while local knowledge is viewed as parochial, emotional, or folkloric. In Indonesian EFL classrooms, English is positioned not merely as a language but as a vehicle of global, often Western, secular, and middle-class values. As a result, students feel pressured to abandon culturally rooted topics in favor of globally acceptable themes to succeed academically. This creates a quiet but powerful rupture in identity formation: one that does not occur in BIPA classrooms, where linguistic performance is evaluated for intercultural engagement rather than epistemic conformity. As Yoo (2025) argues, classrooms act as ideological state apparatuses, where dominant racial-linguistic ideologies are internalized, shaping students’ perceptions of what counts as legitimate knowledge.

Linguistic practices in EFL classrooms are deeply tied to historical and geopolitical power relations involving language, race, and authority (Stevani, 2024; Selvi, 2025). Maulana et al. (2025) introduce the concept of the “white listening subject,” where educators shaped by curriculum, training, and assessments perceive non-standard Englishes through racialized filters. For example, in U.S. high schools, Palestinian students were discouraged from writing

about occupation and identity, while essays on American war veterans were praised. This reveals how English often functions as a gatekeeper, silencing marginalized narratives. Such raciolinguistic ideologies, though implicit, systematically disadvantage students from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds by restricting whose experiences are considered appropriate in English academic discourse.

Most Indonesian language education research has emphasized grammar (Stevani, 2024), teaching methods (Khoir & Susanti, 2025), and proficiency (Wahidiyati & Kholid, 2025), with limited focus on the racialized dynamics of English instruction. Evidence shows students internalize linguistic hierarchies early. A Sulawesi study revealed suburban Gen-Z students mocked peers' English mistakes and feared speaking, while urban peers showed greater tolerance for accented English (Uswatunnisa et al., 2025). This reflects peer-enforced linguistic discrimination. In Medan, North Sumatra, students faced unequal treatment for grammar and pronunciation. One student saying "*He don't like the food*" was publicly corrected and ridiculed, despite being understood. Similarly, like cases in U.S. schools, Palestinian students were warned not to discuss their lived experiences in English essays for fear of being "political." Their reflections on occupation and identity were deemed inappropriate for narrative writing tasks, while other students writing about American war veterans were praised. Such incidents reveal how English instruction silences certain lived experiences.

The theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Wibowo, 2025) provides a crucial scaffold for understanding how these linguistic preferences function as racialized mechanisms within education. CRT posits that racism is not merely individual prejudice but structurally embedded, often manifesting through policies and discourses that appear race-neutral. In Indonesian EFL classrooms, where race is often construed as an irrelevant category, linguistic performance becomes a proxy for racialized judgment. This study, therefore, adopts CRT to critique how English teaching practices, even when well-intentioned, may sustain global racial hierarchies through local pedagogical choices.

Linguistic racism manifests through indicators that reflect how language enacts power and inequality. A key indicator is accent bias, where regional or non-native accents such as Sundanese or Javanese-accented English are seen as less competent or professional, often leading to mockery or correction based purely on pronunciation. Another indicator is non-standard varieties like Jakarta slang are also stigmatized as "low-class," undermining local linguistic identities. Forced code-switching further is another critical sign, where individuals feel compelled to suppress their home language or dialect in favor of standardized English in order to be accepted or taken seriously in formal or educational settings. This often leads to internalized linguistic inferiority, where speakers come to view their own linguistic resources as flawed or illegitimate. Further, linguistic racism is evident when individuals are silenced or excluded in multilingual interactions, whether through being interrupted, ignored, or overlooked due to their perceived "broken English" or "non-standard" speech. Additionally, teacher bias in assessments may penalize multilingual students not

for ability, but for perceived linguistic deficiency (Al-Zoubi et al., 2025), reinforcing systemic marginalization in education.

Raciolinguistics (CRT) examines how race and language are co-constructed. In Indonesia, racialized judgments of English proficiency often depend on the speaker's ethnolinguistic identity. Prasodjo (2025) and Al-Zoubi et al. (2025) show that identical English expressions are perceived differently based on accent. On TikTok Indonesia, Sundanese-accented English marked by flat intonation, [ɪ] for [i:], and syllable-timed rhythm frequently invites mockery. A viral clip saying *"I sink dis is de best plis for vacaision"* drew comments like *"Speaking English but ended up in Subang (Ngomong Inggris tapi nyasar ke Subang)*, branding it as fake or low-class. They're frequently called *"alay bule KW"* (*fake foreigner*), implying their English sounds inauthentic or low-class. Content creators like @tante_rempong and @raymondsaywhat parody such accents, often receiving DMs mocking their West Javanese English. This illustrates how accent-based discrimination, tied to class and region, is normalized in digital spaces like TikTok.

Translanguaging pedagogy, as proposed by Setyarini and Jocuns (2025), challenges the rigid separation of languages by promoting the fluid use of students' full linguistic repertoires. In Indonesia's multilingual context, where *Bahasa Indonesia* coexists with local languages like Sundanese or Javanese, translanguaging offers both a critical lens and a pedagogical strategy for linguistic justice. This study adopts translanguaging to counter the dominance of standardized English, especially inner-circle varieties, by validating students' blended language practices. For instance, students who mix English with regional expressions gain not only fluency but also critical awareness of language hierarchies, questioning why certain accents are mocked while others are praised. Reflecting on regional-accented English through translanguaging helps resist internalized stigma, affirming identity and agency. Yet, empirical research in Indonesian EFL classrooms remains scarce. Existing studies often ignore sociopolitical issues or treat linguistic variation as error. This research addresses that gap by foregrounding students' voices, classroom discourse, and the emotional effects of linguistic correction.

While promoting standard English is often seen as enhancing global competitiveness, this view overlooks the psychological and identity costs of linguistic assimilation (Nazari & Karimpour, 2025). For example, a Batakese student who frequently code-mixes English and Indonesian may feel silenced not due to lack of skill, but because her linguistic style is unwelcome. Such practices not only restrict classroom participation but can also fracture students' sense of belonging and academic identity: outcomes that are rarely captured in standardized assessment metrics. The significance of this study lies in its interrogation of the invisible yet powerful ways that language becomes racialized in education. This study reveals how language becomes racialized in Indonesian EFL classrooms, offering a critical lens within applied linguistics and education studies. It informs teacher training and curriculum design by emphasizing the need to affirm, not erase, linguistic diversity. Research questions include: (1) How is standard English ideologically positioned in varied Indonesian EFL settings?

(2) In what ways do classroom practices such as correction, feedback, and assessment can reinforce linguistic hierarchies that marginalize regional and non-standard forms?

In conclusion, this study calls for a shift from language correction to language affirmation in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Analysis of classroom discourse and student reflections reveals that prevailing language ideologies are not neutral but embedded with biases. Rather than viewing linguistic diversity as a problem, the research advocates for pedagogical approaches that value students' linguistic and cultural identities, creating classrooms where students speak not in spite of who they are, but because of who they are.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a critical qualitative approach grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and raciolinguistic perspectives to examine how linguistic racism operates in Indonesian EFL classrooms (Lee et al., 2025). Rather than measuring proficiency or quantifying behaviors, the study interrogates the ideological forces embedded in teaching practices and classroom discourse. The goal is to reveal how standard English norms are constructed, internalized, and enforced, and how these shape learners' identities, participation, and perceptions.

A case study design was used to explore three distinct junior high schools in Medan, North Sumatra. Each school functioned as a bounded unit, enabling intra- and cross-site comparisons. School A was a private bilingual institution (*Sekolah Internasional, using Cambridge curriculum and English-only policy*) that reflected strong native-speakerism. School B was a public model school (*Sekolah Negeri Standar Nasional that used Indonesian curriculum, using national curriculum with standardized tests as final evaluation*) that emphasized grammar and standardized testing. School C was a religious school (*Sekolah Agama/Pesantren, using faith-integrated curriculum with code-switching*) that allowed some code-switching but still penalized "non-standard" English. These contrasting contexts highlight how linguistic racism is shaped by institutional ideologies, teacher beliefs, and assessment systems.

Figure 1. The School Profile as Data Collection



Data were collected over three weeks through ethnographically informed classroom observations, audio-recorded interactions, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis (Lott and Brundage, 2025). The researchers took as

passive observers role to capture natural classroom dynamics, focusing on moments of correction, accent policing, and code-switching restrictions. This multi-method approach ensured triangulation and enriched the interpretive depth of the study. Interviews involved 18 students and 4 teachers, selected via stratified sampling to reflect diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Student interviews explored emotional responses to correction, awareness of linguistic norms, and perceived sanctions. Teacher interviews focused on pedagogical beliefs and classroom strategies.

The primary method of analysis was critical discourse analysis by using the concept of “raciolinguistic listening” (Song et al., 2024) to examine not only what was said but how it was interpreted and judged. Transcripts were coded for key themes including pronunciation policing, grammar shaming, native-speakerism, and rejection of translanguaging. To complement discourse findings, the study analyzed instructional materials such as textbooks, rubrics, and curriculum documents to focus on representations of English and the prioritization of native-like norms.

A reflexive stance was maintained throughout, recognizing the researchers’ positionality as multilingual Indonesian trained in both local and Western academic contexts. Reflexivity was supported through analytic journaling, peer debriefings, and attention to power dynamics during interactions (Tezcur and Vitanova, 2025). This ensured ethical engagement and minimized bias, especially when working with students who may have internalized linguistic inferiority. Ethical clearance was obtained from the schools with informed consent from all participants while ensuring anonymity and allowing withdrawal at any time. The study emphasized emotional care, especially given the sensitive nature of linguistic marginalization.

Figure 2. The Procedures of Observing Linguistic Racism in English Learning



Methodologically, the study aligns with interpretive and anti-positivist traditions that prioritizes transferability over generalizability. By focusing on classroom micro-events that are often overlooked in policy discourse, the research reveals how seemingly routine interactions encode deeper racialized ideologies. Importantly, student voices are treated not merely as data but as epistemological

resources that reveal how they resist negotiate or internalize linguistic hierarchies to challenge the deficit framing of non-native speakers. The methodological framework is designed to uncover interpret and confront the structures that sustain linguistic racism in Indonesian classroom. By using case study, critical discourse analysis, and student-centered inquiry, this method lays the foundation for a politically engaged and evidence-based understanding of how English instruction can marginalize or empower diverse linguistic identities.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Theme 1: Linguistic Surveillance and Correction as Policing

Section: Accent as a Marker of Legitimacy

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, accent functions as a racialized marker of legitimacy. When a Kalimantan student said, "The rig no give big effect to sea if we plan careful," a peer interrupted, "Talk properly... you sound like a worker." Though intelligible, the student's regional grammar triggered correction rooted in social status assumptions. Likewise, a Minang student who pronounced "video" as "pideo" was stopped mid-class: "It's vi-de-o, not pi-de-o. This is not Padang," showing how regional accents are policed even when communication is clear (Weddle et al., 2024). In contrast, a student imitating a British YouTuber was praised: "You sound so smart! I thought you were from LONDON!" This supports Rajagopal and Lauwo's (2024) claim that linguistic prestige aligns with whiteness. These cases illustrate how accent correction reinforces raciolinguistic hierarchies in EFL settings.

Section 2: Grammar as Moral Discipline

Grammar correction in Indonesian EFL classrooms often reflects linguistic racism by moralizing non-standard forms. Example, a Bataknese student said, "She no go to market," and the teacher replied, "Is this your kampung dialect?", publicly shaming regional identity rather than addressing grammar (O'Neil, 2025). In another, a Batak student used "You must go now" in a role-play, reflecting direct cultural norms, but was told, "Too rude. That's not how British people talk," enforcing white politeness standards through racialized listening. A third student used reduplication "little-little talk" and was mocked: "Don't bring village English here." Rather than recognizing multilingual transfer, such responses frame local speech as inferior (Sun, 2025). These examples show grammar is not just corrected but moralized, reinforcing dominant linguistic hierarchies while silencing Indonesia's multilingual voices.

Section 3: Surveillance through Peer Correction

Peer correction in Indonesian EFL classrooms often reinforces linguistic racism. When a student pronounced "vegetable" as /fe-ge-ta-bel/, classmates laughed and whispered, "kampung banget." In another case, a student said "He go to church" but quickly self-corrected to "goes" after glancing at peers. During peer review, students replaced "my big brother" with "older sibling," commenting it sounded "more English." These moments show how students

internalize dominant language ideologies, policing one another through ridicule and correction. This horizontal surveillance pressures conformity and suppresses local expressions. Bhamburkar (2025) calls this “*colonial mimicry*”, adopting dominant norms to avoid shame. Widayati (2024) adds that such practices stifle creativity and voice. Rather than fostering bilingualism, peer correction turns English learning into fearful performance, privileging sameness over cultural authenticity.

Theme 2: Standard English as the Sole Voice of Authority

Section 1: Textbooks and Ideological Silencing

English instruction in Indonesia often privileges Anglo-American norms, marginalizing local voices. In one reading, a Western tourist calls Indonesia “*exotic but underdeveloped*,” with no local response. When a student questioned this, the teacher dismissed it as “*just vocabulary*,” silencing critique and reinforcing orientalist discourse (Babar et al., 2024). A writing textbook favors American idioms like “*cut to the chase*,” while expressions such as “*rambutan leaves drifting*” are removed as culturally inappropriate, revealing linguistic imperialism (Lestiono et al., 2024). A student’s translation of “*Bagai air di daun keladi*” was marked incorrect and replaced with “*in one ear and out the other*,” reinforcing that only Western idioms are valid. These practices exemplify ideological silencing (Rahmawaty et al., 2024), positioning English as a gatekeeper that devalues non-Western linguistic identities.

Section 2: Classroom English-Only Policies

English-only rules in Indonesian EFL classrooms often reinforce linguistic racism by penalizing students for using their first language. In one school, students receive “warning cards” for speaking Bahasa; a student asking “*Boleh saya ke toilet?*” was penalized. Another was told “*Speak English. This is not Bahasa class*,” after asking “*Apa maksudnya ‘seldom?’*”, leaving the student confused and silent. In another school, “English Ambassadors” report peers for speaking Indonesian: “*Hey, they’re using Bahasa! Write it down so their score gets cut.*” These policies enact symbolic violence (Hakim et al., 2024), positioning English as the only legitimate language while silencing L1-based inquiry. This contradicts interdependence theory and undermines translanguaging benefits (Setyarini & Jocuns, 2025). Rather than promoting fluency, such enforcement fosters fear, peer policing, and reduced participation.

Theme 3: Linguistic Shame and Identity Suppression

Section 1: Emotional Reactions to Correction

Linguistic correction in Indonesian EFL classrooms often triggers emotional harm and identity suppression. A Sundanese student became withdrawn after repeated pronunciation corrections tied to her regional accent, expressing anxiety and fear of ridicule. A pesantren student admitted, “*Every time I speak English, I feel like people are waiting for me to be wrong*,” reflecting past mockery and a belief that English is reserved for the elite. Another described grammar mistakes as “*like being dirty in front of others*,” showing how public correction leads to

shame, not growth. Such reactions support Arifin et al. (2024), who state that correction can feel like personal attack. Lin et al. (2025) add that when identity investment meets ridicule, motivation declines. These cases show that unsympathetic correction reinforces linguistic racism and silences vulnerable students.

Section 2: Identity Concealment in Oral Performance

In many Indonesian EFL classrooms, students conceal their identities to avoid ridicule. A Minangkabau student introduced herself as “Samantha” instead of her real name “Rohayah,” after peers mocked her name as sounding like an “ibu-ibu” or a “90s soap opera character.” Another student from Mandailing neutralized her accent and avoided speaking unless reading a script. Others memorized entire YouTube dialogues to escape spontaneous speech and potential mistakes. These behaviors, while appearing fluent, reflect defensive strategies shaped by linguistic racism and classroom norms that stigmatize non-standard English. Such environments pressure students to conform, suppressing cultural identity in favor of perceived legitimacy (Wahyuni & Ariyanto, 2024). As a result, EFL classrooms risk becoming sites of alienation, where correctness is valued over meaningful self-expression rooted in students’ authentic voices.

Section 3: Withdrawal from Participation

Linguistic racism in EFL classrooms often leads students to self-silence, not due to lack of skill, but from repeated experiences of exclusion. In one case, a Javanese student stopped joining oral tasks after classmates laughed at their accent during a drill, feeling humiliated. Others chose writing over speaking to avoid correction and peer judgment, finding written tasks more private and less risky. In another case, rural girls avoided speaking in groups led by urban peers, not from incompetence, but due to fear of rejection.

These examples show how oral participation becomes a site of anxiety, while silence becomes a protective strategy (Rahaman, 2025; Larasati & Mbato, 2025). When accent and fluency reflect power and class, students withdraw to preserve dignity, exposing how linguistic racism shapes who speaks and who stays silent.

Theme 4: Resistance, Reclamation, and Subversion

Section 1: Strategic Code-Mixing and Code-Switching

Students resist linguistic racism by using code-switching and code-mixing to express identity and enhance clarity. In a discussion, one said, “*Kalau hutan tropis terus dibabat, rantai makanannya hancur,*” then restated in English, “*If tropical forests are cut, the food chain will collapse,*” showing strategic intersentential switching. Another began a presentation with the Sundanese proverb, “*Caina herang laukna beunang,*” followed by, “*Clear water means successful fishing,*” gaining applause for grounding ideas in local wisdom. A third mixed languages: “*We need to make this argument lebih kuat. Coba tambah contoh dari local area,*” before continuing in English.

These examples reflect translanguaging practices (Paradita et al., 2025) that affirm hybrid identities and resist English-only norms by blending local language and culture into academic discourse.

Section 2: Parodic Mimicry of Native Norms

Students often resist imposed native English norms through parody. In one case, after being corrected for saying, “*The heat go out from the ground,*” a student exaggerated a British accent in the next slide: “*According to Her Majesty’s thermodynamic law, the earth doth releaseeth its noble energy!*”, drawing laughter and discomfort from the teacher. Another group mocked the phrase “*Use proper structure*” by saying, “*Structure like Queen Elizabeth’s tea party!*” while in a grammar drill, a student asked, “*Should I say ain’t or isn’t, Your Highness?*”, mocking formality and triggering classroom laughter.

These utterances reflect parodic mimicry, not to assimilate, but to critique linguistic authority. Teachers often misread this as disrespect, rather than recognizing it as critical resistance to rigid norms (Maulana & Muniroh, 2025), reinforcing linguistic hierarchies instead of challenging them.

Section 3: Peer Support Networks

Students often resist dominant language ideologies through peer support. In one writing task, a “help desk” group emerged, where a fluent student translated instructions into Bahasa and Bataknese. Another student explained passive voice using a local metaphor: “*Kalimat dibalik kayak gorengan dibalik.*” After harsh correction, peers comforted a classmate: “*Don’t worry, you’re brave to speak. English bukan ukuran pintar kita,*” and kept encouraging her.

These examples show how students build empathy-based networks through translation, humor, and cultural framing. Such quiet acts of care reflect resistance to correction-based teaching and linguistic imperialism (Herda & Kaur, 2025). By valuing local languages and shared resilience, students affirm identity, restore confidence, and disrupt hierarchies in subtle but powerful ways.

Discussion

The findings reveal that English learning in Indonesian EFL classrooms is deeply shaped by structures of linguistic racism, often enacted through subtle yet persistent practices of correction, mockery, and exclusion. While classrooms are designed to foster communicative competence, they frequently become arenas of linguistic surveillance, where accents, grammar, and word choices are interpreted not just linguistically, but morally and socially. In such spaces, students are not only evaluated for their ability to speak English but are judged based on how closely their English approximates Euro-American norms. The repeated correction of regional accents such as the pronunciation of “*video*” as /pideo/ by a Minang student or the mispronunciation of “*vegetable*” as /fe-ge-ta-bel/ illustrates how intelligible variation is often not tolerated. These practices reflect what Hakim et al. (2024) term symbolic violence, where linguistic correction becomes a mechanism for disciplining identity and reinforcing colonial language hierarchies.

In these classrooms, correction is rarely a neutral pedagogical act. When a teacher interrupts an entire class to correct a student's pronunciation, or when grammar mistakes are tied to notions of being "*kampungan*" or uneducated, the classroom dynamic shifts from one of support to one of surveillance and shame. Grammar, especially, is treated not merely as a structural issue but as a proxy for intellectual capacity or moral discipline. As seen in the correction of Batakese students who use directness common in their culture, the imposition of so-called "*proper*" grammar reveals the alignment of linguistic standards with white middle-class norms. Rather than validating the cultural roots of speech patterns, correction often erases them, reinforcing what O'Neil (2025) identifies as the disciplining function of English in postcolonial settings.

Moreover, peer interactions mirror these institutionalized ideologies. When students mock a classmate's pronunciation or suggest that "*kampung*" speech is inappropriate, it reflects internalized colonial standards of linguistic legitimacy. Peer correction often becomes horizontal enforcement of dominant norms, where students act as linguistic gatekeepers in hopes of avoiding ridicule themselves. The fear of judgment leads many learners to self-monitor obsessively, avoid spontaneous speech, or mimic native-speaker accents, not because they believe in the superiority of such forms, but to survive within an unforgiving classroom ecology. This internalization echoes Bhamburkar's (2025) concept of colonial mimicry, where conformity is not a sign of genuine learning but a coping mechanism for oppressive standards.

The consequences of this climate extend beyond performance; they penetrate deeply into students' sense of self. Emotional reactions to public correction, ranging from shame to withdrawal are common, especially among students from pesantren or rural areas, who already perceive English as a foreign and elite-coded language. Affective barriers, such as anxiety and embarrassment, reinforce Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, where emotional discomfort inhibits language acquisition (Rahaman, 2025). Students from Sundanese, Mandailing, or Javanese backgrounds often begin to suppress their identity in order to avoid correction. Adopting Western names, memorizing scripts from YouTube, or using hyper-formal expressions are not signs of engagement but acts of identity concealment. These behaviors show that language learning has become performative about being perceived as legitimate rather than becoming expressive.

Linguistic racism also manifests in curricular and institutional structures. Textbooks that depict Indonesia as "*underdeveloped*" without critique, or penalize the use of local metaphors like "*bagai air di daun keladi*," send the message that only Western narratives and stylistic conventions are valid. Similarly, oral assessments reward accent over substance; students with clear, well-structured arguments but regional accents are penalized, while those mimicking Western intonation receive praise. Such practices institutionalize native-speakerism and invalidate the pluralistic linguistic realities of Indonesia. This reinforces what Rahmawaty et al. (2024) describe as ideological silencing, wherein English becomes not just a language of learning but a tool of exclusion.

English-only policies in many Indonesian schools further exacerbate this exclusion. Penalizing students for using *Bahasa Indonesia*, even to clarify

instructions or ask for help, contributes to linguistic insecurity and disempowerment. Rather than supporting bilingual development or scaffolding comprehension, these rules frame L1 use as deviant, undermining confidence and understanding. As Setyarini and Jocuns (2025) argue, translanguaging should be legitimized as a learning strategy, not punished. When students are reported by peers for speaking their native language, the classroom becomes not a site of exploration but a surveillance zone. These acts of linguistic policing restrict access to learning and enforce monolingual norms, deepening the divide between fluency and identity.

Yet, amidst these oppressive dynamics, students also engage in forms of resistance and reclamation. Strategic code-switching, use of local proverbs, and translanguaging show that learners are not passive recipients of linguistic norms but active negotiators of meaning. For instance, when a student explains a Sundanese proverb in English to connect cultural wisdom with academic concepts, it affirms local identity while engaging with global discourse. These moments of linguistic hybridity challenge the colonial logic that equates English with whiteness and monolingualism. They embody Paradita et al.'s (2025) theory of translanguaging as not just a communicative strategy but a political act.

Humor and parody emerge as further tools of resistance. When students exaggerate British accents or mock formal grammar rules with royal metaphors, they are not merely being disruptive: they are critically engaging with the artificiality of native-speaker norms. These acts of parody, while often misinterpreted by teachers as disrespect, serve to destabilize the hegemony of “proper” English and highlight its performative, culturally loaded nature. Maulana and Muniroh (2025) see this as a form of critical mimicry, where students reveal their awareness of linguistic power structures and seek to reclaim agency through humor.

Peer support networks also serve as quiet forms of subversion. In classrooms where institutional support is lacking, students help each other through bilingual explanations, emotional reassurance, and contextual metaphors. These grassroots practices create inclusive micro-communities within classrooms, where linguistic diversity is valued and affirmed. Such support helps students navigate an otherwise alienating environment and build confidence on their own terms. As Herda and Kaur (2025) note, these practices are not just collaborative but politically significant, representing resistance to linguistic imperialism from below.

In sum, linguistic racism in Indonesian EFL classrooms is not merely about overt discrimination but about the everyday, normalized practices that enforce linguistic hierarchies rooted in colonial histories. Accent correction, grammar policing, native-speaker favoritism, and English-only mandates collectively shape a learning environment that privileges whiteness, conformity, and silence over diversity, creativity, and dialogue. These practices harm students psychologically, academically, and culturally, pushing many to withdraw, conform, or suppress their identity. However, the same classrooms also reveal students’ resilience and creativity through translanguaging, parody, and mutual support, they challenge the norms imposed upon them and begin to reclaim English as a tool for expression,

not erasure. To foster equitable and empowering EFL education, Indonesian classrooms must shift from correction-as-policing to pedagogy-as-inclusion, where all linguistic identities are valued, and communication is prioritized over conformity.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates that English language education in Indonesia, by rigidly adhering to standardized native-speaker norms, has become less about fostering global intelligibility and more about enforcing symbolic hierarchies that marginalize linguistic diversity. Teacher-led correction practices, often delivered through public shaming or ridicule, serve not to support learning but to reinforce Eurocentric ideals, rendering students' local accents and speech patterns invalid or "incorrect." These pedagogical norms function as a form of symbolic violence, where English is weaponized to regulate identity and impose cultural conformity, particularly disadvantaging learners from non-Java-centric or rural backgrounds. In classrooms where "proper" English is narrowly defined by Euro-American pronunciation and grammar, students internalize the message that their identities are incompatible with academic success, leading to shame, withdrawal, and linguistic insecurity. The result is not merely a technical error in speech, but a systemic silencing of local knowledge and a loss of learner confidence and creativity. However, the presence of translanguaging, parody, and peer-led support systems reveals that students are not passive recipients of linguistic oppression but active negotiators of meaning who strategically reshape English to reflect their lived realities. These resistance practices not only challenge the legitimacy of dominant norms but also demonstrate the pedagogical power of multilingual competence in Indonesian classrooms. Therefore, future studies must interrogate how teacher training programs either perpetuate or disrupt linguistic hierarchies, especially across diverse regional contexts where English operates as foreign language. This research is limited in scope due to its focus on a small number of schools within urban and semi-urban areas in Indonesia. The analysis relies primarily on interview and observation data, which, while rich in qualitative depth, may not represent the full spectrum of EFL experiences across different regions, especially in remote or multilingual communities. Further research is encouraged to explore linguistic racism across a wider demographic, including rural and indigenous settings. Longitudinal studies involving teachers, textbooks, and institutional discourse would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how systemic language bias is reproduced. Investigating student agency and resistance strategies would also enrich the discourse on equity and justice in EFL education.

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