

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in the study and is divided into four sections: 1) Research Design, 2) Research Context and Participants, 3) Data Collection Methods, and 4) Data Analysis Methods.

#### 3.1 Research Design

The aim of this study was to explore how Indonesian EFL learners shape and construct their identities based on their experiences participating in the IISMA program by employing narrative inquiry. As a research methodology, narrative inquiry provides a framework for delving into the intricacies of participants' lived experiences and realities as well as the social circumstances in which they are constructed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, as cited in Wirza, 2018). It is one of the most insightful approaches to exploring identity construction and reconstruction given the participants' stories offer valuable insights into the complexity and richness of their lived experiences (Barkhuizen, 2015; Wirza, 2018).

In the context of the present study, narrative inquiry research design was expected to facilitate a thorough investigation of how research participants shape and construct their identities through their participation in the IISMA program. This approach enabled researcher to uncover the ways in which research participants perceive and interpret their realities, as well as the academic, social, and cultural contexts in the host country in which these realities were shaped and reconstructed. By focusing on personal stories, narrative inquiry allows for an in-depth understanding of how identity is shaped within specific social, cultural, and political environments (Wirza, 2018), which is what this study strives for.

#### 3.2 Research Context and Participants

Unlike other methods that require a fixed setting, narrative-based research focuses on the richness of individual accounts. Since the goal is to understand lived experiences, the context naturally emerges through the narratives themselves.

Therefore, this study was not set to a specific physical location, as it was conducted through a combination of face-to-face interviews and online interviews. This approach allowed for flexibility in accommodating both of the participants' availability. The interview sessions with Ayla were conducted in both face-to-face interviews and online meetings. Meanwhile with Andi, the interview sessions were conducted fully via online meeting.

The research participants in this study were two undergraduate Indonesian students, namely Ayla and Andi. They are a female and a male, respectively, identified by pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The research participants and the researcher have participated in the same IISMA program during the 2024/2025 fall semester at one of the top public universities in Lithuania, where we interacted and met on a regular basis.

Both of the research participants are Sundanese, although they speak different dialects of Sundanese. Ayla came from a humble family background. Until the age of 11, she grew up in Cirebon, West Java and moved out to Majalengka ever since. She speaks the Majalengkan dialect of Sundanese in his familial environment because she got more exposed to Sundanese in Majalengka. Sundanese is used for interactions with her father's side of the family, as they are originally from Majalengka. It is primarily spoken with older relatives, such as her grandparents and aunts. Meanwhile, *Bahasa Indonesia* is used for all purposes, especially as her primary language for daily communication. Throughout her life, Ayla had never gotten the chance to travel abroad given her family background simply made it unlikely for her to do so.

Andi also came from a humble family background. Until the age of 17, he spent his life in Bandung, West Java before moving out to Ciamis and also regularly commuting to Tasik ever since. Andi speaks the Bandungnese dialect of Sundanese, more specifically *Sunda loma*—a standard version of Sundanese—in his surroundings. He also learned the Lithuanian language as he enrolled in the same Lithuanian as a foreign language A1 course as the researcher. Both Ayla and Andi learned *Bahasa Indonesia* as a medium for educational purposes and to communicate with their other acquaintances who do not share the same linguistic

backgrounds. Like Ayla, securing a seat in the international student mobility program was his chance to step foot abroad for the first time ever in his life. Table 3.2.1 shows the participants' demographic information.

**Table 3.2.1** Demographic information of the participants

Name	Gender	Age	Linguistic Background	Educational Background	Approx. length of English learning experiences	Socio-economic backgrounds
Ayla	Female	21	Sundanese (Majalengka dialect), Bahasa Indonesia, English	Undergraduate study	15 years	Lower socio-economic status
Andi	Male	21	Sundanese (Bandung dialect), Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Lithuanian	Undergraduate study	15 years	Lower socio-economic status

### 3.3 Data Collection Techniques

This study employed a narrative-inquiry approach to explore the lived experiences of Indonesian EFL learners, focusing on their stories of prior English language learning experiences up until their return from the IISMA program, which influenced the construction and reconstruction of their identities as EFL learners and users. The data collection techniques utilized were in-depth semi-structured interviews, photovoice, participants' essay, and audio recordings.

#### 3.3.1 Interviews

The in-depth interviews served as the primary source of data. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, with each participant interviewed in three sessions. Each session lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The questions addressed to the participant were formulated based on Benson et al's (2013) L2 learners' identities in narratives of study abroad frameworks. The interviews were conducted through the Google Meet. This is to ensure they feel at ease and comfortable given that

rapport establishment in this phase is particularly useful when seeking information on their personal experiences, feelings, and emotions (Hamied, 2017).

Following Younas et al. (2021) assertion, to avoid potential language barriers during interviews, participants' native language should be used, as translation involves researcher interpretation that may alter contextual meanings. Using the native language helps preserve participants' intended messages, enhances cultural and linguistic transparency, and strengthens the rigour of qualitative research by revealing researcher positionality and supporting deeper, more accurate interpretations of lived experiences (Younas et al., 2021). Therefore, during the entire interviews, *Bahasa Indonesia* was used as a primary language to ensure they can express themselves freely without the constraints of potential language barriers, although the researcher gave freedom to participants to speak in English suppose they found it difficult to convey anything in *Bahasa Indonesia*. The questions addressed to the participants focused on three main observations: participants' prior experiences learning English language and pre-departure journey, participants' experience during the program, and participants' reflection after returning from the IISMA program.

Following Squire et al. (2014), researcher encouraged the participants to provide specific examples of events, people, and/or situations that played a significant role in their journey of identity construction and reconstruction. For instance, participants were asked to recall their experience learning English during school years prior to preparing for applying to the program, what are their expectations by participating in the program, their academic experience during the program, intercultural engagements they had, and reflections after returning from the program. The utterances in the Excerpt presented in the chapter 4, which are considered key to the findings, are written in bold. Below are the leading questions addressed to the participants:

#### **Leading questions interview #1**

1. What made you interested in registering for IISMA?
2. Before registering, what did you expect to get by joining IISMA? Be it in terms of English language skills or self-development?

3. How did you imagine what life would be like in your destination country?  
And how did you think English would be used in everyday life?
4. When preparing for IISMA, what did you do? Were there any challenges?

#### **Leading questions interview #2**

1. What is your favorite class(es), and what do you like about them?
2. What are the activities in that class that you usually do? Something that is typical in the class that you remember.
3. How do you feel about the way the professors in those classes treat you as a student? How do you compare it when you're in Indonesia?
4. What was your view on LGBTQ and disability issues before studying them during IISMA? Then, what's your view now?
5. You mentioned European regulations that support elderly citizens to remain productive. How does that affect your view as a student or as an Indonesian?
6. Can you tell me about some of the intercultural experiences you had during IISMA that influenced the way you view yourself?

#### **Leading questions interview #3**

1. Can you tell us about your experience learning English when you were in school? What were some things that made you have certain views or feelings about English?
2. In your school, what was it like to learn English? What were the classes like?
3. During IISMA, how did you usually use English on a daily basis?
4. When you chatted with classmates, local people, or campus staff there, how did you usually communicate?
5. In your opinion, what role did English play in your overall experience while studying abroad?
6. Did you feel there was a change in the way you saw yourself—not just as a learner, but also as a person?
7. After returning from IISMA, how do you see your future?

### 3.3.2 Photovoice

Photovoice in this study served as a supplementary data rather than a research design. It used pictures taken by research participants that were interrelated with stories they provided in the interview sessions about their experiences participating in the IISMA program. In this sense, visualizing an event or phenomenon provides the ease to attract target audiences' initial attention and provide new information that may not be captured when it is only conveyed in text form. Therefore, photovoice is suitable for exploring lived experiences as applied in previous studies from other fields (see Call-Cummings et al., 2019; Ferdiansyah et al., 2020; Koltz et al., 2010; Wan et al., 2021, as cited in Suwarno et al., 2022). Photos that clearly show the faces of participants and people in the photos were covered to respect privacy. It was expected that Indonesian EFL learners, as participants in this study, were able to better describe their experiences through visual data about identity construction and reconstruction from the moment of their first encounter with English language up until their return from the IISMA program.

### 3.3.3 Participants' Essay

In addition to in-depth interviews and photovoice, personal essays submitted by each participant as part of the prerequisites to apply for the IISMA program were also collected. The essay primarily aligned with the theme of participants' motivation and drive to join the IISMA program, as it depicted their academic and non-academic achievements, motivations, and study plan prior to becoming IISMA awardees.

### 3.3.4 Audio Recordings

The audio recordings were collected by the researcher throughout the interview sessions by observing closely and recording what unique events might occur in the participants' stories. Following Fraenkel et al. (2012, as cited in Nugraha, 2024), there are three items that the researcher could gather by utilizing recorders. First, the recordings can be reviewed repeatedly for further research. Additionally, other parties such as experts could provide their invaluable insights accordingly to support researchers in analyzing the recordings. Lastly, a permanent

record ought to be obtained so that it can be compared to subsequent or distinct samples.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

For the data analysis, this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-stage thematic analysis framework (see Table 3.4.1). To identify emergent themes, a recursive process of coding and data analysis must be employed to identify relevant events, experiences, and expressions (Braun & Clarke, 2022), as what this study necessitates. Therefore, this study's thematic analysis focused on the stories' content over its linguistic aspects, observing at "what" the participants are telling rather than "how" the participants convey it (Riessman, 2003, as cited in Wirza, 2018). In addition to that, the findings were analyzed following the frameworks of Benson et al's L2 identity in narrative of study abroad (2013). The data analysis procedure in this study is further elaborated in the table 3.4.1.

**Table 3.4.1** Stages of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

Stage	Description of the Process
<b>1. Familiarizing with the data</b>	Transcribing all interview data and thoroughly reading and re-reading all data sources obtained (transcripts, photovoice, and personal essays) for a thorough understanding of the participants' narratives.
<b>2. Codifying the data</b>	Key patterns in the data were identified and categorized, guided by the research questions. This involves identifying and labeling segments of data relevant to research questions. For RQ1 (Motivations and Drives), codes captured expressions of personal aspirations, career/academic goals, socio-economic factors, institutional challenges, and participants' resilience. For RQ2 (Identity Construction as Influenced by Intercultural Experiences), codes identified experiences such as participants' emerging English learner identity, culture shock, adaptation strategies, interactions with international students, shifts in confidence, linguistic challenges (e.g., accent shock and communication inadequacy), and engagement with different cultural values. For RQ3 (Identity Reconstruction as

	influenced by Host Academic Environments), codes captured descriptions of classroom discourses, professor-student dynamics, assessment methods, student autonomy, and classroom participation norms.
<b>3. Searching for themes</b>	All of the codes previously generated were collated into candidate themes that address the research questions. For RQ1, codes related to “motivation and drives” were grouped into initial themes such as "Investment in Future Selves" and "Overcoming the Constraints." For RQ2, codes related with “intercultural experiences” were grouped into "Navigating Cultural Differences", "Reconstructing the Linguistic Self-Concept", and “Developing Intercultural Competence.” For RQ3, codes related with “the host academic environments” were grouped into themes such as "Engaging into Student-Centered Classroom" and "The Influence of Egalitarian Classroom Norms on Participants’ Learner Agency."
<b>4. Reviewing the themes and the codes</b>	The themes and the codes were recursively reviewed and ensure revised themes are aligned to both the coded extracts, and then the full dataset.
<b>5. Defining and naming the themes</b>	This step continues to refine the specifics of each theme founded, and the overall analysis of the story was named and defined according to the core concept, which is the concept of learner identity construction and reconstruction (e.g. Benson et al., 2013; Sung, 2019; Wirza, 2018).
<b>6. Writing the interpretation of the themes</b>	Writing a formal interpretation of each themes generated from stage 3 and linking findings to the research question. All of the generated themes were interpreted and analyzed according to the theoretical frameworks of L2 learners’ identities concept (Benson et al., 2013). To obtain data credibility, member-checking progress was also conducted in which the researcher involved research participants in establishing, verifying, or correcting the researcher's findings.