

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN NATIONALS IN INDONESIAN HOUSING

Modal Linguistik dan Kekerasan Simbolik: Analisis Fenomenologis Pengalaman Warga Negara Asing dalam Sektor Perumahan di Indonesia

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Abstract

Foreign nationals residing in Indonesian local housing face structural linguistic disadvantages that existing second language acquisition literature has largely overlooked, particularly in non-institutional everyday settings. This study aims to analyze how linguistic capital and symbolic violence operate in shaping the identity reconstruction of foreign nationals within an Indonesian residential context. This research employs a critical phenomenological approach integrating Bourdieu's linguistic capital theory with Schutz's social phenomenology. Data were drawn from semi-structured in-depth interviews (60–90 minutes) with six foreign nationals residing at Easton Park Apartment, Jatinangor, representing diverse linguistic backgrounds (Kenya, China, Pakistan, England, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh), as well as the apartment manager. Data were collected through purposive and maximum variation sampling, then analyzed through phenomenological reduction combined with critical discourse analysis. Findings reveal that linguistic identity awareness emerges through systematic communicative breakdown across phonological, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic dimensions. Foreign nationals deploy four adaptive strategies: technological mediation, gestural compensation, practical mimesis, and code-switching. These strategies, however, operate within asymmetrical power relations that produce symbolic violence through the systematic misrecognition of non-native competence—a condition this study terms “linguistic precarity.” Identity reconstruction unfolds across four temporal phases, from existential disorientation to hybrid linguistic integration, yet competence remains situationally fragile. Critically, the study exposes institutional linguistic violence through the complete absence of linguistic support structures at the residential level, forcing individualized adaptation without systemic scaffolding. These findings carry significant implications for housing policy, institutional linguistic justice, and critical language pedagogy, calling for multilingual support systems that recognize linguistic diversity as a communal resource rather than an individual deficiency.

Keywords: *code-switching; language ideology; linguistic anthropology; linguistic capital; linguistic habitus; phonology; symbolic violence*

Abstrak

Warga negara asing yang tinggal di hunian lokal Indonesia menghadapi ketimpangan linguistik struktural yang selama ini kurang mendapat perhatian dalam literatur pemerolehan bahasa kedua, khususnya dalam konteks keseharian di luar institusi formal. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana modal linguistik dan kekerasan simbolik beroperasi dalam membentuk rekonstruksi identitas warga negara asing di lingkungan hunian Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi kritis yang mengintegrasikan teori modal linguistik Bourdieu dengan fenomenologi sosial Schutz. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur (60–90 menit) dengan enam warga negara asing yang bermukim di Easton Park Apartment, Jatinangor, yang mewakili latar belakang linguistik beragam (Kenya, Cina, Pakistan, Inggris, Ethiopia, dan Bangladesh), serta pengelola apartemen. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui purposive sampling dengan variasi maksimum, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan reduksi fenomenologis yang dipadukan dengan analisis wacana kritis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran identitas linguistik muncul melalui kegagalan komunikatif sistematis yang meliputi dimensi fonologis, morfosintaktis, dan pragmatis. Warga asing

menerapkan empat strategi adaptif: mediasi teknologi, kompensasi gestural, mimesis praktis, dan alih kode. Namun, strategi-strategi ini beroperasi dalam relasi kuasa yang asimetris dan melahirkan kekerasan simbolik melalui salah pengakuan (misrecognition) kompetensi non-penutur asli—kondisi yang dalam penelitian ini disebut sebagai “prekaritas linguistik.” Rekonstruksi identitas berlangsung melalui empat fase temporal, dari disorientasi eksistensial hingga integrasi linguistik hibrida, namun kompetensi yang dicapai tetap bersifat situasional dan rentan. Secara kritis, penelitian ini mengungkap kekerasan linguistik institusional melalui ketiadaan total dukungan linguistik di tingkat hunian, yang memaksa warga asing menjalani adaptasi secara individual tanpa dukungan terstruktur. Temuan ini memiliki implikasi signifikan bagi kebijakan perumahan, keadilan linguistik institusional, dan pedagogi bahasa kritis, dengan mendesak penerapan sistem dukungan multibahasa yang mengakui keragaman linguistik sebagai sumber daya kolektif, bukan beban yang harus ditanggung sendiri oleh individu.

Kata-kata kunci: alih kode; ideologi bahasa; antropologi linguistik; modal linguistik; habitus linguistik; fonologi; kekerasan simbolik

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INTRODUCTION

Language constitutes far more than instrumental communication system; it functions as embodied cultural capital through which individuals establish social positioning, claim recognition, and negotiate belonging within communities (Bourdieu, 1991; Ron & Norton, 2015). For foreign nationals residing in Indonesian local housing contexts, linguistic competence—or its absence—becomes the primary medium through which identity possibilities are structured, constrained, and perpetually renegotiated. At Easton Park Apartment, Jatinangor, foreign residents confront not simply the practical challenge of learning Indonesian but the existential question of linguistic identity: ‘Can I speak myself into belonging here, or will my linguistic inadequacy perpetually mark me as outsider?’

Contemporary sociolinguistic theory has increasingly recognized that linguistic competence cannot be understood through formalist frameworks emphasizing grammatical accuracy alone. Rather, as (Bourdieu, 1991) argues, linguistic exchanges constitute ‘relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized’ (p. 37). What matters in social interaction is not abstract linguistic knowledge but practical mastery of linguistic habitus—the embodied dispositions enabling speakers to produce contextually appropriate utterances that are recognized as legitimate by interlocutors (Rahmah et al., 2024; Ron & Norton, 2015). Foreign nationals at Easton Park possess varying degrees of formal Indonesian knowledge, yet their linguistic habitus—acquired through different cultural and linguistic socialization—frequently proves inadequate for navigating actual communicative encounters, exposing them to what Bourdieu terms ‘symbolic violence’: the systematic misrecognition and devaluation of their linguistic practices.

Existing research on second language acquisition and cross-cultural adaptation has predominantly adopted cognitive-psychological frameworks emphasizing individual learner variables, motivation, and anxiety (MacIntyre, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2018). While valuable, such approaches tend to individualize linguistic struggles, obscuring how linguistic identity reconstruction remains fundamentally shaped by structural conditions including language

ideologies, institutional support systems, and asymmetrical power relations between native and non-native speakers (MacIntyre, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2018). Critical sociolinguistic scholarship has challenged these limitations by foregrounding how language ideologies—culturally specific beliefs about language correctness, appropriateness, and value—construct hierarchies positioning certain linguistic varieties as legitimate while marginalizing others (Woolard, 2021). Yet studies specifically examining how these linguistic power dynamics operate within Indonesian local housing contexts, where foreign nationals must negotiate linguistic identity without institutional scaffolding, remain remarkably limited.

This study advances sociolinguistic understanding by critically analyzing linguistic dimensions of identity reconstruction through integrated theoretical framework combining Bourdieu's linguistic capital theory with Schutz's social phenomenology. Where Bourdieu exposes structural power relations embedded in linguistic exchanges, Schutz provides conceptual tools for understanding how individuals subjectively experience and respond to linguistic estrangement. The research problematizes conventional second language acquisition narratives by revealing: (1) how linguistic competence functions as embodied cultural capital conferring social recognition and symbolic power; (2) how linguistic identity awareness emerges through systematic breakdown of previously automatic communicative practices; (3) how linguistic labor strategies—technological mediation, gestural compensation, practical mimesis, code-switching—constitute adaptive responses to linguistic precarity; (4) how linguistic identity reconstruction unfolds through temporal phases requiring continuous adjustment; and (5) how institutional absence of linguistic support produces structural violence forcing individualized linguistic struggle. By integrating critical sociolinguistic theory with phenomenological analysis, this research exposes material, ideological, and institutional conditions shaping who foreign nationals can become linguistically within Indonesian contexts.

METHOD

Research participants comprised six foreign nationals residing at Easton Park Apartment, Jatinangor, representing diverse linguistic backgrounds from Kenya, China, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh. The majority were students, with one participant holding tourist status, and length of residence ranged from two weeks to one year. Participant selection employed maximum variation sampling, deliberately recruiting individuals representing diverse linguistic backgrounds, language typologies, and script systems across five dimensions: geographic origin, L1 phonological system, script type, length of Indonesian residence, and occupational status.

Inclusion criteria required: (1) minimum two-week residence enabling temporal perspective on linguistic adaptation; (2) willingness to reflect critically on linguistic identity experiences; (3) sufficient English proficiency for metalinguistic discussion; and (4) no prior Indonesian language exposure before arrival. Additionally, the apartment manager was interviewed to understand institutional linguistic support structures from a managerial perspective.

Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted at Easton Park Apartment between October and November 2025, with duration ranging from 25 to 80 minutes per participant. One participant was interviewed twice due to the depth of data required, while the remaining five were each interviewed once. All sessions were audio-recorded with informed consent. Following the primary interviews, data deepening was conducted through member checking and cross-checking via WhatsApp messages, voice notes, and calls, as well as informal face-to-face interactions, carried out iteratively through November to December 2025. Interview protocols explored linguistic identity awareness and breakdown experiences, specific challenges across phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic domains,

linguistic labor strategies and their effectiveness, temporal development of competence and confidence, critical incidents revealing linguistic power dynamics, and institutional support or absence thereof. Interviews encouraged metalinguistic reflection, asking participants to describe not only what linguistic difficulties they experienced but how these difficulties affected their sense of self and social belonging.

Analytical procedures integrated phenomenological reduction with critical discourse analysis (CDA) in a two-stage sequential process. In the first stage, phenomenological reduction following Moustakas (1994) was applied: epoché suspending researcher linguistic assumptions to approach data without preconceptions; phenomenological reduction identifying linguistically significant experiences across transcripts; imaginative variation exploring structural conditions enabling or constraining those experiences; and synthetic integration producing thematic structures of linguistic identity reconstruction. In the second stage, CDA was applied to the thematic structures identified phenomenologically, examining how language ideologies, linguistic capital, and symbolic violence operated within participants' narratives—moving analysis from individual lived experience toward the structural and ideological forces shaping those experiences. Data credibility was established through member checking, in which participants reviewed and validated linguistic interpretations, and analytical triangulation comparing phenomenological and structural sociolinguistic readings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Breakdown and the Phenomenology of Linguistic Estrangement

Linguistic identity awareness among foreign nationals emerges through what phenomenology terms 'breakdown'—moments when habituated linguistic practices systematically fail, rendering one's linguistic competence problematically visible (Heidegger, 1962). For participants, this linguistic breakdown crystallized through multiple dimensions: phonological unfamiliarity, morphosyntactic inadequacy, pragmatic incompetence, and prosodic misalignment. These failures constitute not merely functional communication difficulties but existential disruptions where one's previously taken-for-granted linguistic self becomes radically questionable.

Mwangi's inability to conduct simple market transactions exposed the profound vulnerability produced by linguistic incompetence. His Kikuyu-English linguistic habitus—embodied competence acquired through lifelong immersion in East African linguistic ecology—suddenly proved worthless in Indonesian contexts. Reduced to gestural approximation and technological mediation, Mwangi experienced acute consciousness of linguistic inadequacy: *'I felt really stupid, like a child who can't speak. I'm a grown man, educated, but there I was, pointing at vegetables like an idiot.'* This visceral description reveals linguistic breakdown's psychological toll. Linguistic competence functions as fundamental component of adult identity; its sudden absence produces not merely practical inconvenience but identity crisis threatening one's sense of mature personhood (Pacheco, 2014).

Phonological challenges proved particularly destabilizing. Indonesian phonology contains sounds absent from participants' L1 inventories, requiring articulatory retraining. Kamran struggled with Indonesian /ə/ (schwa), frequently substituting /a/, producing comprehension difficulties: *'I say "besar" [bəsar] as "basar" [basar], and people look confused. These small sound differences change meaning completely.'* This phonological interference exposes how linguistic habitus operates beneath conscious awareness—speakers produce sounds automatically through embodied articulatory routines that resist conscious (Darcy, I., Mora, J. C. & Daidone, 2016; Saito & Plonsky, 2026). Kamran's struggle reveals that foreign accent stigmatization operates through ideological processes positioning non-native

phonology as linguistic deficiency rather than legitimate linguistic variation (Lippi-green, 2012; Rosa & Flores, 2021).

Yan Yi's experience demonstrates that formal linguistic education cannot substitute for practical communicative competence. Despite majoring in Indonesian language—acquiring explicit grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, and basic conversational patterns—he encountered persistent difficulties navigating actual Indonesian discourse: *'In class, we learned standard Indonesian. But people here speak differently—faster, with different words, mixed with Sundanese. My textbook Indonesian doesn't work.'* This gap between academic knowledge and practical competence exposes fundamental limitations in formalist language pedagogy emphasizing decontextualized grammar over situated communicative practice (Geeslin et al., 2022; Jakubik, 2022). Yan Yi's formal knowledge constitutes what Bourdieu distinguishes as 'theoretical mastery'—abstract understanding of linguistic rules—rather than 'practical mastery'—embodied capacity to produce contextually appropriate utterances without conscious rule application (Bourdieu, 1991; Rahmah et al., 2024).

Pragmatic incompetence—inability to recognize and deploy culturally appropriate speech acts—constituted another dimension of linguistic breakdown. Hugh struggled with Indonesian politeness systems requiring specific address terms (*Kang, Ibu, Kak, Mas*) marking social relationships: *'I never know how to address people. If I use wrong term, people correct me, and I feel embarrassed. In English, we just use names, but here social position matters in how you speak.'* This pragmatic challenge reveals how linguistic practice encodes specific cultural logics about social hierarchy, relational proximity, and appropriate deference (Sadow & Fernández, 2022). Indonesian language ideology positions proper address term usage as moral obligation reflecting respect and cultural competence; failures are interpreted not as linguistic errors but as social transgressions indicating insufficient cultural understanding (Hamdani, 2019).

Linguistic Capital, Symbolic Violence, and Communicative Asymmetry

Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital provides critical analytical purchase for understanding power dynamics structuring foreign nationals' linguistic experiences. Linguistic capital refers to socially valued linguistic resources—pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical competence, pragmatic knowledge—that confer symbolic power and social recognition within specific linguistic markets (Bourdieu, 1991; Ron & Norton, 2015). In Indonesian contexts, native-like linguistic competence constitutes legitimate linguistic capital; non-native speakers' linguistic resources—however grammatically correct—are systematically devalued through what Bourdieu terms 'symbolic violence': the imposition of dominant group's linguistic norms as natural and universal standards (Rosa & Flores, 2021; Woolard, 2021).

Participants consistently reported experiences of linguistic misrecognition—moments when their linguistic productions were dismissed, corrected, or met with incomprehension despite grammatical accuracy. Parvez described attempting to ask directions using carefully prepared Indonesian phrases: *'I practiced saying it correctly, but when I spoke, the person just looked blank and walked away. Maybe my pronunciation was wrong, or maybe they just didn't expect foreigner to speak Indonesian. Either way, I felt invisible—my words didn't count.'* This experience exemplifies symbolic violence's operation: Parvez's linguistic effort receives no recognition because his non-native pronunciation marks him as linguistically illegitimate, regardless of grammatical correctness (Lippi-green, 2012; Zarate, 2020).

This communicative asymmetry reveals how linguistic exchanges constitute sites where social hierarchies are reproduced. When foreign nationals speak Indonesian, their linguistic productions undergo intense scrutiny—pronunciation is evaluated, grammar is corrected, word choices are questioned. Conversely, when Indonesians speak English to foreign nationals, no comparable scrutiny occurs; broken English receives acceptance while broken Indonesian

provokes correction or incomprehension. Mwangi observed this asymmetry: *'Indonesians appreciate when we try speaking Indonesian, but they're quick to point out mistakes. When they speak English to me, I never correct them—it would be rude. But they feel free to correct my Indonesian constantly.'* This differential treatment exposes language ideologies positioning Indonesian as requiring protection through correction while treating English as international lingua franca allowing flexible standards (Andrian & Putra, 2025; Goebel, 2014).

The concept of 'linguistic precarity' emerges as analytical category describing foreign nationals' perpetual vulnerability within Indonesian linguistic markets. Unlike native speakers whose linguistic habitus matches market demands, foreign nationals occupy structurally precarious positions where linguistic adequacy remains perpetually questionable (Windle & Brien, 2019). Bett articulated this precarity: *'I'm always worried about speaking wrong. Even when I think I know what to say, I hesitate because I'm not confident. This constant worry is exhausting—native speakers don't think about language, but I'm always calculating every word.'* This perpetual linguistic monitoring constitutes significant cognitive and emotional labor that native speakers need not perform, exposing how linguistic privilege operates through naturalized competence enabling effortless communication (Rosa & Flores, 2021; Zarate, 2020).

Critical analysis reveals how linguistic ideology naturalizes this asymmetry. The 'native speaker' construct—ideological fiction positioning monolingual native speakers as linguistic authorities—establishes standards against which all other speakers are measured and found deficient (Pennycook, 2013; Zarate, 2020). Foreign nationals internalize this ideology, positioning themselves as perpetual linguistic learners requiring native speaker validation. Yan Yi, despite formal linguistic training, deferred to Indonesian speakers as authorities: *'Even though I studied Indonesian formally, native speakers know better. They lived the language; I only learned it.'* This deference reveals how symbolic violence operates through misrecognition—dominated groups accept dominant group's linguistic superiority as natural rather than recognizing it as socially constructed hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1991; Jakubik, 2022).

Linguistic Labor: Strategies of Communicative Compensation

Confronting linguistic breakdown and symbolic violence, foreign nationals engage in intensive linguistic labor—conscious, effortful work constructing alternative pathways for communication and recognition. This linguistic labor operates through four primary strategies: technological mediation, gestural compensation, practical mimesis, and code-switching. Each strategy constitutes adaptive response to linguistic precarity, enabling partial participation while simultaneously marking speakers as linguistically deficient.

Technological mediation through Google Translate, ChatGPT, and language learning applications emerged as ubiquitous compensatory strategy. Kamran described his multimodal approach: *'I use Google Translate for vocabulary, ChatGPT, and Duolingo to practice. Without these tools, I couldn't communicate at all.'* This technological supplementation reveals linguistic competence's increasingly distributed character—rather than residing entirely within individual speakers, contemporary linguistic practice involves assemblages of human and non-human actants enabling communication (Jan & Rampton, 2011; Pennycook, 2013). However, critical analysis exposes technological mediation's limitations. Translation algorithms frequently produce grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate outputs, failing to capture contextual nuance, register variation, or culturally specific speech acts (Taivalkoski-shilov, 2019). Parvez encountered this limitation attempting to compose polite request: *'Google Translate gave me grammatically correct sentence, but Indonesian friend said it sounded too formal. Technology can't teach you when to be formal versus informal.'*

Gestural compensation—deploying non-verbal communication to supplement linguistic inadequacy—constituted the second major strategy. Smiling emerged as what participants termed a 'universal gesture' creating fleeting moments of mutual recognition despite linguistic barriers. Mwangi explained: *'When I can't speak, I smile. Smiling communicates friendliness, apology for linguistic limitation. Usually people smile back and try to help.'* From a semiotic perspective, this gestural labor transforms the body into a communicative resource compensating for linguistic deficiency (Bergmann, 2018). However, critical analysis reveals power dynamics embedded within gestural compensation. Foreign nationals must perform constant affective labor—producing smiles, demonstrating friendliness, signaling non-threatening presence—to secure basic communicative cooperation that native speakers receive without such emotional performance (Hochschild, 2003). This compulsory cheerfulness constitutes a form of symbolic violence requiring dominated groups to perform perpetual gratitude for inclusion (Ahmed, 2010). In the Indonesian context specifically, this dynamic is amplified by cultural norms positioning hospitality and non-confrontational demeanor as moral expectations in social interaction. Foreign nationals who fail to perform visible friendliness risk being perceived as arrogant or culturally disrespectful regardless of their actual communicative intent. Consequently, smiling functions not merely as a communicative supplement but as a compulsory social tax: foreign nationals must continuously signal deference and goodwill simply to access the basic linguistic cooperation that Indonesian native speakers extend to one another as a default. This asymmetry reveals how affective performance becomes structurally required of those occupying linguistically subordinate positions, naturalizing their inferior status within the interaction order.

Practical mimesis—learning through bodily observation and imitation of local linguistic practices—represented third strategy. Mwangi described observing Indonesian speakers' bowing gestures accompanying *'permisi'* (excuse me): *'I watched how Indonesians bow when passing someone—not deep bow, just slight head nod. I started copying this gesture when I say permisi, and people respond more positively.'* This mimetic learning demonstrates linguistic socialization occurring through embodied practice rather than explicit instruction (Brown, 2011). The concept of 'phonetic imitation' proves relevant here—speakers gradually approximate native pronunciation through repeated exposure and production attempts, unconsciously adjusting articulatory patterns toward ambient linguistic norms (Babel, 2009). However, critical scrutiny reveals mimetic learning's one-directional character. Foreign nationals observe and imitate Indonesian linguistic practices, but Indonesians rarely reciprocate by learning Kikuyu, Amharic, or Bengali practices. This asymmetry exposes linguistic adaptation as assimilative process wherein minority speakers adopt dominant linguistic norms while receiving no comparable cultural-linguistic recognition (Kroskrity, 2019; Woolard, 2021).

Code-switching—alternating between languages within single interaction—constituted fourth strategy enabling communicative flexibility. Hugh, married to Indonesian woman, developed sophisticated code-switching practices: *'With my wife, we mix English and Indonesian constantly. She teaches me Indonesian phrases, I help her with English, and we switch languages depending on what we're discussing—emotional topics in English, practical matters in Indonesian.'* This translanguaging practice reveals multilingual speakers' creative capacity to draw on full linguistic repertoires rather than treating languages as bounded systems (Otheguy & Reid, 2015). However, code-switching remains available only within specific contexts—intimate relationships, multilingual friend groups—where interlocutors share linguistic resources. In public contexts with monolingual Indonesians, code-switching becomes impossible, forcing exclusive Indonesian use regardless of competence level. This contextual

constraint reveals how linguistic practice remains structured by surrounding linguistic ecologies rather than individual speaker choices (Blommaert, 2010; Pradillo-caimari et al., 2023).

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Linguistic Labor Strategies in Identity Reconstruction

Strategy	Linguistic Domain Targeted	Structural Constraints	Power Asymmetry Indicator	Participant Quote Evidence
Technological Mediation	Lexical, Syntactic	- Pragmatic inadequacy - Register insensitivity - Cultural context failure	Technology as necessity reveals native privilege	<i>"Grammar correct but sounded rude"</i> (Parvez)
Gestural Compensation	Paralinguistic, Kinesic	- Semantic limitation - Cannot convey abstract concepts - Requires constant emotional labor	Compulsory affective performance for acceptance	<i>"I smile to apologize for my limitation"</i> (Mwangi)
Practical Mimesis	Phonological, Prosodic, Pragmatic	- Requires prolonged exposure - Fossilization risk - Unidirectional adaptation	Only foreigners imitate; no reciprocal learning	<i>"I copied bowing gesture"</i> (Mwangi)
Code-Switching	Discourse, Sociolinguistic	- Context-dependent - Requires bilingual interlocutors - Impossible in monolingual settings	Available only in intimate spaces	<i>"We mix languages with my wife"</i> (Hugh)

These strategies collectively demonstrate that linguistic identity reconstruction operates through layered temporal processes rather than linear progression. The following section examines how these strategies unfold across distinct temporal phases of adaptation.

Temporal Dimensions of Linguistic Identity Reconstruction

Linguistic identity reconstruction unfolds through distinct temporal phases revealing adaptation as non-linear process requiring continuous adjustment. Following Schutz's emphasis on temporality in meaning construction, analysis identifies four phases: existential linguistic disorientation, active linguistic negotiation, progressive linguistic habituation, and hybrid linguistic integration. Each phase involves specific linguistic challenges, strategies, and identity positions.

Existential linguistic disorientation characterizes initial phase when familiar linguistic reference points dissolve. Hugh described this phase: *'First days, I was completely lost. People spoke so fast, I couldn't distinguish word boundaries. Everything sounded like continuous stream of sounds with no breaks. I felt unable to speak or understand.'* This description captures what psycholinguistic research terms 'segmentation difficulty'—inability to parse continuous speech stream into discrete words, a foundational skill native speakers develop in childhood but foreign language learners must consciously (Scharenborg & Os, 2019; Whong et al., 2014). Parvez's experience revealed additional phonological challenge: *'Indonesian sounds similar to Bengali in some ways—both have retroflex consonants—but different enough that I kept making mistakes. This similarity-but-difference was more confusing than completely different language would be.'* This observation highlights role of linguistic transfer—when L1 and L2 share partial features, learners often incorrectly assume complete overlap, producing fossilized errors resistant to correction (Andersson & Gullberg, 2022; Marijje et al., 2022).

Active linguistic negotiation phase involves intensive language learning efforts characterized by explicit rule-following and conscious linguistic monitoring. Yan Yi, despite prior formal training, described renewed learning intensity: *'Living here forced me to confront how little I actually knew. Classroom knowledge wasn't enough. I started watching Indonesian TV, reading street signs, eavesdropping on conversations.'* This immersive learning

demonstrates importance of authentic linguistic input—exposure to language as actually used rather than pedagogical simplifications (Geeslin et al., 2022; Jakubik, 2022). Mwangi’s curiosity about Indonesian bowing-while-speaking practices exemplifies active investigation: *‘I kept wondering why people bow when saying permissi. Is it respect? Apology? Something else? I asked my Indonesian friends, and they explained it’s polite gesture showing awareness of intruding on someone’s space.’* This metalinguistic inquiry reveals how second language learning involves not merely acquiring linguistic forms but understanding cultural meanings embedded within linguistic practices (Bo, 2022).

Progressive linguistic habituation occurs as repeated successful interactions validate emerging competence. Hugh reported: *‘After few months, I noticed I was understanding more without conscious effort. Words I had to look up repeatedly became automatic. My wife said my pronunciation improved.’* This habituation process reflects developing linguistic automaticity—transition from controlled to automatic processing as frequently used linguistic structures become proceduralized (Marijje et al., 2022). Kamran observed similar development: *‘Initially, I translated everything mentally from Urdu to Indonesian. Now, for common phrases, I think directly in Indonesian without translation.’* This observation aligns with research demonstrating proficient bilinguals develop direct conceptual access to L2 without L1 mediation (Andersson & Gullberg, 2022). However, critical analysis questions whether this habituation represents true linguistic integration or strategic linguistic performance. Bett noted: *‘I’m comfortable speaking Indonesian in familiar contexts—ordering food, buying things, basic greetings. But complex conversations about abstract topics still overwhelm me. My competence is situational, not universal.’*

Hybrid linguistic integration phase involves achieving functional competence while maintaining linguistic distinctiveness. Participants developed what sociolinguistic theory terms ‘multilingual identities’—positioning themselves simultaneously as English/Kikuyu/Bengali speakers and emergent Indonesian speakers (García et al., 2018; Pacheco, 2014). Mwangi articulated this hybrid positioning: *‘I’ll never sound like native Indonesian speaker—my accent always marks me as foreign. But I’ve accepted that. I speak Indonesian with my accent, which is my authentic voice.’* This statement demonstrates critical shift from deficit perspective—viewing non-native accent as inadequacy requiring correction—toward pluralist linguistic identity celebrating multilingual repertoire (Pennycook, 2013). However, whether Indonesian linguistic market recognizes and values this hybrid identity remains questionable. While participants personally accepted linguistic hybridity, Indonesian interlocutors continued positioning them as linguistic learners requiring correction rather than legitimate multilingual speakers.

Linguistic Ideology and Institutional Linguistic Violence

The most critical finding concerns systematic institutional absence of linguistic support structures for foreign residents. Manager Fahri confirmed Easton Park provides no linguistic assistance: no multilingual signage, no Indonesian language classes, no translation services, no cultural-linguistic orientation. This institutional void constitutes what this study terms ‘institutional linguistic violence’—harm produced not through direct linguistic aggression but through social structures preventing individuals from developing linguistic resources necessary for social participation (Galtung, 1969; Phillimore et al., 2025).

This institutional neglect reflects broader linguistic ideology positioning Indonesian as natural default requiring no accommodation. The monolingual ideology—belief that monolingualism represents normal condition and multilingualism requires special explanation—structures institutional practices assuming Indonesian linguistic competence as prerequisite for residence rather than outcome requiring institutional support (Galtung, 1969;

Phillimore et al., 2025). By failing to provide linguistic scaffolding, Easton Park management implicitly positions foreign residents as linguistically deficient individuals responsible for managing their own inadequacies rather than as legitimate community members deserving institutional accommodation.

Comparison with international student support programs reveals how institutional infrastructure profoundly affects linguistic adaptation outcomes. Universities increasingly provide language support centers, conversation partners, pronunciation workshops, and writing tutors recognizing linguistic competence requires systematic development (Brunsting et al., 2018; Wade, 2018). Easton Park's absence of comparable infrastructure indicates management views foreign residents as temporary transients rather than legitimate community members deserving linguistic support. This classification reveals how institutional practices construct linguistic boundaries determining who receives support versus who remains responsible for managing linguistic precarity independently.

The study exposes how institutional absence produces differentiated linguistic vulnerability. Participants with strong linguistic aptitude, prior multilingual experience, or cultural-linguistic proximity managed relatively well. Yan Yi's formal Indonesian training and Parvez's Bengali Indonesian phonological similarities provided advantages. However, those lacking such resources—particularly from linguistically distant backgrounds without relevant preparation—experienced prolonged linguistic confusion potentially leading to social isolation and mental health consequences (Muhayyang et al., 2023; Teimouri et al., 2018). This finding reveals how structural conditions produce linguistic inequality whereby some foreign residents successfully develop competence while others struggle, with outcomes determined less by individual capacity than by institutional support availability and linguistic distance from Indonesian.

Religious institutions emerged as exceptional spaces providing alternative linguistic recognition frameworks. For Muslim participants, mosques offered immediate linguistic-religious community despite Indonesian inadequacy. Parvez described: *'At mosque, even though I don't speak Indonesian fluently, brothers accept me because we share Islamic identity. Prayer language is Arabic—universal for Muslims—so linguistic barriers partly dissolve. After prayer, when we shake hands, that physical gesture communicates brotherhood beyond words.'* This experience demonstrates how religious identity can transcend linguistic boundaries, providing alternative recognition not requiring native linguistic competence (Cohen et al., 2016; Young, 2025). However, this religious linguistic exception simultaneously reveals exclusionary character—only Muslim and Christian participants accessed such linguistic-religious communities; those from minority religions or secular backgrounds lacked comparable linguistic support structures.

Toward Critical Linguistic Pedagogy and Institutional Linguistic Justice

Findings indicate urgent need for critical linguistic pedagogy and institutional linguistic justice initiatives supporting foreign residents' linguistic development. Current linguistic adaptation practices individualize linguistic struggles, positioning competence development as personal responsibility rather than collective institutional obligation. Critical linguistic pedagogy challenges this individualization by recognizing linguistic competence as socially distributed achievement requiring institutional scaffolding (Shin, 2022).

Recommended institutional interventions include: (1) establishing comprehensive linguistic orientation programs providing phonological training, pragmatic instruction, and cultural-linguistic contextualization; (2) developing conversation partnership programs connecting foreign residents with Indonesian linguistic mentors for authentic interaction practice; (3) creating multilingual environmental support including signage, documents, and

digital resources in multiple languages; (4) implementing critical cultural-linguistic awareness training for Indonesian residents and staff addressing linguistic ideology, foreign accent bias, and multilingual communication strategies; (5) establishing linguistic support networks enabling peer learning and mutual linguistic encouragement among foreign residents; and (6) providing technological linguistic resources including access to language learning software, online tutoring platforms, and specialized pronunciation training applications.

Beyond these practical interventions, findings suggest need for ideological transformation regarding linguistic diversity. Rather than positioning Indonesian monolingualism as norm requiring foreign residents' unidirectional adaptation, linguistic justice framework recognizes multilingualism as valuable resource benefiting entire (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2021). This ideological shift involves questioning native speaker supremacy ideology positioning native competence as only legitimate standard; challenging monolingual bias assuming single-language competence as normal; and celebrating linguistic diversity as communal strength rather than individual deficiency. Such ideological transformation requires not merely policy changes but fundamental reconceptualization of linguistic belonging, recognition, and justice.

CONCLUSION

This critical phenomenological analysis demonstrates that linguistic identity reconstruction among foreign nationals is a complex process shaped by structural constraints and ideological power relations. Linguistic identity awareness emerges through communicative breakdown across phonological, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic dimensions, prompting intensive linguistic labor through technological mediation, gestural compensation, practical mimesis, and code-switching. These adaptive strategies, however, operate within asymmetrical power relations producing symbolic violence and perpetual linguistic precarity. Most critically, the systematic absence of institutional linguistic support at Easton Park constitutes institutional linguistic violence, forcing individualized adaptation that reflects a monolingual ideology marginalizing foreign residents as deficient transients rather than legitimate community members.

Theoretically, this study advances sociolinguistic understanding by positioning linguistic identity as a performative achievement requiring continuous maintenance, linguistic competence as embodied cultural capital, and institutional neglect as a form of structural violence. Practically, findings call for institutional linguistic justice initiatives—including orientation programs, multilingual environmental support, and peer networks—alongside an ideological shift that recognizes multilingualism as a communal resource rather than an individual deficiency. Future research should examine linguistic identity reconstruction across varied Indonesian contexts, with longitudinal and ethnographic approaches to inform evidence-based policy.

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