

# I heard “hunedresit?”: Uncovering Language Barriers Among Indonesian Diasporas in Glasgow

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## ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
diaspora;  
Glaswegian;  
Indonesian;  
International student;  
Language barrier

### Article History:

Received : 25/11/2024  
Revised : 16/05/2025  
Accepted : 24/05/2025  
Available Online:  
31/05/2025

## ABSTRACT

Despite the history of the 30th of September Movement (*Gerakan Tiga Puluh September, G30S*) incident and the Indonesian diasporas' status as exiles with feelings of being haunted and separated from their homeland, many Indonesians currently reside abroad. This current study aims to uncover and scrutinize language barriers among Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow, focusing on language barriers encountered, the effects of the language barriers, and adaptation strategies to face the language barriers. The findings of this study uncover that the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow encompass the language barriers in Glaswegian accents, vocabularies or slang, and the fast pace of Glaswegian speech. The language barrier has significantly affected their living in Glasgow, especially regarding their communication with the locals and their emotional responses. In navigating the language barriers and adjusting to their new environment, the Indonesian diasporas employ various strategies, such as engaging with locals and learning through entertainment. In shedding light on the language barriers experienced by the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow, this study highlights the imperative to learn and understand the cultures of host countries aimed at mitigating the challenges and obstacles while living over there.

**How to cite (in APA style):** Firdausiyah, H., & Rifai, A. A. (2025). I Heard “Hunedresit?”: Uncovering Language Barriers Among Indonesian Diasporas in Glasgow. *OKARA: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 19(1), 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ojbs.v18i2.16040>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of Indonesian independence, the first president, Sukarno, had ambitious plans for the development of Indonesia, including establishing economic independence, strengthening the political system, and expanding governmental infrastructure. One of the strategies employed by Sukarno to achieve this objective was the enhancement of human capital and the nurturing of a nascent generation of potential leaders through the development of Indonesia's most talented youth to advanced educational and training institutions in other countries (Jayanti et al., 2023; Suradi et al., 2023). In the 1950s, the Indonesian government sent thousands of Indonesians to the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, the United States, Albania, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, North Korea, and Egypt (Akmaliah, 2015). Hill (2022) recounts that their circumstances changed dramatically in 1965 when Major General

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Suharto took power following a coup by the 30th of September Movement (*Gerakan Tiga Puluh September, G30S*), which was blamed on the PKI in the following decades.

The G30S/PKI incident affected thousands of Indonesians, diplomats, journalists, members of parliament, and students who had been sent abroad by President Sukarno to study abroad, particularly in socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. They were prevented from returning to Indonesia, and even their citizenship was revoked. They had been forced into exile and stateless. They asked for asylum from one country to another to survive (Adam, 2018). During their life abroad, they feel haunted and separated from their homeland, their country, and their family. After the fall of Suharto in May 1998, the exiles were rendered *personae non grata*, particularly under the more sympathetic approach adopted by President Abdurrahman Wahid (in office from 20 October 1999 to 23 July 2001). As a result, such exclusion has been relaxed, and they now generally feel welcome in both the embassies and the broader Indonesian diasporic communities (Hill, 2022).

Half a century has elapsed since the traumatic incident, leaving an indelible mark on Indonesia's history. A considerable proportion of the Indonesian people have been diasporas, residing abroad to pursue either professional or academic endeavors. Since 2013, the Indonesian government has sent numerous talented youths to pursue Master's and PhD degrees abroad through the Indonesian Education Endowment Fund (*Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan, LPDP*) under the Indonesian Ministry of Finance. In light of the evolving conceptualization and definition of Indonesian diasporas, these communities are now poised to be reintegrated with the recognition and support provided by Presidential Regulation (Peraturan Presiden No 76, 2017). These international students are regarded as diasporas, following the concept of Cohen (1996), which states that international students are a contemporary diaspora emphasizing espousing return.

Additionally, Brooks and Waters (2021) argue that international students are a knowledge diaspora for their contribution to knowledge exchange. Oktafiani (2019) proposes her perspective that the important thing about Indonesian diasporas is the recognition and emotional belonging of the people since the Indonesian government still hopes for their contribution to the country. Furthermore, an increasing number of studies portray the notion of the diaspora as a highly prized object of state interests and an integral part of multifaceted individual and collective hybrid identities (Bamberger et al., 2021). In another work, Bamberger (2020) argues the significance of pursuing not only cosmopolitan capital but also ethnic identity capital in diaspora identities through international student mobility.

The term 'diaspora' began to be defined more widely. Traditionally, it referred to the dispersion of the Jewish people from ancient Israel. In its pejorative connotation, it was associated with the punishment of the Jewish people for disobeying divine laws and decrees, and it was defined in a broad manner by traumatic dispersion, resulting in exile and a continued longing for an idealized homeland and return to it (Cohen, 2008). In an expanding definition, Cohen (2008) suggests that the term 'diaspora' can be used to describe the existence of transnational bonds of co-responsibility even without strong historical evidence for exclusive territorial claims. Butler (2001) mentions there are three basic features of diaspora. First, after dispersal, there must be a minimum of two (Sawir et al., 2008) destinations. Second, there must be some relationship to an actual or imagined homeland. Third, there must be self-awareness of the group's identity.

Grossman (2019) reconceptualizes diaspora as a transnational community whose members (or their ancestors) emigrated or were dispersed from their original homeland but remain oriented to it and preserve a group identity. He proposes the six core attributes of diaspora to define it, including transnationalism, community, dispersal and immigration, outside the homeland, homeland orientation, and group identity. Despite the shifting view and expanding the definition of diaspora, many nations (states) have come to recognize the value of diasporas in pursuing their own foreign relations and enhancing their global economic competitiveness.

Many studies have indicated that diasporas especially international students encounter some challenges in host countries, such as language barrier (Ali et al., 2020; Sawir, 2005; Zakaria et al., 2024), loneliness (Zheng et al., 2023; Wawera & McCamley, 2020; Sawir et al., 2008), homesickness (Mekonen & Adarkwah, 2023; Shoukat et al., 2021; Rathakrishnan et al., 2021), cultural shock (Almukdad & Karadag, 2024; Ahmed & Shahzeb, 2024), discrimination and racism (Fang & van Liempt, 2021; Mall & Payne, 2023; Okolie & Manyeruke, 2024; Yang et al., 2023), and social support (Kristiana et al., 2022).

Abuarqoub (2019) defines language barriers in his study as factors that impede or significantly distort effective communication. The existence of language barriers is caused by a multitude of factors, including the divergence in the meanings and uses of words, symbols, images, gestures, languages, dialects, accents, linguistic abilities, technical terminology or jargon, the volume of voice, ambiguous words, mispronunciations of words, faulty translations, wrong interpretations of messages, misunderstandings of messages, complex messages, and the varying individual linguistic abilities of the sender and the receiver. Furthermore, the lack of clarity and coherence in the use of words and messages also leads to the emergence of language barriers.

Alhamami (2020) discussed language barriers in multilingual Saudi hospitals, which are related to the causes, the negative effects, and the strategies. The study investigated the causes of language barriers from patients, healthcare professionals, and policy and found that the barriers contribute to a great deal of frustration and make Saudi hospitals less efficient. Tenzer et al. (2014) also examined language barriers in multinational teams. They found that language barriers result in reduced participation in team communication and that hidden language barriers (pragmatic and prosodic transfer between mother tongues and working language) impair sensemaking.

In addition, language issues become barriers to communication, academic adjustment, and mental health. Trice (2004) states that a language barrier can result in a lack of socialization, potentially leading to many unhelpful results. These include feelings of stress, anxiety, and the inability to cope with social challenges in host countries. Ali et al. (2020), in their study about language barriers among international students in Universitas Airlangga, showed that most international students experienced language barriers, which they identified as a significant source of stress. A further study by Nazir and Özçiçek (2022) found that language is a significant cause of stress among international students in their first year. The majority of students report feelings of incompetence in academic language, which can lead to feelings of isolation, stress, depression, and overall mental health issues. Ennin and Manariyo (2023) revealed that language barriers affect communication among international students more than any other factor, such as cultural barriers and others.

The current study focuses on the language barrier as one of the significant challenges for international students, as evidenced by the findings (Ernofalina, 2017). The research findings indicate that language is the most prevalent and problematic aspect encountered

by Indonesian students pursuing studies abroad. A study on the language barriers faced by Indonesian international students has been conducted by Zakaria et al. (2024). It examined the language barriers encountered by Indonesian students in Malaysia in academic and social contexts. Their study investigated the complexities of academic language comprehension, active involvement in academic and extracurricular activities, and the broader domain of interpersonal communication, peer acceptance, and adaptation to an English-medium educational setting.

Unfortunately, no study has investigated language barriers among Indonesian students in English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom or the United States. The issue of language barriers has been identified as a major challenge for non-English-speaking international students in English-speaking countries (Andrade, 2006; Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007; Wright & Schartner, 2013). To fill the gap, this current study explores the language barriers among Indonesian diasporas, particularly international students, in Glasgow. There are three research questions guiding this study to scrutinize it:

1. What are the language barriers the Indonesian diaspora in Glasgow regularly confronts?
2. Do the language barriers affect their living in Glasgow? What are the effects?
3. How do the Indonesian diasporas adapt to the language barriers while they reside in Glasgow?

## 2. METHOD

In uncovering the language barriers among Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow, we conducted an electronic survey distributed in the WhatsApp group of Indonesian students in Glasgow. In this study, we concentrated our attention on the students since their situation is complex, as they must obtain English proficiency certificates, or IELTS qualifications, to reside and pursue their studies in Glasgow. The underlying assumption is that individuals who have obtained English proficiency certificates are not confronted with language barriers in their host country. Therefore, this is a significant issue for Indonesian and other Asian students who aspire to pursue their studies in Glasgow.

The survey was done over two weeks (from 29 July to 5 August 2024), using both closed-ended and open-ended questions and Likert scale items ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to measure the level of the participants' agreement. The survey aimed to explore the types of language barriers faced by the Indonesian diaspora in Glasgow, their impact on daily life, and the adaptive strategies employed in the situations. Additionally, the survey was applied anonymously to protect the participants' identities. However, the demography of the participants was asked in the first section of the survey, including their gender, age, occupation, educational attainment, time living in Glasgow, and English proficiency level.

A total of 28 participants from Indonesian students in Glasgow took part in the survey. Table 1 below presents the demographic breakdown of the participants, highlighting significant differences in gender, age, educational attainment, occupation, time living in Glasgow, and English proficiency levels.

**Table 1**  
Demography of the Participants

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	13	46.4%
Male	15	53.6%
Total	28	100
<b>Age</b>		
20-29 Years Old	19	67.9%
30-39 Years Old	9	32.1%
Total	28	100
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Master	26	92.9%
PhD	2	7.1%
Total	28	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student	27	96.4%
Researcher	1	3.6%
Total	28	100
<b>Time Living in Glasgow</b>		
< 1 Year	25	89.3%
1-2 Year	3	10.7%
Total	28	100
<b>English Proficiency Level</b>		
C2	1	3.6%
C1	20	71.4%
B2	3	10.7%
B1	3	10.7%
A2	1	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>

The gender distribution indicates that the proportion of male and female participants in the survey is nearly equal. It comprises 13 female participants, accounting for 46.4%, and 15 male participants, representing 53.6%. Regarding age composition, the survey revealed that the participation of individuals in the 20-29 age group is predominant, with 19 participants (67.9%), while those in the 30-39 age group accounted for only 9 individuals (32.1%). This composition highlights the predominance of younger adults among the participants in this survey. The educational attainment and occupational distribution of the participants in this study also draw a clear distinction. Most participants are enrolled in master's degree programs, with only two pursuing doctoral degrees and one engaged in research. Furthermore, the distribution of participants according to the length of their residence in Glasgow and their English language proficiency levels is markedly disparate. The majority of participants in this study have resided in Glasgow for less than one year (<1 year), accounting for 89.3%, and only 3.6% of them have been residents for between one and two years (1-2 years). Regarding English proficiency levels, most Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow have reached an advanced level (C1), representing 71.4% of them. This level is characterized by individuals who can express themselves fluently and spontaneously, flexibly and effectively for all purposes. The demographic composition of the participants provides a foundational understanding that is essential for contextualizing the research findings and for achieving the aim of this study.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 The Language Barriers Confronted by the Indonesian Diasporas in Glasgow

The survey findings deal with the language barriers confronted by the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow. However, the results indicate different agreements on the hardship of dealing with the language barriers while they reside in Glasgow. The language barriers include some aspects such as the Glaswegian accent, vocabulary, and pace. Table 2 below illustrates their detailed agreement on the hardship of each language barrier.

**Table 2**  
Hardship dealing with the language barriers in Glasgow

Items	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	(%)
I really had hard time with English (Glaswegian accent)	<b>1</b> (3.6%)	<b>2</b> (7.1%)	<b>8</b> (28.6%)	<b>11</b> (39.3%)	<b>6</b> (21.4%)	100%
I really had hard time with some Glaswegian (English) vocabularies	<b>0</b> (0%)	<b>4</b> (14.3%)	<b>12</b> (42.8%)	<b>11</b> (39.3%)	<b>1</b> (3.6%)	100%
I really had hard time with Glaswegian speaking English because the pace is too fast	<b>0</b> (0%)	<b>7</b> (25%)	<b>4</b> (14.3%)	<b>10</b> (35.7%)	<b>7</b> (25%)	100%

##### 3.1.1 Accent

Regarding the overall language barriers confronted by the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow, most participants agree with English in the Glaswegian accent as their difficulty in communicating in Glasgow, particularly with the locals. A total of 17 participants expresses their agreement about their hardship with the Glaswegian accent, with 21.4% strongly agreeing and 39.3% agreeing. However, 8 participants (28.6%) remain neutral, while only 3 participants show their disagreement in strongly disagree (3.6%) and disagree (7.1%). Most participants in the survey—international students in Glasgow—report having an advanced level of English proficiency (C1 level). However, they recount that the Glaswegian accent is particularly difficult to understand. One participant stated, "The Glaswegian accent is another level of an accent." They argue that English spoken with a Glaswegian accent differs significantly from the standard English they have learned. These differences create barriers to effective communication. Their opinions include the following: "I used to learn American English, and it seems unusual to hear and use Scottish English," "Quite different from other accents in the UK," and "The pronunciation is different from the English accent that I learned or heard."

##### 3.1.2 Vocabularies

English in Glasgow sometimes has other Glaswegian vocabularies, which is another significant barrier for Indonesian diasporas. These vocabularies refer to the slang used by the locals, and they have been a challenge for the Indonesian diasporas while communicating with them. A substantial 12 participants agree with the hardship in the Glaswegian vocabularies, representing 39.3 % strongly agreeing and 3.6% agreeing. Nevertheless, 12 participants (42.8%) indicate a neutral stance on the hardship of the Glaswegian vocabularies, while only 4 participants demonstrate their disagreement



(14.3%). The participants expressed their hardships regarding the Glaswegian vocabulary in the survey. According to them, the vocabulary is very unusual, and the slang is different from English (see the examples below):

- (1) "Some Glaswegian words are really unfamiliar to my ears, such example would be *Tap Aff* which means very hot."
- (2) "Changes small/little to wee. Changes Yes/Okay to Aye, which sound similar to 'I'. Changes good/great to sound."
- (3) "The slang is different with other English."

However, the different vocabularies and slang confuse them. However, they state that when locals notice them as foreigners, the locals adjust the way they communicate with them (look at their experiences at 4 and 5 below):

- (4) "There are some vocabularies that are not common, however they sometimes might notice that I'm not a local, so they would adjust how they communicate."
- (5) "Most of the time, if they know you're not from Scotland, they won't use weegies slang. Only in rare occasion they use weegies slang. If they know you're not from here, you won't be hearing "Pish" or "Scran." Some vocab is also understandable even though it might be strange, such as "wee" or "aye," you know what it means even when you hear it for the first time."

### 3.1.3 Pace

The pace of Glaswegian speaking English is another significant language barrier for the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow. 17 participants expressing their agreement on the hardship of the pace indicate the degree of challenge for them while communicating with the locals because the pace is too fast. 35.7% of them agree, and 25% of them strongly agree. Conversely, 7 participants (25%) show their disagreement, while the remaining 4 participants (14.3%) express their neutrality of the hardship on the pace of communication in Glasgow.

The participants report that the way locals speak at a fast pace is so challenging for them and makes it difficult to communicate outside, such as going to the supermarket. They recount that they have difficulties hearing and understanding the meanings of the locals (see 6). Moreover, the fast pace makes the difficult Glaswegian accent too hard for them (see 7). They find it hard to catch the utterances of the locals in the difficult accent and the fast pace. As a result, they make assumptions based solely on what they perceive, as illustrated by one participant's experience of attempting to communicate with locals in a supermarket (see 8).

- (6) "First time hearing it, I didn't even know what he was talking about."
- (7) "They speak too fast and make it even more difficult with their accent. Same example, when we go to a supermarket."
- (8) "Do you need a receipt (I heard *hunedresit?*)."

## 3.2 The Effect of Language Barriers for the Indonesian Diasporas in Glasgow

This segment delves into the effect of language barriers on the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow. 28 participants in the survey expressed different opinions and experiences regarding language barriers. The majority of participants indicate that language barriers have had an effect on their lives in Glasgow, while only 4 participants state that language barriers have had no significant impact on them, as they said,

- (9) "It does not significantly affect me. Most of the people in store can speak clearly."
- (10) "I'm pretty much fine with it."
- (11) "No impacts"
- (12) "I don't feel any big impact."

In terms of the effect of language barriers, the findings of this study demonstrate several key aspects pertaining to the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The breakdown of the effect of language barriers on Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow, as reported by the participants, is as follows:

### 3.2.1 Misunderstanding

The participants in this survey argue that the language barriers force them to misunderstand when communicating, especially with the locals. It is challenging for them to communicate effectively when involved in society, as they report,

- (13) "The impact is mostly related to the communication. I often misunderstood something, and it makes the communication more challenging."
- (14) "Misunderstood of some guidelines."
- (15) "Some misunderstandings with local people."
- (16) "... misunderstanding sometimes when you were in society."

The findings of this study align with those of Abuarqoub (2019) regarding the role of language barriers in fostering misunderstanding. He asserts that language barriers can give rise to a range of communication issues, including misunderstanding, misinterpretation of messages, distorted messages, misinformation, confusion, mistrust, uncertainty, frustration, weak and inaccurate feedback, aviation and marine accidents and disasters, deaths, tension, conflict, and violence among people.

### 3.2.2 Difficult to get to know Glaswegians

Another key aspect of the effects of the language barriers experienced by the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow is the difficulty in getting to know Glaswegians. Language barriers have a detrimental impact on the ability of Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow to establish effective communication, which in turn affects their capacity to form and maintain relations with Glaswegians. Locals tend to regard individuals who do not exhibit or perform the local accent poorly as foreigners. Consequently, it is challenging to establish a close relationship with Glaswegians. The participants in the survey report the following:

- (17) "It is hard for me to communicate with native people outside of academician", "A bit hard to befriend the Scottish (closely)."
- (18) "Hinder the follow up potential communication. Close the opportunity to the networking."
- (19) "Nothing much. I would say it's harder to deal with services through phone, but you will eventually understand it. If they talk to you and you don't have the accent (or try the accent poorly), they will treat you as a foreigner. Nothing harmful, but they won't be as close to you as to the local."
- (20) "The local people might have ignored us if they think it's pointless to start a conversation with someone who stammers in speaking English," "I found it as a little barrier to have more friends from Glasgow."

A study by Barger (2004) reveals that the establishment of a mutually friendly relationship between international students and locals needs healthy and effective



communication. This can potentially facilitate the transfer of linguistic, cultural, and academic experiences positively. The existence of language barriers blocks international students' ability to communicate effectively with the locals, thereby hindering the establishment of close relationships.

### 3.2.3 Emotions

The inability to communicate effectively because of the language barriers has an impact on the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow, causing feelings of anxiety, awkwardness, and discomfort, as well as feelings of separation from one another. The participants in the survey articulate the emotions they experienced when communicating with the locals. Some participants report their feeling of anxiety for the first few weeks (see 21), while the majority report feelings of awkwardness and discomfort due to the necessity of requesting repetitions from locals and, on occasion, repeating their own utterances to clarify (see 22 and 23). Other participants express a preference to have activities by themselves or with Indonesian individuals due to a perception of passivity in the context of interactions with the locals (see 24). The language barriers also contribute to feel not confident and a perceived limitation in their ability to contribute to society (see 25).

- (21) "I was afraid to speak for the first few weeks, but that was nothing to do with Glaswegian accent since I don't meet many locals, it's just English in general. Things get better once I'm comfortable though."
- (22) "It gets awkward sometimes asking people to repeat more than once."
- (23) "Ask them to repeat what they're saying multiple times."
- (24) "When attending social event, sometimes I only become passive listener, and it makes me prefer hanging out more with Indonesian."
- (25) "Reducing self-confidence."

The Indonesian diasporas are characterized by a complex emotional landscape as individuals navigate the processes of adjustment to their new environment. Berry et al. (2006) that international students encounter two distinct phases of adjustment when confronted with a new environment, namely psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adjustment. It can be reasonably assumed that the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow are experiencing a process of adjustment to a certain extent.

## 3.3 The Adaptations towards the Language Barriers

This section meticulously explores how Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow deal with the language barriers, focusing on their adaptation strategies. The participants in the survey reported their experiences with language barriers and habits in Glasgow. The following breakdown of their strategies are below:

### 3.3.1 Engagement with the locals

Most participants stated that they were actively forging activities with Glaswegian and social communities, showcasing a good strategy for social integration with locals in the host country. Activities include engagement with social communities, football club supporters, and other routine meeting events. The engagement between the Indonesian diasporas and the locals allows the former to observe, learn, and get used to the accent and the habit in Glasgow. One of them shares his experience dealing with language barriers through

engagement with a local community. He recommends joining a football club with a fanbase in Glasgow to foster social integration (see 26). Another participant also recounts his experience socializing with locals, during which they teach him some Glaswegian slang (see 27).

- (26) "Join the Football Club Fanbase in Glasgow. In my case, as an Arsenal supporter, I regularly come to Arsenal Glasgow fanbase match screening at Alfie's Sport Bar, City Centre."
- (27) "I adapt naturally, I guess. Maybe because I hang out with Glaswegian a lot. They teach me Glaswegian slang and I got used to their accent."

### 3.3.2 Learning through entertainment

Other participants in the survey indicate that they encounter barriers in various strategies to familiarize themselves with the Glaswegian accent by learning through entertainment, including following Glaswegian influencers, watching movies, and listening to folk songs. Some participants express their experiences learning the Glaswegian accents and recommend watching a Glaswegian performance and listening to folk songs (see 28 and 29).

- (28) "Watching stand-up comedy that performed by Glaswegian or learning the different pronunciation through videos. Engage with direct one to one conversation."
- (29) "I listen to Scottish folk songs to familiarize myself with the accent."

However, some participants in the survey have shared their experiences of how they have adapted to the language barriers by allowing the language to naturally flow. They have not applied any specific methods to handle the barriers, while one participant has shared the challenge of adapting to the language barriers, particularly the local accent. Despite having resided in Glasgow for 10 months, this individual still encounters difficulties in navigating the language barrier. Consequently, the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow have resorted to either dealing with the language barriers or separating themselves from society.

## 4 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal the multifaceted language barriers encountered by Indonesian diasporas, particularly international students in Glasgow. These barriers—related to accent, vocabulary, and speech pace—are not isolated phenomena but rather reflect broader challenges commonly faced by international students in English-speaking contexts.

One of the most prominent barriers reported by participants was the Glaswegian accent. Despite most respondents holding C1-level English proficiency, many struggled to comprehend local speech, echoing Trice's (2004) assertion that linguistic proficiency does not always translate to communicative competence. The difficulty with regional accents has been reported in other contexts as well. For example, Tenzer et al. (2014) found that accents create "hidden" language barriers that hinder comprehension and collaboration, especially in diverse settings. This supports the argument that even at high levels, English proficiency may fall short when regional dialects, pronunciation patterns, and phonological variations differ substantially from standard or familiar forms (Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007). Moreover, Wright and Scharfner (2013) argue that strong regional accents can cause anxiety among international students, contributing to communication avoidance and reinforcing social distance between locals and newcomers.

Participants also identified difficulty in understanding Glaswegian-specific vocabulary and slang. This finding aligns with Sawir (2005), who noted that international students often struggle with colloquialisms that are culturally embedded and rarely taught in formal language instruction. Zakaria et al. (2024), in a study of Indonesian students in Malaysia, similarly found that students had trouble decoding localized English expressions, which led to social disengagement and confusion in everyday interactions.

Slang and idiomatic expressions serve as identity markers in local cultures but can also act as exclusionary mechanisms for non-native speakers. Ali et al. (2020) reported that unfamiliar jargon among native English speakers could cause feelings of incompetence and exclusion among international students, especially during their initial months abroad. In the current study, some participants noted that locals occasionally adapted their speech when recognizing someone as a foreigner, a finding also observed by Andrade (2006), who emphasized the importance of locals' willingness to accommodate non-native speakers in fostering inclusivity.

Another key finding in this study was the challenge presented by the fast pace of Glaswegian speech. The rapid delivery often compounded the difficulties posed by the unfamiliar accent and vocabulary. Similar results were reported by Ennin and Manariyo (2023), who found that fast-paced conversations were one of the most cited difficulties among international students in Gujarat. When combined with unfamiliar pronunciation and slang, rapid speech can lead to cognitive overload and miscommunication (Abuarqoub, 2019). This communication breakdown affects functional interactions, such as shopping or asking for directions, and emotional well-being. The stress caused by fast, incomprehensible speech contributes to the development of communication apprehension, a phenomenon widely reported in second language acquisition studies (Nazir & Özçipek, 2022).

The language barriers reported by Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow significantly impacted their social relationships and emotional states. The study found frequent experiences of misunderstanding, emotional discomfort, and difficulties forming relationships with Glaswegian locals. These findings are consistent with Berry et al.'s (2006) framework on acculturative stress, which identifies communication difficulties as a central stressor in cross-cultural adaptation.

Participants also shared feelings of awkwardness and anxiety, especially in the early stages of their stay. This finding corresponds with the findings of Zheng et al. (2023), who observed that language difficulties exacerbate loneliness and reduce social engagement. Similarly, Wawera and McCamley (2020) argue that linguistic insecurity can create self-imposed isolation, leading to limited intercultural friendships and a narrow social circle centered around co-nationals.

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience by employing adaptation strategies such as engaging with locals and learning through entertainment. These strategies align with Andrade's (2006) findings, emphasizing the importance of informal learning contexts—like watching local media or participating in community events—in enhancing linguistic and cultural competence.

Engagement with local communities, such as football fan clubs or social gatherings, was reported as an effective way to absorb local language and culture. By immersing themselves in authentic social contexts, students gain both language skills and cultural insights crucial for effective communication, as Barger (2004) recommended. Entertainment as a learning tool—through music, comedy, and digital media—reflects contemporary language learning approaches. Brooks and Waters (2021) noted that exposure to authentic

materials outside the classroom allows learners to develop pragmatic competence, which is often more crucial for daily interaction than grammatical accuracy. However, not all students were able to adapt effectively. Some preferred staying within Indonesian circles, indicating a partial or selective integration strategy. This mirrors the findings of Grossman (2019), who noted that diasporas often negotiate between assimilation and cultural preservation, creating hybrid identities that adapt to circumstances.

The findings from this study underscore the need for a more nuanced understanding of linguistic preparedness in international education. Proficiency scores like IELTS or TOEFL may not adequately capture a student's ability to engage in authentic communication in diverse English-speaking settings. Wright and Scharner (2013) call for greater attention to “communicative ecology,” which includes accent familiarity, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic awareness.

Universities and host institutions should consider offering orientation programs focused on regional dialects and informal speech forms, possibly through peer mentoring or digital simulations. Kristiana et al. (2022) argue that structured social support significantly reduces acculturative stress and improves academic and social outcomes for international students. Furthermore, there is a broader sociolinguistic implication: Language barriers are not simply individual challenges but manifestations of systemic exclusion embedded in linguistic norms. Recognizing this can guide policymakers in designing more inclusive communication strategies, such as multilingual signage, simplified service interactions, or culturally responsive teaching practices.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study delves into the language barriers encountered by Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow. Despite presidential regulations to facilitate the Indonesian diasporas abroad and educational institutions requiring Indonesian students to obtain English proficiency to pursue their studies abroad, the findings of this study uncover that the Indonesian diasporas, including international students, confront several challenges, including language barriers. Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow encounter difficulties in navigating the linguistic landscape. These barriers encompass Glaswegian accents, vocabulary or slang, and the fast pace of Glaswegian speech. The language barrier has significantly affected their living conditions in Glasgow, especially regarding their communication with the locals. Misunderstanding is a common occurrence between the Indonesian diasporas and the locals. This case leads to the establishment of poor relationships and the building of boundaries between the two groups.

Furthermore, the language barriers experienced by the Indonesian diasporas give rise to a range of emotional responses, including feelings of anxiety, awkwardness, discomfort, and a sense of separation from one another. However, these psychological emotions are part of adjusting to a new environment. In navigating the language barriers and adjusting to their new environment, the Indonesian diasporas employ various strategies, such as engaging with locals and learning through entertainment. The results of this study imply that cross-cultural understanding of host countries is of such significance that it cannot be supported by English proficiency for communication and relationship-building. International students must learn and understand the cultures of host countries aimed at mitigating the challenges and obstacles while living over there.

There are some recommendations for further studies. First, the study only focuses on international students, whereas the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow also include professionals. Secondly, further studies could examine additional topics related to other diasporic issues, such as citizenship and sense of belonging among Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow or other cities in the United Kingdom. Finally, the object of material in this study is limited to the Indonesian diasporas in Glasgow. However, it should be noted that Indonesian diasporas have also established themselves in numerous other countries.

#### Acknowledgment

We would like to thank the Indonesian students in Glasgow, especially the LPDP Awardees, for participating in this research survey.

#### Availability of Data and Materials

All the data generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly accessible due to the privacy of the interview participants. However, they are available from the corresponding author at reasonable request.

#### Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests in this article.

#### Funding

The authors received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and publication.

#### Authors' Contribution

Hurrotul Firdausiyah worked on the project and its main conceptual ideas, performed all of the statistical and numerical analysis of the data, and wrote the manuscript. Ahmad Abu Rifai collected the data, provided the discussion, and proofread the manuscript.

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