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Individual Language Policies of Nigerian Students Living and Studying in an Indonesian University Dormitory

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Abstract

This study investigates how Nigerian students living in an Indonesian university dormitory form beliefs about the languages in their multilingual repertoires, practice these languages across educational and social domains, and manage them in response to communicative demands, drawing on Spolsky's framework of language beliefs, practices, and management. The study used a qualitative case study design, including questionnaires for all participants, semi-structured interviews with two key informants, and informal observations of everyday language use in the dormitory. The findings showed that participants held pragmatic beliefs linking English to academic opportunities and Indonesian to local social participation, and ideological beliefs that recognized English's social prestige and the cultural significance of Nigerian languages while viewing Nigerian Pidgin negatively. These beliefs were reflected in their practices. English and Indonesian dominated communication in both domains and often mixed in academic discussions. In contrast, participants used Nigerian languages selectively with peers who shared them. To manage these resources, participants used audience-oriented accommodation, switching, mixing, and simplifying their language to maintain mutual understanding in linguistically diverse interactions. The study concludes that individual language policies are shaped by the interplay of language beliefs, social relationships, and communicative demands. These findings suggest that universities should develop international students' Indonesian for everyday social interaction and academic study while recognizing the linguistic repertoires and cultural identities they already bring.

Keywords: individual language policy; language beliefs; language practices; language management; Nigerian international students; Indonesia

Introduction

Indonesia has become an increasingly popular destination for international students. Because these students come from many nationalities, they bring a wide range of linguistic backgrounds to Indonesian campuses. Nigerian students are among them, and their numbers have risen for two main reasons. The first is linked to brain drain. Weak governance and inadequate funding for higher education in Nigeria have left many students with uncertain employment prospects at home (Lamido, 2026). The second is affordability. Indonesian universities are considerably cheaper than many

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other destinations, especially for scholarship-supported students (Fajarwati & Suyanto, 2020).

These students arrive with a multilingual background shaped by Nigeria's colonial history. As a former British colony, Nigeria adopted English as its official language (Aboh, 2022). Efforts to promote indigenous languages have not displaced English, which remains dominant, particularly in formal settings (Emike & Iyiola, 2019). Most Nigerians therefore grow up speaking English alongside major indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. Long contact between English and these languages has also produced Nigerian Pidgin, an English-based contact language widely used in informal communication. English literacy is high among young Nigerians: as of 2019, about 72 percent of young women and 78 percent of young men were literate in English (Statista, 2021).

However, this repertoire does not fully prepare Nigerian students for life in Indonesia, where Indonesian dominates everyday social interaction. English serves them well in classrooms that use it as the medium of instruction. However, it offers limited help in social situations conducted in Indonesian (Rahmawati & Suharsono, 2016). National policy reinforces this divide. Indonesian higher education positions Bahasa Indonesia as the guardian of national and cultural identity while promoting English as a tool for internationalization (Abduh et al., 2022). International students therefore often go through a period of language displacement before they learn to blend English with newly acquired Indonesian expressions in daily life (Salihu et al., 2025).

How international students handle this situation has received some attention, but existing studies leave important questions open. Rahmawati and Suharsono (2016) found that international students at Universitas Negeri Surabaya mainly used Indonesian in educational settings and returned to their first language with fellow nationals. However, they analyzed institutional-level language management. Artawan and Suarta (2022) examined factors that accelerate Indonesian acquisition, such as teaching methodology, motivation, and learner traits, and Tiawati et al. (2023) identified cultural awareness as a predictor of language competence. Both studies centered on acquisition outcomes rather than how students organize their language use. Salihu et al. (2025) traced the linguistic experience of a single Somali student in Indonesia, while studies of Nigerian students' multilingualism have largely been set in Nigeria itself (Nwagbo, 2025; Uwen et al., 2025). Little is therefore known about how students with multilingual repertoires, such as Nigerians who may draw on several languages, form their individual language policies across educational and social domains in an Indonesian university dormitory. Few studies have also treated language beliefs, practices, and management as connected components of such a policy. This study addresses these gaps at the individual level, since the small number of Nigerian students in the dormitory limits the chance of a community-level policy taking shape.

The wider literature on international higher education helps explain why the individual level matters. Multilingual students rarely adopt a single institutional language. Their choices emerge where English-medium instruction, the dominant language of the host society, and their home languages meet (Salihu et al., 2025; Sung,

2022). Studies in Hong Kong show that these choices are not neutral, as hierarchies of proficiency in English and the local language influence whether international students feel included or sidelined (Sung, 2020, 2021, 2022). Shirahata and Lahti (2022) found similar ideological rankings in university policy documents that can include, exclude, or rank students by the languages they speak. Students' language behavior thus reflects the beliefs and power relations of the institutions they join.

Nigerian students bring a repertoire well suited to this kind of negotiation. Uwen et al. (2025) show that Nigerian university students draw on several codes to meet academic and social demands and use language choice to perform plurilingual, ethnolinguistic, and in-group identities. Nwagbo (2025) found that residential spaces in a Nigerian university encouraged code-switching among Igbo students, where mixing languages built solidarity rather than keeping each language in a separate compartment. Research on translanguaging points in the same direction. Students in Malaysian and Indonesian universities mix languages to ease anxiety, join informal discussions more comfortably, and keep emotional bonds with peers (Sani & Senom, 2026; Agustin & Wahyudi, 2024; Abdurahman & Mutiaraningrum, 2026). Ou et al. (2020) argue that such practices push intercultural communication in international universities beyond a narrow English-as-a-lingua-franca model. However, flexible language use has limits, because institutions that insist on monolingual norms restrict how freely students can draw on their full repertoires (Ali, 2024; Rajendram, 2021).

Dormitories are where these tensions are most likely to surface, since they combine academic and social life under one roof. Rohmah and Mulkiyah (2021) found that language choice in an Indonesian girls' dormitory reflected cultural pluralism and followed social hierarchies of age, status, and leadership. Moreover, African students abroad often navigate residential and social situations without formal language support from their universities (Xeketwana & Anthonissen, 2025). Informal interaction thus becomes a space where students exercise agency and rework official expectations about language use, a process closely tied to their sense of belonging (Shibata, 2025; Rajendram, 2021).

To capture this agency, the present study draws on the concept of individual language policy, which refers to how individuals develop and enact their own orientations towards language use (Nguyen, 2026). It examines Spolsky's tripartite model, which treats language beliefs, practices, and management as the core components that shape how individuals manage multilingual settings (Victoria et al., 2022). Language beliefs are the ideologies, assumptions, and value judgments a person holds about particular languages, and Spolsky (2019) divides them into status, affect, value, and utility beliefs. Status belief concerns which language Nigerian students regard as prestigious and how this affects their willingness to speak it, since a language with higher perceived status often invites more use (Lotfie & Hartono, 2018). Affect belief concerns whether students feel confident and comfortable using a language, which may stem from emotional attachment to their indigenous languages (Mori & Sanuth, 2018). Value belief concerns how linguistic

identity and solidarity persist across borders. Nigerian migrants show that relocation need not weaken linguistic identity, because heritage languages sustain cultural continuity and solidarity within co-ethnic networks (Kupolati, 2024). Utility belief concerns whether students see Indonesian as practically necessary for social participation and everyday communication. These beliefs may support or contradict one another. English may hold academic prestige, indigenous languages may sustain identity, and Indonesian may bring immediate communicative benefits. Their interplay helps explain why students adopt, retain, or avoid particular languages in different settings.

Beliefs become visible only through use, so Spolsky (2019) links them to language practices, the actual patterns of language use across social domains. A domain-based perspective offers a practical way to compare language choices across recurring settings such as family, friendship, religion, education, and employment. This study examines two of them: the social domain, understood broadly as friendship, and the educational domain. International students living on campus do not participate in the family or employment domains, and the religious domain falls outside this study's focus on language choice. The social and educational domains therefore show students' linguistic negotiation most clearly.

Practices, in turn, are shaped by management, the deliberate effort to regulate or influence language use when people face diverse repertoires and varied needs. Management separates language policy from language use: the latter concerns what people actually do with language, whereas the former covers how that use is regulated, explicitly or implicitly. Spolsky (2019) describes management as interventions by individuals, families, the public, or organizations that seek to shape language use and beliefs. For individuals, management takes the form of strategies for handling communicative demands. Accommodation refers to adjusting language choices to an interlocutor's linguistic resources and needs. It can ease mutual understanding and social participation, yet it may also burden students who must adapt repeatedly (Bibi & Hamida, 2024). Avoidance refers to refraining from a language because of anxiety or limited resources (Zheng & Cheng, 2018). Audience design refers to selecting or modifying language choices in anticipation of interlocutors' expectations and responses.

Drawing on this framework, the present study investigates how Nigerian students in an Indonesian university dormitory form beliefs about the languages in their multilingual repertoires, how they practice these languages across educational and social domains, and how they manage their multilingual resources in response to the communicative demands they face. These questions matter because Nigerian students arrive with English as a second language and Indonesian as a third. In contrast, local students typically place a local language or Indonesian first and English at the periphery. This asymmetry makes the dormitory a distinctive site for observing how language policy is negotiated from the bottom up and extends Spolsky's framework to the lived experience of Nigerian students in Indonesia.

Method

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study design. Case studies suit contemporary phenomena examined in their real-life context, especially when the boundary between the phenomenon and its setting is not clear-cut (Yin, 2014). Here, the phenomenon is Nigerian students' individual language policy, and the setting is the Indonesian university dormitory where they live. The two cannot be easily separated because the dormitory is where students meet Indonesians, English, and fellow Nigerians in everyday life, and these encounters shape their language choices. The case was bounded by place (one university dormitory), participants (Nigerian students residing there), and focus (language beliefs, practices, and management across the social and educational domains), following Spolsky's (2019) framework. The study does not aim at statistical generalization. It offers a context-specific account, and its transferability depends on how closely other residential, educational, and linguistic settings resemble this one.

Research Instruments

Three instruments were used: a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview guide, and field notes from observation (Fraenkel et al., 2012). All three were organized around Spolsky's three components so that the data could be compared across sources. The questionnaire collected participants' background information and linguistic repertoire, including gender, field of study, length of stay in Indonesia, BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers) status, and the languages they reported using. It then asked about their beliefs about English, Indonesian, Nigerian languages, and Nigerian Pidgin; how they used language with different interlocutors in social and educational domains; and the strategies they used when communication became difficult.

The interview guide expanded on the questionnaire responses. Its questions asked participants why they valued particular languages, how they chose languages with Indonesian friends, lecturers, and fellow Nigerians, and how they adjusted their language when interlocutors did not understand them. Because access to classrooms was restricted, the guide also included prompts to reconstruct interactions. Participants were asked to describe typical classroom situations, the languages used in them, and the reasons for switching between languages. Field notes recorded general patterns of language use in the dormitory's public and semi-public spaces. These notes focused on which languages were used, who used them with whom, and how speakers moved between English and Indonesian.

Participants

Five Nigerian students living in the university dormitory took part voluntarily. They were selected purposively using three criteria: they were (1) active students at a university in Indonesia, (2) residents of the student dormitory, and (3) current or former participants in the BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers) program. These criteria ensured that every participant had regular exposure to both English and Indonesian. Within this group, natural variation in field of study, length of stay, and BIPA status was retained, because such variation helps show how individual circumstances shape language policy (Yin, 2014).

All participants were male. Three had lived in Indonesia for two years or more and had completed BIPA, while two had been in the country for less than six months and were still in the program. Three reported Hausa and two reported Yoruba as their Nigerian language. All five reported English and Indonesian; one also reported Nigerian Pidgin, and one also reported Arabic. Table 1 summarises the participants' profiles.

Table 1

General data of the participants

Participant	Gender	Field of Study	Length of Stay in Indonesia	BIPA Status	Languages Reported	Local Nigerian Language
P1	Male	Electrical Engineering	More than 2 years	Completed	English, Bahasa Indonesia, Local Nigerian language(s), Arabic	Yoruba
P2	Male	Biology	More than 2 years	Completed	English, Local Nigerian Language(s), Bahasa Indonesia	Hausa
P3	Male	Hospital Administration	2 years	Completed	English, Nigerian Pidgin, Bahasa Indonesia, Local Nigerian language(s)	Yoruba
P4	Male	Animal Science	Less than 6 months	Not completed	English, Bahasa Indonesia, Local Nigerian language(s)	Hausa
P5	Male	Data Science	Less than 6 months	Not completed	English, Local Nigerian Language (s), Bahasa Indonesia	Hausa

Note. P = participant. Codes replace names to protect anonymity.

Findings and Discussion

Finding

The findings are organized around the three components of individual language policy: language beliefs, language practices, and language management. Questionnaire data from all five participants were analyzed first, and interviews with the two key informants (P1 and P2) were then used to explain the patterns that emerged. Dormitory observations further supported these findings. Five themes were developed from this process. Two themes concern language beliefs: pragmatic beliefs, which link each language to a practical purpose, and ideological beliefs, which concern the prestige and cultural meaning participants attach to their languages. Two themes concern language practices: the dominant use of English and Indonesian across social and educational domains, and the selective use of Nigerian languages in in-group interactions. The fifth theme, audience-oriented accommodation, concerns language management, that is, how participants adjust their multilingual resources to maintain mutual understanding. The sections below present each component in turn.

Language Beliefs

Participants' beliefs were shaped first by pragmatic considerations, namely what each language allowed them to do. They linked English to academic advancement and

Indonesian to participation in local society. Four of the five participants regarded English as the most useful language for academic learning, and all five considered Indonesian useful for making friends with Indonesians. The interviews explain this division. P1 saw English as a gateway to "lots of opportunities […] to study abroad," while P2 described Indonesian as essential for communicating and building relationships with local people. English was thus valued for access to international academic resources, and Indonesian for everyday interaction in the host environment.

Alongside these pragmatic beliefs, participants held ideological beliefs that attached social and cultural meanings to their languages. For some, English carried social prestige. Two participants rated English highly for prestige at university, and three strongly agreed that it signals higher social status among peers. P1 confirmed that English "signals higher social status among peers and among friends," noting that students recognized this status even in Indonesia. However, he added that his own use of English was driven by learning and practice rather than a desire for recognition. His account shows that a language can carry prestige without every speaker using it to gain social standing.

Nigerian languages carried a different kind of ideological meaning, one rooted in identity rather than status. Three participants rated these languages' role in preserving cultural identity highly, though only two strongly endorsed a responsibility to maintain them abroad. P1 stated that Yoruba "holds my identity," and P2 described his home language as a link to "identity, culture, and connection to home." For both, their Nigerian languages anchored a sense of belonging.

However, this attachment did not translate into confidence. Three participants reported high confidence in using English and Indonesian. However, none reported high confidence in speaking Nigerian Pidgin or Nigerian languages in Indonesia. Nigerian Pidgin in particular drew negative evaluations. One participant called it "a bad language" and "poor language" and associated it with limited formal education. P2 avoided Pidgin because he feared being misunderstood outside Nigeria, and P1 worried that Indonesian friends might hear it as unstructured English. These responses suggest that participants' feelings about a language depend partly on how they expect others to judge or understand it. Cultural attachment, then, does not guarantee confidence in every social setting.

Language Practices

These beliefs were reflected in how participants actually used their languages. English and Indonesian dominated their daily communication across social and educational domains, and participants chose between them largely based on the interlocutor. In the social domain, four participants named English as their main language with international students, while three reported frequent use of Indonesian with Indonesian friends. Observations confirmed this pattern. A Nigerian student was seen using Indonesian to order food in the canteen, chat with Indonesian friends, and carry out other routine activities, even when this involved simple expressions or imperfect sentence structures. The usefulness participants attributed to Indonesian was therefore realized in concrete daily interaction.

The educational domain showed a similar reliance on both languages. Three participants reported frequent exposure to academic content in English and two to content in Indonesian. Four reported mixing English and Indonesian in group discussions, while none reported using English alone in such settings. The interviews show that participants followed the lecturer's lead. P1 explained, "If the lecturer asks the question in Indonesian language, I reply using Indonesian language. And if the lecturer asks using English, I also reply using English language." P2 preferred English when the lecturer used it but switched to Indonesian to ask for clarification. Educational communication was therefore not dominated by English. English and Indonesian alternated and at times substituted for each other, depending on the instructional situation and the people involved.

By contrast, participants used Nigerian languages far more selectively, mostly in in-group interactions. Four participants gave high ratings to using a Nigerian language with Nigerian peers. However, only one did so for Nigerian Pidgin, a gap consistent with the negative views of Pidgin reported earlier. The interviews show that shared knowledge of a specific language, not shared nationality, determined its use. P1 spoke Yoruba only with people who understood it, particularly students from the same ethnic group. P2 likewise used Nigerian Pidgin and his mother tongue only when he met people who spoke them. Coming from the same country did not mean that participants shared the same local language, since some spoke Yoruba and others Hausa. Participants kept Nigerian languages in their repertoires. However, they were used only within smaller circles where a common language was available.

Language Management

The practices described above did not happen by chance. Participants actively managed their language choices through audience-oriented accommodation to keep communication going. Four participants reported a strong tendency to switch to English when their Indonesian was not enough to express a message, and three reported simplifying their language to aid understanding. In other words, management involved not only choosing a language but also adjusting linguistic resources when communication became difficult. P1 described this process: "Whenever I feel like I cannot convey my message completely in Indonesian, I can switch to English or combine English with Indonesian so I can convey my message completely." For him, switching and mixing were deliberate strategies for getting the full message across. These strategies allowed him to work around the limits of his Indonesian without withdrawing from the conversation.

This management was also directed at the people participants spoke to. When Indonesian and Nigerian friends were together, P1 chose English "so that they understand our communication." P2 chose English with those who understood it and Indonesian with those more comfortable in Indonesian, explaining, "My goal is to communicate well, so I choose the language that makes both of us comfortable." Both participants weighed their own ability to express an idea against what their interlocutors could understand. Their language management was therefore audience-oriented, with choices adjusted to build shared understanding in linguistically diverse interactions.

Accommodation in this sense was a purposeful response to communicative needs rather than a fixed preference for any one language.

Taken together, the findings show how the three components connect. Participants' beliefs about what each language offers shaped which language they used and with whom. When those practices ran into the limits of their own proficiency or their interlocutors' understanding, participants managed their repertoires by switching, mixing, and simplifying their language to sustain communication.

Discussion

Language Beliefs

The participants' beliefs about their languages were closely tied to the opportunities and relationships each language offered. Their strong preference for English in academic learning reflects its pragmatic value for international academic engagement and future mobility. This finding is consistent with research in Nigeria, where English is preferred over indigenous languages because of its perceived role in education and socioeconomic advancement (Uwen & Okafor, 2025) and is closely tied to national identity (Ugwuanyi & McKenzie, 2025). Shirahata (2023) similarly found that English can serve both as a shared language that eases interaction among international students and as a marker of identity that creates hierarchies among them. However, the present findings complicate the assumption that English's academic value diminishes the importance of the host language. All five participants considered Indonesian useful for making friends with Indonesians, suggesting its value rests on immediate interpersonal needs. This resonates with Queirós et al. (2025), who found that learning and using a host language supports social relationships, participation, and a sense of belonging. Salihu et al. (2025) reported a comparable pattern for a Somali student in Indonesia, who balanced English with newly acquired Indonesian to manage daily life. The study participants thus evaluated their languages against different expected outcomes: English promised wider academic possibilities. At the same time, Indonesian opened the door to local social life.

The participants' ideological beliefs about English add a further layer to this picture. Several participants recognized that English signals higher social status, consistent with studies showing that hierarchies of English proficiency shape international students' inclusion and standing among peers (Sung, 2021, 2022). Nevertheless, P1 separated his own use of English from this prestige and attributed it to learning and practice. This differs from findings in Nigeria, where English preference is tied to its perceived socioeconomic value (Uwen & Okafor, 2025). For P1, at least, English prestige was something he recognized rather than something he sought.

The findings on Nigerian languages reveal a tension between cultural attachment and social stigma. P1's description of Yoruba as central to his identity shows how heritage languages sustain belonging for people living abroad. This echoes Banda and Adetomokun (2015), who found that Nigerian students in South Africa negotiated Yoruba identity in a diaspora setting, and Kupolati (2024), who showed that heritage languages maintain cultural continuity among Nigerian immigrants in the United States. Studies within Nigeria likewise report strong

positive attachment to indigenous languages as markers of cultural identity (Wappa, 2020; Nyamekye et al., 2025). However, Nigerian Pidgin was evaluated very differently. Participants' negative views align with Mazzoli's (2021) finding that Pidgin is often regarded in Nigeria as an inferior form of English linked to limited education. Ajagbe and Okesola (2024) likewise found that Nigerians in the diaspora hold competing views of Pidgin, seeing it as accessible on the one hand and denouncing it on the other. This stigma contrasts with recent evidence that Nigerian students increasingly accept endonormative varieties of Nigerian English (Aboh, 2023). Participants' concern about how Indonesian friends might hear Pidgin suggests that the host audience also shaped their reluctance to use it. Preserving one's cultural repertoire abroad, then, sometimes means negotiating linguistic stigma as well as distance.

Language Practices

Viewed through Spolsky's framework, participants' use of English and Indonesian partly aligned with their beliefs, but the two components did not correspond directly. Four participants considered English most useful for academic learning, yet four also reported mixing English and Indonesian in group discussions, and none reported using English alone. Valuing English for academic opportunities did not mean endorsing English-only communication. Wang and Xu (2024) found a sharper mismatch among Thai international students at a Chinese-medium university, some of whom endorsed monolingual ideologies while using multilingual resources in practice. The Nigerian students' mixing differs in that it does not contradict their beliefs. It is consistent with valuing English and Indonesian simultaneously. Their alternation also resembles the translanguaging reported among Indonesian university students, who mix languages to join discussions and support understanding (Agustin & Wahyudi, 2024; Abdurahman & Mutiaraningrum, 2026), and the pragmatic code-switching that helps students negotiate meaning in multilingual classrooms (Asadu, 2026). Dobinson et al. (2024) showed that translanguaging can mediate intercultural meaning and disciplinary knowledge. However, the present questionnaire data cannot confirm whether participants' mixing served these functions. Dobinson et al. (2024) also showed that English-only institutional norms affect whether students regard multilingual practices as legitimate. The present findings also contrast with those of Rahmawati and Suharsono (2016), who found that international students in Surabaya used mainly Indonesian in educational domains. Participants in this study showed a more flexible pattern, with English and Indonesian alternating depending on the lecturer and the task.

The social domain showed a similar dependence on the interlocutor. Participants used Indonesian for routine exchanges with Indonesians, even with imperfect structures, and English with other international students. Nwagbo (2025) found that English was highly present in a Nigerian university hostel alongside dominant regional languages such as Yoruba. The present setting differs in one important respect. In the Indonesian dormitory, where no single Nigerian language was shared by all Nigerian residents, English served as a common code.

This difference is also reflected in the selective use of Nigerian languages. Kupolati

(2024) found frequent heritage-language use among co-ethnic Yoruba–English immigrants in the United States, and Nwagbo (2025) showed that students signal ethnic solidarity by using shared indigenous languages in residential spaces. The present study points to a more fragmented situation. Participants shared Nigerian nationality but not necessarily the same local language, as some spoke Yoruba and others Hausa. P1's use of Yoruba only with those who understood it marks this boundary clearly. Nigerian Pidgin could in principle bridge these ethnic differences, yet only one participant reported using it often with Nigerian peers. In this study, shared linguistic knowledge and attitudes toward Pidgin determined which languages stayed active within Nigerian peer networks.

Language Management

Participants' language management involved both linguistic adjustment and audience awareness. P1's decision to switch to English or mix languages when his Indonesian fell short reflects convergence towards communicative clarity, and three participants also reported simplifying their language. These strategies broadly align with those of Nigerian engineering students, who used oral strategies such as circumlocution and repair to avoid communication breakdown (Isa & Noor, 2025). Bibi and Hamida (2024) showed that communication accommodation helped students handle linguistic and cultural differences, but they also reported persistent barriers. In other words, accommodation does not automatically guarantee mutual understanding, because its success depends on whether the chosen language is accessible to everyone involved. The present findings also differ from those of Elega and Özad (2017), who found that Nigerian students in Northern Cyprus relied on mobile translation applications to cope with language barriers. The participants in this study instead described drawing on their own repertoires.

This audience-oriented management is most visible in mixed groups. P1's choice of English when Indonesian and Nigerian friends were together shows how language choice can include some interlocutors without excluding others. P2's aim of choosing "the language that makes both of us comfortable" reflects the same concern. Androutsopoulos (2014) showed that multilingual speakers design their language choices around diverse audiences, particularly when different social groups overlap, and Uwen et al. (2025) found that interlocutors' backgrounds shape Nigerian students' language choices. The participants in this study thus treated audience design as relational work, negotiating not only what they could express but also who could take part in the conversation. Ou et al. (2020) argue that flexible language practices move intercultural communication in international universities beyond a narrow English-as-a-lingua-franca model. The present findings support this argument, since participants used Indonesian, English, and a mixture of the two as the situation required rather than defaulting to English.

Implications and Future Research

These findings have implications for universities hosting international students. Participants valued Indonesian mainly for friendship and daily participation, so Indonesian language programs such as BIPA could place more weight on the language of everyday social interaction alongside academic Indonesian.

Because participants regularly mixed English and Indonesian in academic discussions, lecturers could recognize this mixing as part of how international students take part in learning. More broadly, language support for international students should develop their Indonesian while recognizing the linguistic repertoires and cultural identities they already bring.

Future research could address several limits of the present study. All participants were male and lived in a single dormitory, so studies involving female students and several institutions would show whether these patterns hold more widely. Systematic observation and recorded interaction, including direct classroom observation, would allow researchers to examine how mixing actually functions in academic talk rather than relying on self-report. Participants also differed in length of stay, with some living in Indonesia for more than two years and others for less than six months, so a longitudinal design could trace how individual language policies change as students' Indonesian develops. Finally, comparing Nigerian students with other international groups in Indonesia would clarify which aspects of these language policies are specific to Nigerian repertoires and which reflect the wider experience of studying in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study examined the individual language policies of Nigerian students living in an Indonesian university dormitory through Spolsky's framework of language beliefs, practices, and management. Participants held pragmatic beliefs linking English to academic opportunities and Indonesian to local social participation. They also held ideological beliefs, recognizing English's social prestige and the cultural significance of their Nigerian languages, while viewing Nigerian Pidgin negatively. In practice, participants used English and Indonesian to dominate communication across social and educational domains and often mixed them in academic discussions. In contrast, participants used Nigerian languages selectively with peers who shared the same language. To manage these resources, participants used audience-oriented accommodation, switching, mixing, and simplifying their language according to their own expressive needs and their interlocutors' linguistic resources. Together, these findings show that individual language policies are shaped by the interplay of language beliefs, social relationships, and communicative demands.

These findings suggest that universities hosting international students should develop students' Indonesian for everyday social interaction and academic study, and treat the mixing of English and Indonesian as a legitimate part of students' learning participation. Language support should also recognize the linguistic repertoires and cultural identities that students already bring. Future research could use larger, more diverse samples across Indonesian universities, including female students, and combine systematic observation with longitudinal designs to trace how these language policies develop over time.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Generative AI Statement

The author used Grammarly solely for language editing and proofreading to improve the clarity and readability of the manuscript. All AI-assisted output was critically reviewed and revised by the author, who takes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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