

Echoes of Heritage: Cultural Identity as a Predictor of the Indigenous Students' Attitude Towards English Language

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the cultural identity of indigenous students, its relationship with their attitudes towards the English language, and their perceptions of immersion experiences in English. This study employed an embedded convergent parallel design as a mixed-method approach where the quantitative phase involved a descriptive-correlation design, while the qualitative phase utilized phenomenology. This study used an adopted questionnaire for the quantitative phase and an interview guide for the qualitative phase to collect the necessary data. There were 143 Program, Advocacies, and Governance for the Lumad, Association of the University of Mindanao (PAGLAUM) members representing the entire population in the quantitative and qualitative phases. Using statistical tools such as mean, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis to analyze and interpret the quantitative data further ensured the validity and reliability of the findings. The results revealed a high level of cultural identity and a positive attitude towards the English language among PAGLAUM members. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between these variables, with affirmation/belonging being the most influential domain on indigenous students' attitudes towards English. On the other hand, in the qualitative phase, through thematic analysis, seven themes emerged: power and prestige, personal growth, opportunity, ethnic pride, discrimination, diminished self-efficacy, and communicative competence barriers. Moreover, the joint display of salient quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated parallel, reinforcing the thoroughness and robustness of this research.

Keywords: education, cultural identity, indigenous students, mixed method, convergent parallel, Philippines

1. Introduction

The relationship between culture and dialect significantly impacts human perception, behavior, and interaction. Mansuy et al. (2023) shed light on the reality that Indigenous students tend to leave school more frequently due to their English proficiency compared to non-indigenous students. Correspondingly, Makhanya and Zibane (2020) asserted that this phenomenon is associated with a less favorable attitude towards English and limited support in English classes. Additionally, Gutierrez et al. (2019) supported that Indigenous students are significantly less likely to meet the national minimum standards for education and numeracy than non-indigenous students.

Moreover, Indigenous students, particularly in Australia, face challenges with limited English proficiency, which hinders their participation in class and educational success (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2022). The language barrier also disconnects them from their culture and language, making it difficult to learn English due to a lack of prior exposure (McCarty & Romero, 2019). Frickel and Napoleon (2021) found that negative attitudes towards English among Indigenous students contribute to higher dropout rates.

In the Philippines, Indigenous students in Echague, Isabela, face challenges with English due to deficiencies in alphabet knowledge, phonics, word recognition, and phonological awareness (JLeaño et al., 2019). Santos et al. (2022) noted that past educational failures have left many Indigenous learners with limited awareness and competence, neglecting their social, linguistic, and cultural needs. Despite educational reforms, teachers, parents, and students continue to struggle with the language of instruction.

In Davao City, Indigenous students from five tribes face challenges in learning English, including poor grammar, limited proficiency, restricted vocabulary, and low confidence (Bontuyan et al., 2013, as cited in Duran and Aloy, 2023). Cultural differences also affect their language learning, leading to misunderstandings, vocabulary gaps, and literal translations. These issues align with findings from Xiao et al. (2024) and Hall et al. (2012), who highlighted the impact of cultural differences on language expectations and the risk of poor literacy due to limited vocabulary.

Moreover, in the rural areas of Davao City, many indigenous people use English as their second language to communicate and adapt to urban life. Dreisbach and Demeterio (2020) documented that those residents in Davao, including indigenous people, commonly used English alongside Cebuano and Filipino in various settings. One example is the (PAGLAUM). This collegiate student organization brings together indigenous people from various tribes, cultures, and traditions. Despite their differences, they share common rights and work towards preserving their identity and promoting advocacy. Tapuroc (2022) reveals that learners in rural schools face difficulties, especially

in writing and comprehension, partly due to the limited explicit teaching of language-learning strategies.

In addition, Davao Today (2024) reveals that educating indigenous learners, particularly those from Lumad communities, is fraught with challenges. Geographic isolation, high transportation costs, and unsafe travel routes hinder access to education, preventing children from regularly attending school. Language barriers are another significant educational issue, as many Lumad children are not exposed to English in their homes and communities, making it difficult for them to learn the language in a formal classroom setting. Mindanews (2024) reported that the lack of culturally relevant curricula makes it more challenging for indigenous students to engage with subjects like English, where cultural differences compound language barriers.

Furthermore, cultural identity is crucial in shaping Indigenous students' attitudes towards English and their communication skills. A strong cultural identity boosts confidence, helping students approach English positively and perform better (Peng & Patterson, 2021; Martin et al., 2021), while positive attitudes towards English correlate with improved academic and social outcomes, including better reading, writing, and critical thinking (Simons & Johnston, 2019; Liu, 2021). Conversely, negative attitudes may arise from classroom detachment and language difficulties, leading to exclusion, reduced confidence, and academic challenges (Rampton, (2021).

Peng (2023) highlights the gap in research regarding the impact of cultural identity on Indigenous students' attitudes towards English, particularly in Philippine universities. The studies of MacElheron (2022) and Napil et al. (2020) focus on international students rather than Indigenous populations. Therefore, this study aimed to address this gap by examining how cultural identity influences the Indigenous students' attitudes towards English in Philippine universities.

This study explored how cultural identity influences Indigenous students' attitudes towards English and the relationship between them. Understanding this could improve educational policies, raise awareness, and support language development. It also seeks to highlight the learning strategies Indigenous students use, contributing to their academic success and ability to navigate multilingual environments (Sanchez, 2018; Bagherzadeh & Tajeddin, 2021; Madden et al., 2022; Herwiana & Laili, 2021).

1.2 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of Cultural Identity of the Indigenous students in terms of:
 - a. ethnic Identity;
 - b. ethnic behavior;
 - c. other-group orientation;
 - d. affirmation/belonging?
2. What is the level of Indigenous students' attitude towards the English language in terms of:
 - a. Behavioral Attitude;
 - b. Emotional Attitude;
 - c. Cognitive Attitude?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the cultural identity and the Indigenous students' attitude towards the English language?
4. Which dimension of cultural identity significantly influences the Indigenous students' attitudes towards English language?
5. What are the Indigenous students' perceptions of their immersion experiences in the English language?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Respondents

The respondents for this study were Indigenous students enrolled at the University of Mindanao, Matina Campus, in Davao City, Davao del Sur, Philippines. Established in 1946, the University of Mindanao is a leading institution in Mindanao renowned for its inclusivity. It embraces individuals from diverse Indigenous and religious backgrounds, demonstrating a strong commitment to diversity and community.

The respondents, aged 18 to 20 years, included both male and female students who speak Cebuano as their native language. Cebuano, sometimes called Sugbuanon or Bisaya, belongs in the Malayo-Polynesian language family and is one of the 36 languages and dialects spoken in the Philippines. With millions of native speakers, it is the second most spoken language in the nation. Cebuano has its own unique syntax, pronunciation, and regional variations, even though it shares specific terminology with the national language, Filipino. For many tribes, notably Indigenous Peoples (IP), it is their primary form of communication (Mojares, 2014, as cited in Inocian et. al., 2020).

To participate in the study, respondents were required to be officially enrolled during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024 and be members of the Program, Advocacies, and Governance for the Lumad Association of the University of Mindanao (PAGLAUM). PAGLAUM is a recognized university organization for Indigenous Peoples from various tribes, including Manobo, Mandaya, Ata, Bagobo, B'laan, Matigsalog, Umayamnon, Calagan, Sama, Subanon, Ubo-Manobo, Maguindanaon, Tagacaolo, Mansaka, and Tigwahaon. Each tribe has its own distinct culture and traditions, yet they are united in their shared rights and advocacy.

2.2 Sampling Procedures

A total of 143 participants were selected through total population sampling, a purposive sampling approach that involved analyzing the entire population to meet specific criteria (Canonizado, 2023). To be included in the study, participants had to meet two criteria: (1) they had to be members of the Program, Advocacies, and Governance for the Lumad Association of the University of Mindanao (PAGLAUM) for the academic year 2023-2024, and (2) they had to be native speakers of Cebuano. Consequently, all 143 members of PAGLAUM who met these criteria responded to the questionnaires and interview questions. It is important to note that non-Indigenous students and those who were not native speakers of Cebuano were excluded from this study, emphasizing the significance of the Indigenous student community in this research.

The study was conducted upon obtaining approval. Before distributing the questionnaires, participants received a consent letter to ensure voluntary participation. The research strictly adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173), safeguarding respondent confidentiality. All data were securely stored, not shared on any platform, and handled with care. Once the required responses were collected, the results were compiled, analyzed, and forwarded to the data analyst and statistician.

2.3 Research Instruments

Data were carefully collected using paper-based survey questionnaires and recorded interviews. The first questionnaire, the Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity (MEIM) by Phinney (1992), was specifically designed to assess cultural identity, comprising four key indicators: ethnic identity (7 items), ethnic behavior (2 items), other-group orientation (6 items), and affirmation/belonging (5 items) (see Appendix A). The second questionnaire, derived from a standardized survey template published by the University of Science Malaysia (Boonrangsri et al., 2004), focused on attitudes towards English. This section included three indicators: behavioral attitude (15 items), emotional attitude (15 items), and cognitive attitude (15 items) (see Appendix B). Both questionnaires were administered in printed form. After answering the survey, the participants were immediately interviewed for the qualitative phase of the study. The interview guide (see Appendix C) was developed by the researchers and validated by field experts. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet and private space. With the participants' consent, each session was audio-recorded. All audio files were securely stored, and the interviews were later transcribed word for word (verbatim) to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the participants' responses.

2.4 Research Design

The research employed a convergent parallel design, a mixed-method approach that involved the simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative elements during the same phase of the research process, giving equal importance to both methods (Chidyau et al., (2021). The researcher independently analyzed the quantitative and qualitative components before interpreting the results. This design was chosen to ensure corroboration and validation by triangulating the methods and directly comparing quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings. This approach produced two distinct datasets, which were analyzed separately and then compared to derive meaningful insights.

In the quantitative phase of this research, a non-experimental quantitative design was applied, utilizing descriptive correlational research techniques. This approach is considered non-experimental because the study variables were not manipulated, and no random assignments were made for the respondents (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2018). Additionally, descriptive research aims to represent existing phenomena as accurately as possible. Unlike experimental research, which examines both current phenomena and those following a specific treatment period, descriptive research focuses solely on current conditions (Ntobo et al., (2018). The data in this study describe the cultural identity and Indigenous students' attitudes towards the English language, making this research design and technique appropriate for achieving the study's objectives.

In the qualitative phase of this study, a phenomenological approach was applied. This method aims to reveal the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it through the perspectives of those who have firsthand experience. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the meaning of these experiences, focusing on both the content of what was experienced and the manner in which it was experienced (Neubauer et al., 2019). In this study, the qualitative data examines Indigenous students' perceptions of their immersion experiences in the English language, making this research design well-suited to meet the study's objectives.

2.5 Research Procedure

In conducting the study, the researchers first secured a permission letter addressed to the head of PAGLAUM at the University of Mindanao, seeking approval to conduct a pilot test. A pilot test involving 30 students was conducted upon receiving the signed letter. Subsequently, a separate letter was sent to the dean, requesting authorization to proceed with the main study. With approval granted, the entire study was conducted, involving 143 students from the organization. Prior to distributing the questionnaires and conducting interviews, participants received a consent form to ensure voluntary participation, confirming no coercion was involved. Privacy was a primary concern, and all procedures strictly adhered to the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173). All responses were secured and treated with the highest confidentiality; completed questionnaires were stored privately and were not shared on any platform or device, nor disclosed to any unauthorized parties.

Moreover, to obtain qualitative data, participants were interviewed after completing the questionnaires. A sum of 143 students participated in these structured interviews, allowing for in-depth exploration of their responses. Once the required number of respondents was reached, the data was compiled, tabulated, and submitted to a data analyst and statistician for analysis and interpretation using appropriate statistical tools.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale, adopted from Phinney (1992) and Boonrangsri et al. (2004). The scale ranged from Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), to Strongly Disagree (1), and was consistently applied to both the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and the Attitude Towards English Questionnaire. This standardized scale allowed for a comprehensive assessment of Indigenous students' attitudes towards English within the context of their cultural identity. To interpret the mean scores, the following classification was used, based on established guidelines from the original sources: scores between 4.20 and 5.00 were considered very high, indicating that the attitude was consistently observed among respondents; scores from 3.40 to 4.19 were classified as high, meaning the attitude was generally observed; scores between 2.60 and 3.39 were categorized as moderate, suggesting the attitude was sometimes observed; scores ranging from 1.80 to 2.59 were labeled as low, indicating the attitude was rarely observed; and scores from 1.00 to 1.79 were considered very low, implying the attitude was never observed. This interpretation framework ensured a clear and systematic analysis of the research findings. For the quantitative data collected through the questionnaires, MS Office Excel was used for data processing, while SPSS version 24.0 was employed for statistical analysis. The quantitative research questions were addressed using descriptive statistics, presented as means and standard deviations. Additionally, Pearson Product-Moment correlation was used to examine relationships between the variables, and regression analysis was conducted to determine whether aspects of cultural identity significantly influenced Indigenous students' attitudes towards English.

For the qualitative data gathered through interviews, thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and insights that complemented the quantitative findings. According to Rosala (2022), thematic analysis provides a structured approach to organizing qualitative data by assigning codes to observations and quotations, allowing significant themes to emerge. Similarly, Perenara-Wilkinson (2024) emphasized that this method categorizes related information while also uncovering dominant ideas within the dataset, enabling researchers to derive meaningful conclusions. To ensure a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with all 143 participants after they completed the survey questionnaire. This approach facilitated a more nuanced exploration of their experiences and attitudes.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the data analysis in alignment with the sequence of the research questions, followed by a discussion of the findings.

3.1 Level of Cultural Identity

Table 1 presents the cultural identity levels of Indigenous students based on the first questionnaire which aims to assess cultural identity, and features the following indicators: ethnic identity, ethnic behavior, other-group orientation, and affirmation/belonging.

Table 1. Level of Cultural Identity

Indicators	Mean	SD
Ethnic Identity	3.55	0.51
Ethnic Behavior	3.68	1.04
Other-group Orientation	3.27	0.63
Affirmation/Belonging	4.33	0.85
Overall	3.67	0.53

The overall mean score of 3.67 indicates a high descriptive level, suggesting that Indigenous students generally uphold their cultural identity. This result aligns with Williams and Smith (2018), who found that a strong sense of cultural identity positively influences Indigenous students' attitudes to learning English. Similarly, Lucas and Villegas (2021) highlighted the role of cultural identity in fostering positive attitudes towards English learning, providing a hopeful perspective on their language learning journey.

The indicator *affirmation/belonging* achieved the highest mean score of 4.33, reflecting a very high level of pride and connection among PAGLAUM members to their ethnicity and cultural identity. These findings align with Colquhoun and Dockery (2022), who highlighted that feeling valued and connected enhances attitude for learning English among Indigenous groups, as cultural pride fosters identity and educational engagement. Similarly, Dedel et al. (2023) emphasized that sense of belonging fosters stronger social ties and enhances individual well-being, as suggested by the Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes the importance of group affiliation in shaping personal identity, while Odello (2019) noted that strong sense of belonging promotes positive self-identity, making them feel comfortable participating and engaging in English learning. Similarly, Chirkov (2018) revealed that affirming their cultural identity promotes a positive self-concept and views their culture as relevant to learning English.

The indicator *ethnic behavior* ranked second with a mean score of 3.68, indicating a high level of cultural identity among PAGLAUM members. This suggests that Indigenous students often exhibit ethnic behaviors, such as speaking their language, participating in cultural practices, and affiliating with ethnic groups. These findings align with Yoon (2020), who noted that embracing ethnic behavior and cultural aspects enhances the learning environment. Similarly, Lucas and Villegas (2021) emphasized that engaging in ethnic behaviors strengthens cultural identity and supports English language learning.

The indicator *ethnic identity* ranked third with a mean score of 3.55, indicating a high level of cultural connection among PAGLAUM

members. This suggests that Indigenous students strongly understand their heritage and actively explore their group's history, customs, and traditions. These findings align with Phinney and Ong (2022), who reported that individuals across ethnic groups show a high level of exploration, commitment, and affirmation towards their ethnic identity. Similarly, French et al. (2019) and Phinney (2006) emphasize that engaging in ethnic behaviors, such as maintaining traditional languages and customs, is key to preserving and shaping cultural identity.

Furthermore, the indicator *other-group orientation* scored a mean of 3.27, indicating a moderate level among PAGLAUM members. This suggests they sometimes engage in intergroup relationships, feel comfortable with diverse ethnic groups, and see the value in such interactions. While Liu and Ramirez (2022) noted that other-group orientation is not consistently observed, it is not consistently present in individuals. For instance, research conducted by Leanza et al. (2024) demonstrated that individuals with higher other-group orientation scores tend to exhibit more empathy and understanding towards diverse groups, fostering better social interactions. However, Smith (2019) argues that other-group orientation does not always lead to positive attitudes towards English, and Han (2022) warns that intergroup contact may risk cultural assimilation. Notably, 8 out of 10 Indigenous students felt excluded from other groups, resisting interactions that might overshadow their cultural identity. This highlights the need for more inclusive approaches to strengthen intergroup connections without compromising cultural heritage.

3.2 Level of Indigenous Students' Attitude towards the English Language

Table 2 presents the level of Indigenous students' attitudes toward the English language regarding behavioral, cognitive, and emotional attitudes.

Table 2. Level of Indigenous Students' Attitude towards the English Language

Indicators	Mean	SD
Behavioral Attitude	3.26	0.60
Cognitive Attitude	3.55	0.56
Emotional Attitude	3.55	0.65
Overall	3.45	0.55

The overall mean score of 3.45 indicates a high level of positive attitudes among Indigenous students toward the English language. This aligns with McKinley (2019), who found similar attitudes in New Zealand, where students viewed English as a tool for academic and social mobility. Likewise, Rahman and Singh (2022) observed that Indigenous students in Malaysia positively associated English with achieving educational and career goals. These findings emphasize the importance of respecting language diversity and providing proper support to help Indigenous students succeed in English language learning.

The indicator *cognitive attitude* scored the highest with a mean of 3.55, indicating that PAGLAUM members generally hold a positive attitude toward learning English. They recognize English as an essential goal for academic achievement. This finding aligns with Wei and Lee (2016) in Taiwan and Choi (2020) in South Korea, who also observed that for Indigenous learners, positive cognitive attitudes toward English can enhance their engagement and facilitate a deeper understanding of the language, allowing them to navigate both their cultural identity and broader societal contexts. Furthermore, Chen (2019) emphasized that a positive cognitive orientation toward English learning often reports increased self-efficacy and a greater willingness to participate in language learning activities.

The indicator's emotional *attitude* also scored a high mean of 3.55, indicating that PAGLAUM members generally hold a positive emotional attitude toward language learning and are often more motivated and engaged, which can lead to better educational outcomes. This aligns with Mitchell (2017), who found that emotional attitudes play a significant role in shaping language learning experiences, as learners who feel positively about the language are more likely to engage in learning activities and persist through challenges. Similarly, Adamina & Pozza (2021) observed that Korean students' emotional attitude who are studying English significantly influences motivation and a supportive emotional environment can enhance learners' resilience and reduce anxiety, further contributing to effective language learning. However, Chambers (2023) argued that Indigenous students' deep emotional attachment to their native language and culture can lead to conflict, as they may perceive English as a colonial language that undermines their identity and threatens their sense of belonging.

The indicator *behavioral attitude* ranked third with a mean score of 3.26, indicating a moderate level of agreement among PAGLAUM members that studying English helps build relationships and fosters a desire to speak English fluently. This finding aligns with Yang et al. (2023), who observed mixed attitudes toward English among Indigenous students. Paolini et al. (2022) noted that limited exposure and resources contribute to this moderate attitude, as many Indigenous communities have restricted access to quality education. Wilhelm et al. (2017) emphasized that positive attitudes toward English can improve academic outcomes and enhance the overall learning experience.

3.3 Correlation between Cultural Identity and Indigenous Students' Attitudes towards English

Table 3 presents the significant relationship between cultural identity and indigenous students' attitudes towards the English language among the indigenous students.

Table 3. Significance on the Relationship between the Cultural Identity and the Indigenous Students' Attitude Towards the English Language

Attitude Towards the English Language				
Cultural Identity	Behavioral Attitude	Cognitive Attitude	Emotional Attitude	Overall
Ethnic Identity	.280** .003	.275** .003	.421 .001	.344** .000
Ethnic Behavior	.067 .479	.180 .055	.116 .217	.120 .205
Other-group Orientation	.552** .000	.450** .000	.528** .000	.578** .000
Affirmation/Belonging	.072 .449	.252** .007	.322** .000	.239* .011
Overall	.368** .000	.421** .000	.529** .000	.490** .000

Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is a statistical measure that quantifies the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables, ranging from -1 to +1. A coefficient close to +1 indicates a strong positive correlation, meaning that as one variable increases, the other variable also tends to increase. Conversely, a value close to -1 signifies a strong negative correlation, indicating that as one variable increases, the other decreases. A coefficient around 0 suggests that there is no correlation between the variables. To assess the statistical significance of the correlation, researchers typically examine the p-value associated with the correlation coefficient. A p-value of less than 0.05 is generally considered statistically significant, suggesting that the observed correlation is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

As summarized in Table 3, the findings illustrate a moderate positive relationship between cultural identity and overall attitudes towards English, as indicated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.490$, with an accompanying p-value of 0.000. This means that as cultural identity scores increase among Indigenous students, their attitudes towards the English language also show an upward trend, supporting rejecting the null hypothesis. This observation aligns with the findings of Cummins (2019), who noted that a strong cultural identity can foster positive language attitudes, particularly among Indigenous groups.

When breaking down the correlations by dimensions of attitudes—behavioral, cognitive, and emotional—we find varied strength in the relationships with cultural identity. The emotional attitude towards the English language strongly correlated with cultural identity ($r = 0.578$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that students who feel a firmer cultural grounding will likely develop more positive emotional responses to learning English. This finding is consistent with research by Cakici (2018), which posits that emotional investment in cultural heritage enhances language attitudes. On the other hand, the behavioral and cognitive dimensions demonstrated moderate ($r = 0.368$, $p = 0.000$) and low correlations ($r = 0.421$, $p = 0.000$), respectively. This suggests that while a sense of cultural identity can positively influence these attitudes, the relationship is not as pronounced.

Furthermore, specific dimensions of cultural identity demonstrated varying impacts on Indigenous attitudes towards English. For instance, ethnic identity had a moderate positive correlation with behavioral attitudes ($r = 0.344$, $p = 0.000$) and emotion-driven attitudes ($r = 0.528$, $p = 0.000$), which implies that students who identify strongly with their ethnic culture tend to engage more positively with the English language. Conversely, affirmation/belonging ($r = 0.239$, $p = 0.011$) and other-group orientation ($r = 0.552$, $p = 0.000$) displayed low to moderate positive correlations, suggesting differing levels of influence based on individual cultural experiences. These findings support the theoretical framework established by Popescu and Pudelko (2024), indicating that an individual's cultural identity can profoundly inform their perceptions and attitudes toward language acquisition and usage.

3.4 Significance on the Influence of Cultural Identity and the Indigenous Students' Attitudes towards the English Language

Table 4 indicates the significance levels for the four indicators of cultural identity: ethnic identity, ethnic behavior, other-group orientation, and affirmation and belonging.

Table 4. Significance on the Influence of Cultural Identity and the Indigenous Students' Attitudes towards the English Language

Cultural Identity		Attitude Towards the English Language			
		B	β	t	Sig.
Ethnic Identity		0.171	.0.161	2.32	.070
Ethnic Behavior		-0.115	-0.219	-2.81	.010
Other-group Orientation		0.444	0.317	4.76	<.001
Affirmation/Belonging		0.203	0.511	3.82	<.001
R	0.709				
R ²	0.503				
F	27.6				
P	<.001				

The linear regression analysis was used to assess the significance of the influence of cultural identity on Indigenous Students' Attitudes towards the English Language. Table 4 indicates significance levels for the four domains of cultural identity: ethnic identity with a significance level of 0.070, ethnic behavior with a significance level of 0.010, other-group orientation with a significance level of p <0.001, and affirmation and belonging with a significance level of p <0.001. Therefore, affirmation/belonging emerges as the best predictor influencing the attitudes of Indigenous students towards the English language. The table also reveals that cultural identity accounts for only 50.3% of the influence on indigenous students' attitudes towards English, with the remaining 49.7% not being part of the current study.

The findings underscore the importance of affirmation and belonging in shaping Indigenous students' positive attitudes towards English. This supports Cervatiuc and Peirce (2019) and Epstein (2021), who highlight that cultural affirmation fosters belonging, improving academic success and personal growth. Similarly, Fatiha (2018) and Kesgin and Mehmet (2019) emphasize that embracing cultural identity enhances motivation and success in language acquisition, with affirmation and belonging aiding in understanding both the language and its cultural context (Lomi & Mbato, 2021). Educators should promote cultural exploration and address biases to foster inclusion.

3.5 Perception of Indigenous Students Regarding their Immersion Experiences in the English Language

Table 5 presents the emergent themes extracted from the cluster of interview themes relevant to indigenous students' perceptions of their immersion experiences in the English language. After gathering information from the participants, the researchers collected various perceptions of indigenous students regarding their immersion experiences in the English language. The emergent themes are power and prestige, personal growth, opportunity, ethnic pride, discrimination, diminished self-efficacy, and barriers to communicative competence. Each theme formulated from their experiences has shown positive and negative perspectives, which have been clustered accordingly.

Table 5. Perception of Indigenous Students Regarding their Immersion Experiences in the English Language

Emergent Themes	Cluster Themes	Formulated Meaning
Positive Perception	Power and Prestige	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Indigenous students admire the English language, which inspires them to excel in academic performance, especially with the support of their families. The IP students admired the English language as it transformed their lives. The English language equips the IP students to become articulate individuals.
	Personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IP students treated the English language as an avenue for self-improvement. The IP students become resilient and adaptable because of the English language. The IP students embrace the English language as it promotes cultural awareness.
	Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IP students see the English language as a provider to earn a living. The IP students see the English language as an avenue to cultural recognition. The IP students consider English as a tool for global information.
	Ethnic Pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IP students engage in English conversations respectfully yet remain true to their cultural identity. The IP students maintain their cultural identity while learning English.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IP students prioritize preserving and cherishing their cultural identity.
Negative Perception	<p>Discrimination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IP students experienced isolation due to pronunciation errors. • The IP students experienced being mocked as illiterate because of their cultural identity. • The IP students experienced discrimination due to their native language accent, which motivated them to learn English.
	<p>Diminished Self-efficacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IP students feel embarrassed whenever they speak English in front of the class. • The IP students feel worried and are not relaxed to speak English. • The IP students are anxious to express themselves using the English Language.
	<p>A Barrier to Communicative competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IP students cannot apply their language knowledge in real-life settings. • The IP students find distinguishing between "you're" and "your" hard because homophones are uncommon in their native language. • Indigenous students struggle to speak English fluently in school because they primarily speak Bagobo outside class.

Positive Perception. These emergent themes reflect students' favorable attitudes towards the English language, driven by themes such as power and prestige, personal growth, opportunity, and ethnic pride. Benson (2021) highlighted that a positive perception of English motivates students to learn more effectively, encourages active participation in learning activities, and fosters a conducive environment for better learning outcomes.

Power and Prestige. This pertains to how Indigenous students' appreciation of English for its ability to improve communication, often with family support. While some view English as a threat to their cultural identity, it also inspires them to excel. This aligns with Abacioglu et al. (2019) findings, which showed that Indigenous students, supported by their families, find strength in learning English, leading to greater participation and engagement in class. Power and prestige are described in the following excerpt:

I wholeheartedly appreciate the English language, as it is a constant source of inspiration. Through this language, I have been able to delve into various aspects of life and broaden my perspectives. Continuous learning and communication in English fuel excellence and allow me to embrace the diverse and enriching world that it offers, regardless of any preconceived notions about indigenous people. [P1]

The English language has been a source of constant inspiration for me. It has broadened my understanding of the world and equipped me with the tools to communicate ideas and thoughts effectively. This enriching experience boosted my passion to excel in my learning journey and become a more articulate individual. [P8]

I experienced judgments and received painful criticism because of how I speak English. I feel like they laugh when I talk in front. However, when I speak up about this to my parents, they make me feel encouraged and understand. From that support, the English language has become a transformative force in my life and instilled in me a deep appreciation and admiration for how the English language changed fear into courage. [P2]

From my experience with the English language, I felt that my classmates avoided me because of my identity, but my family encouraged me, so it elevated my skills and inspired me. This inspiration fuels my determination to excel in learning and effectively expressing my thoughts. [P5]

P1 and P8 appreciate English for broadening their perspectives and allowing exploration, despite societal views on Indigenous people. Similarly, P2 and P5 find motivation through negative experiences, supported by their families. This drive has helped them communicate effectively. Leung (2020) notes that family encouragement improves academic performance, while Shuey (2019) highlights how English proficiency boosts active participation in class.

Personal growth. This refers to how the English language fosters development by helping students improve, adapt, and understand diverse cultures. Participants noted that learning English enhances their proficiency, helps them overcome challenges, and enables them to adapt to new situations, driving continued progress in language acquisition.

Participants noted that immersion in English enhances understanding, empathy, and respect for diverse cultures, contributing to personal growth. Leong and Ahn (2022) found that Indigenous students with a strong cultural identity viewed English as a tool for growth, driven by past challenges. Faez and Peacock (2018) also observed that learning English exposes students to various cultures, deepening their understanding of their own cultural identity.

I experienced criticism sa laing tao tungod sa way of how I speak in English. Ang akong cultural identity naka apekto jud. Pero, tungod sa supporta sa akong pamilya, na change akong pag tanaw sa English language. I see it as an avenue to strive more. Gitudluan ko na atubangun ang mga pagsulay and dili mahadlok na magkamali. This has helped me become more resilient in other aspects of my life as well.[20]

[I have experienced criticism from other people because of how I speak English. My cultural identity affects it. Nevertheless, I see the English language as an avenue to strive more because of my family's positive support. It has taught me to face challenges head-on and not to be afraid of making mistakes. This has also helped me become more resilient in other aspects of my life.]

From my experience, despite the challenges because of my cultural identity, the English language enables me to access a wealth of knowledge and resources that have helped me grow personally and professionally. It allows me to reflect on improvement, so I started to participate in the English class. [6]

I have gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures. This has allowed me to connect with people from various backgrounds and has enriched my life in countless ways. I believe embracing other cultures is essential for personal growth, and learning the English language has been a crucial step in this process. [21].

P20 shares that despite facing criticism due to cultural background, family support has motivated her to view English as a tool for improvement and resilience. P6 highlights the personal and professional growth achieved through English, inspiring active participation in language classes. Similarly, P23 emphasizes how learning English fosters cultural understanding and personal growth, aligning with Kramsch's (2023) view that English learning encompasses appreciating diverse cultures.

Opportunity: Indigenous students see English as a tool for earning a living, gaining cultural recognition, and accessing global information. Learning English enables them to share their heritage, engage with a broader community, and stay informed. It also opens up job opportunities. Tom et al. (2019) emphasize that English helps Indigenous peoples advocate for their rights, connect with global institutions, and promote their culture.

English enables indigenous students to enhance their socio-economic status by providing better job opportunities and breaking the cycle of poverty. As Hermes et al. (2012) highlights, proficiency in English empowers them to challenge stereotypes and contribute to their communities' economic growth and development. Opportunity is described in the following excerpt:

In my first year in college, I struggled with the English language. My cultural identity held me back. However, when I applied for a job in a telecom company, I found out how important English is. From that, I took all the challenges positively. As a result, I was hired, and I am continuously exploring the English language as it helps me satisfy my household needs. [P27]

The English language has been a valuable opportunity for me. Mastering the language has allowed me to showcase my indigenous heritage to a broader audience and contribute to a more inclusive global community. I can engage with international institutions and advocate for my rights and culture by learning the language. Additionally, it has helped me access updated information and understand current events. English has also played a significant role in my job search, enabling me to earn a living and improve my socio-economic status. [P25]

P27 overcame cultural challenges with English in college, excelling in tele-company work to support his family. Similarly, P25 values English for sharing her heritage, accessing global opportunities, and improving her socio-economic status. Berryman and Richardson (2020) and Corrie (2023) highlight that Indigenous students who overcome language barriers achieve greater academic success and socio-economic mobility through English proficiency.

Ethnic Pride. This emergent theme highlights the value of balancing English proficiency with preserving cultural identity. Participants celebrate their heritage while mastering English, fostering community pride and belonging. Cummins (2019) supports "additive bilingualism," promoting English alongside native languages, while Pavlenko (2023) emphasizes using both languages to maintain cultural identity, viewing English as a tool rather than a replacement.

Kanang mag storyahanay og english ang akong mga amigo mag English pud ko pero kutob ra didto isip respeto ra, but akong pagka tribu wala nako gi salikway nagpabiliglig-on sa makanunayon.[P13]

[When my friends speak English, I join them only to show respect. However, I never forget my cultural identity and always hold them close to my heart.]

When I'm learning and using English, I constantly strive to maintain the integrity of my cultural identity and ensure that the language does not compromise it. [P17]

My cultural identity significantly impacts my attitude towards the English language. I want to preserve and cherish my artistic identity. [P9]

Because culture is critical to enhancing your own identity and encourages more practice in one's language and learning the English language. [P20]

P13 values speaking English with friends while preserving cultural identity. P17 ensures English use doesn't compromise their heritage. P9 emphasizes cultural pride's influence on attitudes toward English, and P20 sees cultural identity as motivation for language practice. These views align with Nova and Alcueres' (2020) claim that strong cultural identity fosters pride in one's heritage and encourages bilingualism.

Negative Perception: These themes highlight students' unfavorable attitudes towards English, influenced by discrimination, low self-efficacy, and communication barriers. Derakhshan et al. (2016) note that such perceptions can harm academic performance, personal growth, and future opportunities, leading to isolation and difficulties in cross-cultural communication in a globalized world.

Discrimination. This emergent theme reflects how participants experience discrimination while speaking English due to their cultural identity, often leading to exclusion or ridicule. McCarthy (2019) and Brayboy (2020) highlighted that Indigenous students are marginalized when their English proficiency is seen as inadequate, and they may encounter biases when their language use deviates from mainstream norms. Discrimination is described in the following excerpt:

For example, when you speak in front of people and don't pronounce it correctly, sometimes they isolate you because they think you need to improve your English. [P18]

When I moved to Davao City to continue high school, many stereotypes about my cultural background existed. They mocked me as illiterate simply because of my cultural affiliation. To prove them wrong, I had to show them that I am more brilliant and find a better way to do that than to out-master them in the English language. [P21]

Because of our native language, including accent and intonation, we are facing discrimination. This is why we are driven to learn English. [P37]

Indigenous students face isolation, ridicule, and discrimination due to their cultural identity and English proficiency. P18 felt isolated, P21 was ridiculed for their accent, and P37 was discriminated against for their native accent. Rahim et al. (2022) noted that pride in one's native language can coexist with discrimination, while Peng (2023) found that language-based discrimination harms confidence and hinders success.

Diminished Self-efficacy. This pertains to how Indigenous students often feel embarrassed, anxious, and lacking confidence when speaking English due to concerns about their accents, pronunciation, and grammar. This aligns with Stander's (2020) findings that disparities between their cultural-linguistic backgrounds and educational expectations contribute to reduced self-efficacy in English communication. Diminished Self-efficacy is described in the following excerpt:

Nahihiya ako everytime I speak English in front of my classmates. Hindi ko alam ano ang masasabi nila. [P25]

[I feel embarrassed every time I speak English in front of my classmates. I don't know what they might think.]

Everytime I speak English in front of others is ako ay worried and di ako gaano Maka relax. [P30]

[Every time I speak English in front of others, I am worried, and I cannot relax that much.]

I felt anxious about speaking English before my classmates because they might judge how I talked. [P12]

I need to be more confident speaking English in class due to my accent, pronunciation, and grammar. I am afraid that my grammar is wrong when talking to my classmates. [P3]

Indigenous students, such as P25, P30, P12, and P3, express feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, and lack of confidence when speaking English due to concerns about their accent, pronunciation, and grammar. Sleath et al. (2016) supports this, noting that native language competency may affect second-language proficiency. Differences between indigenous cultural identities and mainstream English-speaking norms can heighten feelings of fear and inadequacy, impacting their confidence and willingness to speak English.

A Barrier to Communication Competence. This concerns how Indigenous students face challenges using English in real-life situations, such as distinguishing homophones and communicating effectively due to their reliance on their native language. McCarty and Nicolas (2014) highlight those limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom hinder their proficiency and confidence in real-world contexts. This Communication Competence Barrier is described in the following excerpt:

Because I'm used to conversing in Bagobo, I find communicating with others when someone else is talking challenging. [P9]

Though I have a clear understanding about English Language but mahirap para sa akin gamitin ito kapag nakikipag-usap. [P11]

[Though I clearly understand the English language, I need help to use it when conversing with others.]

Because it's hard to communicate if you don't know your cultural language, it's okay to learn to speak English because it's so helpful, but it is challenging for me to talk in front of others. [P30]

Factors in using homophones, minsan pa nga ay nalilito padin ako sa "you're" and "your" at iba pa dahil hindi nakasanayan." [P34]

[Factors in using homophones: Sometimes, I still get confused with "you're," "your," and others because I'm not used to them.]

P9 and P11 struggle to use English in real-life settings due to their reliance on their native language. Similarly, P30 finds speaking English challenging, while P34 has difficulty distinguishing homophones. Khan (2020) notes that languages shape cultural identities but can also act as barriers, influencing how native languages are preserved or replaced over generations. Alfarhan (2017) adds that adopting a new language often creates a different sense of self, as natives adapt to the target language for practical reasons.

4. Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

Integrating quantitative and qualitative findings underscores an intricate relationship between cultural identity and Indigenous students' attitudes towards the English language. Quantitative assessments reveal a significant correlation between cultural identity and attitudes towards English, indicating that a more robust cultural identity corresponds with a more positive attitude towards English among Indigenous students. Qualitative insights, on the other hand, enrich this understanding by elucidating Indigenous students' perceptions of English as both a tool for personal and academic growth and as a potential threat to their cultural identity. Positive perceptions of English highlight its utility for accessing opportunities and engaging with broader society. In contrast, negative perceptions reflect deeply ingrained concerns about cultural preservation and resistance towards colonial influences. However, a thorough analysis reveals that a higher cultural identity correlates with a more positive attitude towards English and fosters a sense of empowerment and pride among Indigenous students. By embracing their cultural heritage while navigating the English language, Indigenous students can bridge cultural divides and express their identities confidently in both linguistic domains

However, this study has three primary limitations. The first limitation is the sample size and diversity. The research was limited by the sample size and geographic scope, which may not adequately represent the diverse experiences and cultural identities of all Indigenous students across different regions. Consequently, the findings might not be generalizable to the broader Indigenous population. The second limitation is the reliance on self-reported measures for assessing attitudes towards the English language introduced potential biases, as participants might have held back their true feelings due to social desirability or lack of awareness. This limitation could affect the accuracy of the relationship identified between cultural identity and language attitudes. The third limitation is the temporal factors. The study was conducted at a specific point in time, which may have influenced the participants' attitudes based on their current social, political, and educational contexts. Changes in societal attitudes or educational policies regarding Indigenous cultures and languages may impact future findings, potentially limiting the study's relevance over time.

Furthermore, this study revealed that Cultural Identity has a significant influence on the Indigenous students' attitude towards the English language. On this basis, future research could further examine the following: In statement of the problem 2, the behavioral attitude has a moderate descriptive level. Therefore, there is a need for a more culturally sensitive approach to teaching English as a second language to Indigenous students. The current education system often overlooks the cultural backgrounds of these students. As a result, they are forced to conform to a standardized and Westernized form of education. It can lead to feelings of cultural alienation and loss of identity, significantly impacting their attitudes towards the English language.

Moreover, educators must be trained to understand the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students and incorporate their cultural heritage into the curriculum. This can be done by including Indigenous literature, history, and language in the English language curriculum. The other-group orientation had a moderate descriptive level. Thus, the schools should create a safe and inclusive learning environment for Indigenous students. Therefore, it is essential to foster a culture of respect and understanding in the classroom, where Indigenous students feel comfortable expressing their cultural identity without fear of judgment. Parental involvement in a student's education is essential. This can be done through workshops, cultural exchange programs, and involving parents in decision-making processes. Providing additional resources and support for Indigenous students to excel in English is essential. Schools and educational institutions should provide adequate support such as scholarships, tutoring, and mentorship programs to help these students succeed. Lastly, the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) should review the activation of PAGLAUM in order to revive the inclusivity for Indigenous students at the University of Mindanao. Thus, the institution should acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of cultures and languages by organizing cultural events, language classes, and providing opportunities for students to share their cultural traditions with their peers.

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Authors' contributions

Maria Shiela Reyes initiated the study by identifying the research topic, drawing from her perspective as an indigenous student, and took primary responsibility for managing the project throughout its course. Jamaica Postrano and Naiah Brodree Adubal were responsible for data collection, processing, and analysis, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data. Finally, Dr. Cristy Grace A. Ngo provided supervision and guidance during all phases of the research, contributed significantly to the development of the methodology, and was involved in drafting and critically revising the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Appendix A

A Survey Questionnaire for Cultural Identity and Indigenous Students’ Attitude towards English Language

Dear Respondents,

The purpose of this survey is to identify the significant relationship between cultural identity and Indigenous students’ attitudes towards English language. Your identity and responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Should you feel uncomfortable with the following statements, please skip them. Your participation is voluntary. Thank you and God bless!

Instruction: Please check the number that corresponds to your answer.

Score	Description	Narrative Description
5	Strongly Agree	Almost always true of me: there are very few times when I don’t feel this way.
4	Agree	Usually true of me: I feel this way more than half the time.
3	Neutral	Sometimes true of me: I feel this way less than half the time.
2	Disagree	Not often true of me: I feel this way less than half the time.
1	Strongly Disagree	Almost never true of me: I hardly ever feel this way

Part I. Cultural Identity

		Ethnic Identity				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.					
2.	I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.					
3.	I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.					
4.	I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life.					
5.	I have really not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group.					
6.	I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.					
7.	In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.					
		Ethnic Behavior				
		5	4	3	2	1
8.	I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.					
9.	I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.					
		Other-group Orientation				
		5	4	3	2	1
10.	I like meeting and getting to know people from other ethnic groups.					
11.	I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn’t try to mix together.					
12.	I often spend time with people from other ethnic groups.					
13.	I don’t try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups.					
14.	I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.					
15.	I enjoy being around with people from other ethnic groups.					
		Affirmation/Belonging				
		5	4	3	2	1
16.	I am happy that I belong to my ethnic group.					
17.	I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.					
18.	I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.					
19.	I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.					
20.	I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.					

Source: The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) - family & community services. (n.d.-d). https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/536755/MEIM-questionnaire-Authors-summary.pdf

Appendix B

Part II. Students' Attitude towards English Language

	Behavioral Attitude	5	4	3	2	1
1.	Speaking English anywhere makes me feel worried.					
2.	Studying English helps me to have good relationships with friends.					
3.	I like to give opinions during English lessons.					
4.	I am able to make myself pay attention during studying English.					
5.	When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.					
6.	Studying English makes me have more confidence in expressing myself.					
7.	Studying English helps me to improve my personality.					
8.	I put off my English homework as much as possible.					
9.	I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.					
10.	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.					
11.	I like to practice English the way native speakers do.					
12.	I wish I could have many English-speaking friends.					
13.	When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.					
14.	I do not feel enthusiastic to come to class when the English is being thought.					
15.	I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.					
	Cognitive Attitude	5	4	3	2	1
16.	Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.					
17.	Being good at English will help me study other subjects well.					
18.	I have more knowledge and more understanding when studying English.					
19.	I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.					
20.	Studying English helps me getting new information in which I can link to my previous knowledge.					
21.	I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.					
22.	Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams.					
23.	In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable.					
24.	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively.					
25.	I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.					
26.	Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts.					
27.	I am able to think and analyze the content in English language.					
28.	I am not satisfied with my performance in the English subject.					
29.	In my opinion, English language is difficult and complicated to learn.					
30.	English subject has the content that covers many fields of knowledge					
	Emotional Attitude	5	4	3	2	1
31.	I feel proud when studying English language.					
32.	I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.					
33.	I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.					
34.	Studying foreign languages like English is enjoyable.					
35.	To be inquisitive makes me study English well					
36.	Studying English makes me have good emotions (feelings).					
37.	I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language.					
38.	I enjoy doing activities in English.					
39.	I do not like studying English.					
40.	I wish I could speak English fluently.					
41.	I am interested in studying English.					
42.	Studying English subject makes me feel more confident					
43.	To be honest, I really have little interest in my English class.					
44.	Knowing English is an important goal in my life.					
45.	I look forward to the time I spend in English class.					

Source: Yampolsky, M. A., Amiot, C. E., & de la Sablonnière, R. (2016). The Multicultural Identity Integration Scale (MULTIIS): Developing a comprehensive measure for configuring one's multiple cultural identities within the self. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 22(2), 166–184. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000043>

Appendix C

Interview Guide

This consists of the interview guide questions that will be employed by the researchers during the in-depth interviews to unravel the indigenous students' cultural identity and their attitudes towards English language.

Research Question	Main Question	Probing Question
1. To determine the perception of indigenous students regarding their immersion experiences in the English language	1. What are the indigenous students' perceptions of their immersion experiences in the English language?	1.1. Do you think your cultural identity has influenced your experience of immersing yourself in the English language? - If not, why do you think that your cultural identity does not influence your experience of immersing yourself in the English language? 1.2. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced while learning English as an IP student? 1.3. Can you provide example situations where your cultural identity influences your attitude towards English? - Can you provide example situations in which your cultural identity does not affect your attitude toward the English language? 1.4. What are the factors of your cultural identity that influences your attitude towards the English language?