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Understanding classroom participation and identity construction of Indonesian EFL teachers as language teaching assistants in U.S. universities

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Abstract

Studies on the interplay of teacher identity and classroom participation have contributed significant findings in transnational settings. However, in-depth research on identity construction and classroom participation of Indonesian EFL teachers serving as Indonesian language teaching assistants in U.S. universities remains scant. This study aims to explore the identity construction of Indonesian EFL teachers as they enact their roles as Indonesian language teaching assistants in U.S. universities. The study employed a narrative inquiry, collecting data through semi-structured interviews. Three EFL teachers serving as Indonesian language teaching assistants with Fulbright scholarships for Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTA) participated in this study. Findings reveal that participants were actively engaged in all phases of instruction, including pre-teaching preparation, classroom interaction, and post-teaching reflection. Their collaboration with American supervisors and use of various digital tools demonstrates professional adaptability and commitment to effective language teaching. Additionally, participants constructed and negotiated their identities through daily interactions with students, colleagues, and members of the local community. Language use, cultural participation, and religious/national identity served as key dimensions in this identity construction. While participants

maintained their Indonesian and Muslim values, they also embraced certain American cultural norms, illustrating the dynamic interplay between cultural adaptation and identity preservation.

Keywords: classroom participation, community involvement, EFL teacher identity, Indonesian language teaching assistants, U.S. universities

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Introduction

Teaching the Indonesian language has been extensively conducted all over the world. In recent years, overseas institutions have widely made the Indonesian language one of the crucial languages to learn. Almost fifty-six countries have provided Indonesian language classes (Kusmiatun, 2016). Approximately 222 institutions all over the world have offered Indonesian language classes in either formal or informal settings (Rahmat, 2022). For instance, *Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing (BIPA)* or Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers classes have been available in 500 elementary schools in Australia (Kusmiatun, 2016). Furthermore, in the United States of America, the existing Indonesian classes in American host institutions have purposes such as to facilitate students with a personal interest in Indonesia, to pursue further study in Indonesia, and to develop in-depth knowledge as well as the culture of Indonesia.

The demand for Indonesians is increasing annually in the United States. One of the prestigious scholarships from the United States Department created a program called Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) to facilitate the urgency of the American people in learning other foreign languages, particularly the Indonesian language (AMINEF, 2022). Several universities in the United States offer Indonesian language learning, such as Yale University, Michigan State University, Columbia University, Arizona State University, Northern Illinois University, and many more. The language teaching competence in English and the Indonesian language is mandatory to be eligible for this FLTA program. In addition, the teaching assistants are required to collaborate with the

Native American supervisor, infuse the Indonesian culture in the class, act as professional students in the desired courses at American universities, and engage with local community activities (Istighfaroh et al., 2021). However, unlike other foreign language teachings, teaching the Indonesian language for foreign learners still gained meagre recognition in language studies and innovations.

For a language teacher nowadays, some can be a fundamental part in the pedagogical process and class management, like leadership identity (Egitim, 2025), the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) literacy in language education (Wang et al., 2025), and teachers strive to motivate students in segregated language learning settings (Woltran & Schwab, 2025). For BIPA (Indonesian language for foreign speakers), most of the recent studies have focused on the use of learning media, such as audiovisual media, to improve teaching competence for future BIPA teachers (Asteria, et al., 2025a), the mobile application for Indonesian grammar learning (Khasanah & Istanti, 2025), the repetition as a reading teaching strategy (Anjani & Febriyana, 2025), a field trip strategy to allow international students in learning Indonesian culture (Idawati et al., 2025) and a combination of communicative approaches to create students' interaction with native speakers (Islahuddin et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the former studies focused on community involvement for students, gained more attention, and boosted the students' language skills through direct engagement with local natives (Idawati et al., 2025) and allowed the students to have contextual learning with more real-life settings (Rumindah et al., 2025). By socializing with natives, the culture is gradually infused because several factors might not be taught by a teacher in an Indonesian classroom, which can cause nonverbal communication problems among learners, such as gestures, facial expressions, body language, and clothes (Amala & Asteria, 2025). However, the work that investigated Indonesian teachers overseas, as addressed in this study, is underexplored.

Many studies have been conducted regarding BIPA teachers' classroom participations in terms of learning media, teaching strategy, and community engagement to give students more opportunities in cultural learning within local educational contexts. Those scholarly works have left a gap in the research issue on Indonesian EFL teachers' experiences abroad, especially on their pedagogical performance as well as cultural exposure. This study is needed to inform English language teacher education and professional development by examining how Indonesian EFL teachers adapt their teaching identities while serving as Indonesian language teaching assistants in U.S. universities. Understanding their classroom participation and identity negotiation abroad offers valuable insights into cross-cultural pedagogy, reflective practice, and resource adaptation. The

findings of this study can guide ELT programs in preparing EFL teachers for international contexts, equipping them with skills to manage diverse classrooms and maintain professional identity. Such knowledge supports the development of more effective training curricula and institutional policies for teacher mobility and global engagement. Therefore, to address these issues, we propose two research questions in the present study:

(1) How do the participants enact classroom participation in U.S. universities as Indonesian language teaching assistants?
(2) To what extent do they construct identities while participating in U.S. universities as Indonesian language teaching assistants?

Literature review

Teachers' classroom participation

Classroom participation for a teacher is considered to be the teacher's cooperation as the most essential contributor to their teaching preparation program (Clarke et al., 2014). Furthermore, the teacher's engagement in classroom activities means the role of the teacher is to provide learning opportunities for students in a conducive circumstance from their point of view (Aziz & Kazi, 2019), and the classroom programs can only be effective when teachers can conduct the programs (Baker et al., 2010). In addition, a foreign language teacher plays a significant role in creative teaching implementation. Their good teaching is driven by the knowledge and teaching experiences, the self-motivation, and the technological mastery (Hidayat et al., 2023), such as the use of specific feature options on learning media that enhance students' English-speaking efficacy (Hartono et al., 2023).

Indonesian language (BIPA) teachers' classroom participation

The most current issues regarding Indonesian language (BIPA) teachers have focused on the specific teaching strategy (Anjani & Febriyana, 2025; Idawati et al., 2025; Laksono & Ismiatun, 2023), the utilization of learning media (Asteria et al., 2025a; Indriyani et al., 2024; Istanti et al., 2024), learning through local community exposure (Amala & Asteria, 2025; Rumindah et al., 2025; Yanti et al., 2025) or Indonesian language assessment strategy (Yulian et al., 2025). Another popular scholarly study on BIPA has investigated the teaching materials in the form of modules that infused the culture through folklores, traditions, habits, or social practices (Asteria et al., 2025b; Darmuki et al., 2022; Ilawati & Nurlina, 2025; Yulianeta et al., 2022), and the e-learning for beginner learners within the BIPA classroom (Panich et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the standardized BIPA teacher, through a particular training, has also been recently investigated (Amaliyah, 2025; Yulianeta et al., 2024). The BIPA teaching materials that emphasized the local culture also gained more attention, such as the use of local stories (Yuliva et al., 2025), the internalisation of Indonesian food (Saddhono et al., 2024), the richness of the tourism places of the Indonesian islands (Marsevani et al., 2024), and the relevance of contents and second language acquisition in terms of methods of empiricism, rationalism, constructivism, pragmatism, and hermeneutics (Tantri et al., 2025).

Those studies have explored the pedagogical process of BIPA teachers inside the classroom in Indonesian academic settings. However, there has not been a single study that unpacks the BIPA teachers in the context of U.S. higher education, with the role of teaching assistant supported by a Fulbright scholarship. Therefore, this study is to explore the personal narratives of Indonesian language (BIPA) teachers in American universities through the lens of classroom participation.

Community involvement for education development

The community involvement can also be set up in both educational and general settings (Clary & Snyder, 2002). For example, the teacher involvement in the school development has been investigated in Finland and Estonia (Eisenschmidt et al., 2025). The concept of community involvement in schools has positive to students, teachers, families, and society (Sanders, 2003). This community engagement can foster a deeper understanding of the key concepts, themes, and issues in the real field. For instance, a study revealed that the kindergarten teacher's positive perspectives on the significance of education, family, and society relationship have shown the teacher's initiative attitudes towards parent education, at-home learning support, and good communication with students' parents (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022).

The perspectives of community involvement itself consist of three primary contexts, such as family, school, and community, and each context brings different responsibilities that often overlap with each other (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). Most of the studies regarding BIPA teachers' community engagement focused only on the teachers' selection process, which emphasizes the pedagogical theories and practical exposures related to contextual teaching and cultural performances (Hardini et al., 2021), culturally bilateral relations, personality, and teaching competencies (Syihabuddin, 2022), and the cross-cultural understanding competence (Tiawati et al., 2024). Most of the former studies investigated the BIPA teachers in the context of education within the local Indonesian institutions, and the real involvement with the international

community experienced by BIPA teachers abroad, especially in American higher education, still remains unanswered till today. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap in this issue.

EFL teacher as an Indonesian language teaching assistant

The demand for Indonesian is annually increasing in the United States. One of the prestigious scholarships from the United States Department created a program called Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) to facilitate the urgency of the American people in learning other foreign languages, particularly the Indonesian language (AMINEF, 2022). This special program is eligible for Indonesian people who have experience in teaching either English or Indonesian for more than 2 years in their home country and are eager to teach the Indonesian language as well as its culture in the U.S. The term EFL Teacher, as an Indonesian language teaching assistant in this study, means an English teacher from Indonesia who gained the opportunity to teach the Indonesian language overseas. They should master both English and the Indonesian language since they are required to teach the Indonesian language using English as the instruction language. They will teach for two semesters and can take a role as a primary teacher or teaching assistant, depending on each university. However, regardless of their status, they are still guided by an American supervisor at the university. The details of their responsibilities are varied depending on the agreement with the supervisor and the university.

The literature reviewed provides a critical foundation for this study by highlighting key themes such as teacher identity construction, cross-cultural classroom participation, and the challenges of adapting pedagogical practices in international contexts. Prior research on EFL teachers' professional development and mobility underscores the importance of understanding how teachers negotiate their roles and identities in new social and institutional settings. These insights inform my study by framing the investigation of Indonesian language teaching assistants in U.S. universities within broader discussions of ELT pedagogy, intercultural competence, and reflective teaching practice. By building on this existing scholarship, our study aims to deepen our understanding of how Indonesian EFL teachers can be better prepared and supported for teaching experiences abroad.

Method

Research design

The method used in this research is qualitative with a narrative inquiry design. This design is selected to explore deeper individual life-changing experiences of EFL teachers serving as Indonesian language teaching assistants (TAs). At American host institutions, its focus is on the perspective of "human beings both live and tell stories about their living" (Clandinin, 2006, p.85). Furthermore, this research design is considered suitable because classroom participation is an experience for a teacher and plays a crucial role in the learning process as well as the success of teaching (Aliakbari & Heidarzadi, 2015), and the principles of community engagement were fundamentally situated by ideology, identity, and language. For instance, the narrative inquiry was also employed in the previous study by Darvin and Norton (2015). To reveal the stories of two immigrants in the context of community involvement. Other studies also used narrative inquiry to explore the stories of five EFL learners in classroom participation at an intensive English course (Ubaidillah et al., 2025) and to investigate the experiences of classroom participation and community of practice for disabled students (Sudarwati et al., 2022). Therefore, this method focused on describing diverse experiences based on particular perspectives and a typical day from Indonesian language (BIPA) teachers in U.S. universities. Furthermore, a similar issue of university members who get exposed to community involvement practices and projects in their higher education using a qualitative method has been investigated (Montt-Blanchard et al., 2023), and the teacher's classroom instruction in a language pedagogical setting has been explored through a qualitative research method (Nasir et al., 2019).

Participants

The participants were recruited through the Fulbright alumni social media. This is done by finding and inviting the participants to take part in the study by using online platforms or groups specifically for former Fulbright program participants. These social media spaces—like Fulbright alumni Facebook groups, LinkedIn networks, or WhatsApp alumni groups—helped us to identify and contact individuals who had the right background or experience for the study, ensuring a relevant and targeted pool of participants. There are three EFL teachers, as Indonesian language teaching assistants from Fulbright, who are involved in this study as research participants. These participants were chosen by a demographic questionnaire, as it had been conducted by a previous study (Butina, 2015), and this simple questionnaire was shared amongst twelve Indonesian Fulbright alumni from 2020 until 2022. The questionnaires were reviewed, and the participants with a wide range of diversity in experiences were finally selected. This purposeful sampling demonstrated maximum variation as

the simple questionnaires allowed sampling a wide diversity of participants (including gender, age, educational background, teaching experience, years in profession, U.S. host institutions, mode of teaching in the U.S., and role in the U.S. universities).

This sample size is not deliberately straightforward in qualitative research, as "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 10). However, prior studies used a sample size of 3 participants for narrative inquiry, which was the same as this research (Jiang et al., 2013; Zhang & Kim, 2024; Zhang & Wu, 2025), and one of those researchers stated that these three subjects can capture the complexity of teachers' experiences and perspectives on their professional identities (Zhang & Kim, 2024). Therefore, we determine a minimum sample size and add it if necessary to achieve redundancy. This means that if the initial interviews do not provide enough overlapping themes or insights, more participants will be added until the findings become consistent and no new information emerges. This ensures the study has enough data to be reliable. So, this study set the minimum sample of three Indonesian EFL teachers serving as Indonesian language teaching assistants with the most diverse experiences.

To address the research ethics, we gained consent from the three research participants. Although it is only in oral consent through WhatsApp since most of them were located in different cities and far from the author, they still gave permission for any information they provided. It indicates their agreement to have the data revealed. We also reaffirmed that the participants comprehended the aim of this study, and the ethical clearance was well maintained, and their rights as research subjects were assured. It was crucial to secure the privacy and confidentiality of participants in this research. Therefore, we make their names and host institutions anonymous, such as participants A, B, and C, and universities 1, 2, and 3. This was employed as a signal that we do take a consideration the issue of ethics in conducting narrative inquiry with human participants. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

All three participants faced different learning atmospheres in American university classes. The diverse backgrounds of their students, as well as the basic competence of language skills for each student, became highly challenging for them in implementing classroom participation as teachers. Situating under a classroom participation paradigm, the teachers' participation involves pre-teaching activity, teaching process, and post-teaching evaluation. To observe the society engagement, driven by Darwin and Norton (2015), this study also investigates the involvement of Indonesian teachers in American society in terms of language, culture as well and identity.

Table 1
Demographic information of the participants

Name	Teaching background in Indonesia	Academic background	Host institution in the U.S.	Mode of teaching	Role in the U.S. universities
Participant A (female, 32 years old)	English lecturer at a private university	Master's degree in English literature	University 1	Hybrid (online and offline)	Teaching assistant
Participant B (female, 26 years old)	English teacher in a private school	Bachelor's degree in English education	University 2	Online	Teaching assistant
Participant C (female, 27 years old)	English teacher in an informal school	Bachelor's degree in English education	University 3	In person	Teaching assistant

Data collection

In this qualitative research, the main type of data collection was interviews, as "data in qualitative research may include data collected through interviews and observations or from documents" (Butina, 2015, p. 191). It is very possible to collect qualitative data through "open-ended interviews" (Patton, 2002, p. 10), and this open-ended interview has been standardized and thoroughly prepared ahead of time. Each participant received the same questions in a certain sequence.

We did the interview through video call because the participants were living in different cities. Each participant was interviewed on a different day and would be lengthened if we need to confirm or clarify further information, as "interviewing a participant more than once is optimal because it provides an opportunity to reflect upon the first interview" (Butina, 2015, p.192). For instance, the first and second participants acquired twice interviews and the third participant got three interviews. The answer to interview is allowed in either Indonesian or English to make it more convenient for participants. The interview question guides were carefully developed and broken down from the research questions.

The research questions consist of two primary themes: classroom participation of EFL teachers as Indonesian language teaching assistant and their community involvement, and those themes were broken down into six sub-theme questions as follows: (1) 'How did you prepare your Indonesian language classroom before teaching at a US university?' (2) 'How did you think your

participation as a teacher in the classroom at a US university (ex., getting engaged with students, having a game during teaching, giving specific tutoring, etc.)?' (3) 'What did you usually do after teaching/post-teaching activity?' (4) 'In term of language ideology, how did you see yourself getting involved with society in the US?' (5) 'How did you engage yourself in the cultural activities of America?' and (6) 'From the view of identity, how did you make a relation with local society (ex. Friendship, association, etc.?'

To ensure the credibility (internal validity) in this study, we employed member-checking, which involves sharing interview transcripts and analytical notes with participants to ensure their main points are accurately represented. Additionally, we asked an expert in qualitative study, particularly in narrative inquiry design, to assess the quality of my data analysis. The expert reviewed our data analysis process to ensure it was thorough, credible, and aligned with narrative inquiry principles. They examined how we interpreted participants' stories, checked that my themes and conclusions accurately reflected the data, and offered feedback to improve clarity and rigor. Their assessment helped strengthen the trustworthiness and validity of the study's findings.

To ensure reliability, we employed an audit trail in this study. As such, we provided a detailed account of the procedures used for data gathering and analysis. For presenting external validity, the strategy of offering rich, thick descriptions was used. This term refers to a detailed and comprehensive portrayal of the setting and, specifically, the study's findings (Butina, 2015). We gave a thorough description of the interview participants and supported the research findings with narrative quotes as evidence. Another strategy we used was maximizing the sample variation, which we implemented during sampling selection to ensure a broader range of applicability.

Data analysis

After collecting data from the three research participants, the data of this study were analyzed using six thematic analysis stages (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, all authors undertake to begin with the data thoroughly by familiarizing ourselves with each participant's recorded Interview video by listening and rewatching many times. This means exactly listening repeatedly to the data as entire and subsequently paying attention to the participants' crucial stories (e.g., "*I developed the materials using the supervisor's created lesson plan"*). Secondly, we type the transcripts and read the interview transcripts several times to have a proper understanding of the narratives. Through this method, we could implement "an interpretive act" (Bailey, 2008). Thirdly, we re-read the written transcripts more than three times, as stated that "it is ideal to read through the entire data set at

least once before you begin your coding, as ideas and identification of possible patterns will be shaped as you read through" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

In this stage, formal coding was completed. Fourth, after reading multiple times, we make markings on any items of the participants' activities that are in pre-teaching, process, and post-teaching activities in the context of classroom participation. We also highlight the points of their community involvement to the local community. Fifth, after all the data were coded and collated, we later listed the different codes found across the data set as Braun and Clarke (2006) stated "the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes" (p. 89). Lastly, we take the codes into topics: pre-teaching, teaching process, post-teaching activities as points for classroom participation, and language ideology, culture, and social relationships as points for community engagement. Sample of data analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Sample of data analysis

Narrative quotes	Initial code	Themes
I developed the materials using the supervisor's created lesson plan. Fortunately, the lesson plan can be integrated with other resources in accordance with the students' abilities and is not inflexible.	Pre-teaching activity	Classroom participation
Not only teaching, I also had some roles in the class, such as becoming a discussion partner inside and outside the class, conducting the language table, and showing some of the cultures during the class.	Teaching process activity	Classroom participation
I lived with my roommate, who was a senior American citizen.	Language	Community involvement

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, we used member-checking in the data verification process (Tisdell et al., 2025). This was conducted in several steps: first, we invited the three participants to reconsider, assert, and give suggestions on the data. Second, we presented abundant and thick explanations regarding the results. Then, we asked the expert, who is an experienced researcher on narrative inquiry, to check the final manuscript. In this step, the expert reviews the whole sections in the paper and gives some necessary additions in order to construct a good scholarly work.

Findings

The participants' classroom participation in the U.S universities

Pre-teaching activity

Findings from this analysis revealed three points: pre-teaching activity, teaching process in the classroom, and post-teaching. Firstly, we focus on the preparation of Indonesian teachers ahead of class. The three participants' experiences in pre-teaching activities are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
The narrative quotes of the pre-teaching activity

Excerpts of participants	Sub themes	Themes
*I developed the materials using the supervisor's created lesson plan. Fortunately, the lesson plan can be integrated with other resources in accordance with the students' ability and is not inflexible, such as preparing a Google doc for learning. The introduction of extra learning tools like Kahoot, Learning Apps, and Padlet also helped to make in-class learning more engaging and enjoyable. (*Participant A in university 1)	Pre-teaching activity	Classroom participation
*I got the role as a teaching assistant. Before teaching, I made the lesson plan and prepared teaching media as well as the assignment for the upcoming class. After that, I always asked for my supervisor's feedback about the lesson plan and media. I also uploaded the teaching media to the learning platform (Canvas) so that the student could study first before the class (*Participant B in University 2)	Pre-teaching activity	Classroom participation
*In many ways, as a teaching assistant, first I discussed the materials with my supervisor, read and learnt again about the Indonesian language main module entitled 'Asyik', and made a PowerPoint. I also browse to find some techniques or activities to be implemented in the class (*Participant C in University 3)	Pre-teaching activity	Classroom participation

By holding the role of teaching assistant, participant A was required to discuss lesson delivery steps, additional learning aids, and the employment of various media with the supervisor prior to class in supporting the classroom activities. Participant B contended a similar narrative. She consulted with the American supervisor regarding her pre-teaching work, such as uploading the lesson materials to the university's learning management system. Participant C contributes to learning materials before teaching and explores teaching strategies prior to the class. As the narratives above reveal, it reveals that all participants

require discussing the classroom preparedness regarding the teaching materials, teaching media, assessment, and other teaching plans with their U.S. supervisor. Therefore, regardless of the teaching mode (hybrid, full online, or full offline), the point of pre-teaching activity highlights the collaboration between American supervisor and Indonesian language (BIPA) teachers in the context of teaching preparation.

In-classroom activity

As Indonesian language instructors, the participants implement various ways to run the Indonesian language classrooms. This Indonesian class was conducted in a different mode of teaching. For example, Participant A worked in a hybrid class, Participant B taught fully in an online class, and Participant C taught in a direct face-to-face class. The three participants' experiences of the in-classroom activities are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

The narrative quotes of the in-class activity

Excerpts of participants	Sub themes	Themes
*Our lesson was a lot of fun, even though it was online, since every student engaged in the discussion quite enthusiastically. They always read the material in advance of class, so they always have questions for me when we meet. They were also quite accommodating when I requested them to do something, such as when I asked them to join me in practicing how to make fried rice online from our various kitchens. They prepared all the ingredients I gave them, cooked as I instructed them, and had a good time. (*Participant A in university 1)	Teaching process activity	Classroom participation
*Not only teaching, I also had some roles in the class, such as becoming a discussion partner inside and outside the class, conducting the language table, and showing some of the cultures during the class. Unfortunately, because of the Pandemic, it was all done virtually (*Participant B in University 2)	Teaching process activity	Classroom participation
*I usually contribute some ideas about the teaching and activities before the class, like icebreaking, and give specific tutoring or answer the questions related to the Indonesian culture and grammar, which cannot be answered by my supervisor, who is American. (*Participant C in University 3)	Teaching process activity	Classroom participation

Participant A expressed positive feedback regarding her virtual class**.** She explained how she managed to organize the classroom effectively and highlighted the enthusiastic participation of students in various class activities. To illustrate, she referred to one of the classroom projects, namely an Indonesian food cooking class. Similarly, Participant B from University 2 shared her experiences in a screen-based Indonesian language class**.** She described her active involvement in discussion sessions and demonstrated her engagement in other activities, such as serving as a discourse partner for Indonesian language practice and showcasing cultural activities. In contrast, Participant C from University 3 reported a different experience, as she conducted an offline class**.** She had the opportunity to contribute her ideas related to recreational activities, provide private lessons in the Indonesian language, and assume her supervisor's role in addressing students' questions. Overall, the three participants demonstrated similarities in their engagement with Indonesian class activities, despite the different modalities of instruction**.**

Post-teaching activity

Afterwards, the three participants evaluated the teaching activities through various practices. It could be a classroom evaluation, teaching reflection, or further discussion with an American supervisor. The three participants' experiences in the post-teaching activities are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
The narrative quotes of the post-teaching activity

Excerpts of participants	Sub themes	Themes
*Usually, after instructing, I went over the homework/assignments they completed in class or at the prior meeting and made corrections. I should be able to identify each student's strengths and problems using positive and inspiring words because my supervisor always trained me to provide feedback qualitatively. (*Participant A in university 1)	Post-teaching activity	Classroom participation
*After teaching, I always did some reflections and took some notes on the activity done on that day. After that, I checked my students' assignments and uploaded the results to the platform. (*Participant B in University 2)	Post-teaching activity	Classroom participation
After teaching, I usually reflect on which activities run very well during the class and which activities and not if there are some questions which I cannot answer in class, I try to browse or ask some Indonesian colleagues. (Participant C in University 3)	Post-teaching activity	Classroom participation

Participant A turned over her class using the tasks to gain more insight into each student's weaknesses as well as strengths. Driven by the qualified feedback, participant A is required to analyze the positivity and negativity of each student in her class. In addition, participant B at Michigan undertook a self-reflection after the class in order to perform better teaching for next day. Then, she went to the students' assessment to evaluate her students and reported the score. Participant C reported the successful and failed teaching activities. Also, she would struggle to deepen her knowledge of the Indonesian language through literacy to explain questions from her students. Overall, it can be seen that participants did the post-teaching activity in the form of teaching evaluation or providing narrative feedback for students. The self-reflection and improvement were also implemented to analyze the strengths and weaknesses during the teaching process.

Identity construction of EFL teachers as Indonesian language teaching assistants in the U.S. universities

Language ideology

The participants were required to blend with American society during their scholarship program. The host community's participations were accomplished through different approaches: language, culture, and identity adjustment. The experiences of participants getting involved with American society in terms of language are shown in Table 6.

Participant A encountered a little complexity in oral English. She faced the issue in comprehending American English from a specific race. However, she tackled her English problem by enrolling herself in an international forum to interact with other overseas participants who need to make betterment in their English. However, participant B did not bump into a specific challenge in English and had limited opportunity to facilitate herself in getting in touch with Americans in person, but she still gained a few virtual involvements with local people with very limited access. Participant C was confident in her English and involved in various dialogues with American natives. However, the difficulty in language use appeared when meeting and talking with Americans, with considerably faster utterances.

The explanation above unpacked how the English skills the participants possessed have affected their interaction with U.S. people. Proper English assisted them in connecting with an international association or in getting in touch with the local neighborhood. However, the difficulty of English-speaking comprehension by American natives still existed, depending on the speaker. This

reveals that English as a language tool plays a crucial role in getting involved with the local community of the U.S.

Table 6

The narrative quotes of language use in community involvement

Excerpts of participants	Sub themes	Themes
When in state, I lived with my roommate, who was a senior American citizen, so I was forced to communicate in English. I happened to find the International Student Club, one of whose programs is to talk in English with native Americans and international students from various countries who were also struggling to improve their English. This forum helped me get to know common expressions/slang in America. *I don't mean to be racist, but it's the most difficult for me to understand when communicating with bus drivers/storekeepers who happen to be black Americans, because in my opinion, the accent and vocabulary they use are slightly different. Sometimes the way they speak is quite fast, so sometimes I don't understand what they are saying and ask them to repeat. Luckily, they want to do it. (*Participant A in university 1)	Language use	Community involvement
*Due to the Pandemic, there were not many in-person activities conducted, but I still managed to get to know some of my FLTA, Fulbright fellows, and housing community. We met like at our cultural night and outing (*Participant B in University 2)	Language use	Community involvement
*I think my ability in English helps me a lot to interact with American society, especially with my supervisor and my housemates. On some occasions, I had discussions with local people about our culture and customs. Of course, sometimes I have trouble understanding when speaking with an American who speaks so fast. (*Participant C in University 3)	Language use	Community involvement

Cultural activity

The EFL Teacher, as Indonesian language teaching assistants, were expected to take part in cultural activities or any local enterprises that can build a positive understanding of the host community. In the hope of language and culture exchange, the participants participated in the local bustles to create a mutual compromise between the two countries. The experiences of participants getting involved with the cultural activity are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
The narrative quotes of cultural activity in community involvement

Excerpts of participants	Sub themes	Themes
Because there was still a pandemic while I was in America, there weren't many community activities that I could participate in. However, while I was there, I met the International Student Club, which held a dinner together every Friday at a church in the city, where we usually talked about many things, from culture, language, to humanitarian matters. Apart from that, once a month, they also hold outdoor activities like hiking together to various mountains (Participant A in university 1)	Cultural activities	Community involvement
I always attended the online session of sharing the cultural agenda from my housing community, which was held every month. I also exchanged the culture with my students when we had a language table or a discussion session (Participant B in University 2)	Cultural activities	Community involvement
I always look for any activities in the U.S. like Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas because it is a new experience and opportunity for me. I tried to get involved in the local community, like talking to my boarding house owner, visiting some friends from America, talking with their families, eating on Thanksgiving, learning the history, and talking with people there. (Participant C in University 3)	Cultural activities	Community involvement

Participant A exposed some of her engaged-society activities during the Pandemic. She attempted to get acquainted with the best in her very limited access to connecting with local people, such as participating in a weekly dinner with another religion, having talks on different issues, and doing outdoor activities. Meanwhile, participant B spent most of her time on screen-time cultural activities. However, she still managed to create a cultural exposure in the language session. On the other hand, participant C demonstrated real cultural involvement. She could associate with American people through neighborhood events, try the cultural exposure in person, and succeeded in meeting the local friends face to face and had some talks with them. Overall, the participants experienced the diverse cultural activities depending on the time they were there and the opportunity to partake in the local community events.

Indonesian identity

Alongside the language and culture, participants gained opportunities to build friendships or get along with local society by considering their identity as Indonesians. Therefore, the participants get various exposures as Indonesians. Table 8 shows the narrative quotes of Indonesian identity in community involvement.

Table 8

The narrative quotes of Indonesian identity in community involvement

Excerpts of participants	Sub themes	Themes
Even though they (Americans and international students/staff) knew that I was from Indonesia and a Muslim (minority there), they treated me very well. Although there were a few others who had shown me an unpleasant look (Participant A in university 1)	Indonesian identity	Community involvement
I got the opportunity to become a member of PERMIAS (the association of Indonesian students in America), and we conducted a lot of in-person activities by paying attention to the health protocol. I also joined the housing community because I stayed in International House and sometimes joined the Muslim events. (Participant B in University 2)	Indonesian identity	Community involvement
I always implement the basic principles of being Indonesian, such as being polite, respecting each other, helping, understanding, and tolerating. I still hold my values as a Muslim. I can take American values too, like punctuality, openness, being more direct, and fairer. As Indonesians, we are not always direct and honest in saying what we want to other people, but living in America has taught me to be more honest and communicative. (Participant C in University 3)	Indonesian identity	Community involvement

Participant A revealed the positive treatment from colleagues and society, but at the same time, she also faced a negative view from a few of the local citizens. However, participant B showed a different view as an Indonesian Muslim living in the USA. This participant B could accentuate her existence through the Indonesian community in the United States and the neighborhood Muslim association without any issue. Participant C saw her identity through a different lens. She contended that identity tends to be the form of personality or character, and she believed she could adjust her principles as an Indonesian and Muslim by respecting other beliefs and values. However, she regarded it as fair to impersonate the American positive identity, such as objectivity, equality, and freedom. Overall, the participants always consider their identity as Indonesian as well as Muslim.

Discussion

The results of this study provide insights into both how Indonesian language teaching assistants enacted classroom participation in U.S. universities and the extent to which they constructed professional identities within cross-cultural academic contexts**.**

Regarding classroom participation (RQ1), the findings reveal that the participants organized and facilitated classroom activities in ways that promoted student engagement and interaction. Unlike prior research showing a gap between teachers' beliefs and classroom practice, where instruction often leaned toward teacher-centered approaches (Phan, 2018), the participants in this study enacted more student-centered practices aligned with their pedagogical beliefs. For instance, lesson planning was not only a preparatory tool but also a means to implement participatory activities, such as cultural projects (e.g., cooking classes) and interactive discussions. This is consistent with Pham et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of structured preparation in leading to effective language transformation. Additionally, assessment practices were largely formative, emphasizing feedback and reflection rather than summative evaluation, a finding that resonates with Bui (2023). Post-teaching activities, including student evaluations and teachers' reflective practices, also mirror Inderasari et al. (2024), who highlighted the significance of supervision and feedback mechanisms in supporting teacher competency and student development. Taken together, these findings show that the participants not only enacted classroom participation through structured instructional design but also actively facilitated learning spaces that encouraged student involvement and agency.

In terms of identity construction (RQ2), the study illustrates that participants continuously negotiated their professional and cultural identities within the U.S. context. While language barriers remained a persistent challenge in engaging with local communities, similar to the struggles identified by Febrianto and Priyana (2024), participants' efforts to navigate these limitations reflect a dynamic process of identity negotiation. Cultural adjustment emerged as an equally critical dimension, although this study diverges from Barlaman and Umamah (2025), who stressed international teaching practicums as pathways for cultural awareness and growth. Instead, the participants in this study reported difficulties in fully connecting with local people, suggesting that institutional and sociocultural factors influenced their capacity for cross-cultural participation.

Furthermore, the participants' self-positioning as Indonesian teachers in global classrooms contributed to the construction of their professional identities. Their experiences resonate with Triyoga et al. (2024), who described Indonesian

teachers abroad as negotiating their identities through emotional responses, teaching practices, and symbolic representations of "being Indonesian." In this study, such identity construction was evident in how participants presented Indonesian culture through class projects, embodied their roles as cultural ambassadors, and reflected on their teaching experiences within the global academic environment. Thus, their professional identities were shaped not only by classroom practices but also by broader sociocultural engagements, challenges, and adaptations in the host institutions.

This study suggests that the enactment of classroom participation and the construction of professional identities among Indonesian language teaching assistants are interrelated**.** Their participatory teaching practices provided opportunities for identity expression, while their identities as Indonesian teachers influenced how they engaged students, navigated challenges, and represented themselves in international academic settings.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how Indonesian EFL teachers, serving as Indonesian language teaching assistants in U.S. universities, enacted their classroom participation and constructed their professional identities in transnational contexts. The findings show that participants actively engaged in lesson preparation, classroom instruction, formative assessment, and reflective practices, while also negotiating their identities through intercultural communication, cultural representation, and community involvement. These results emphasize the dual role of teaching assistants as both educators and cultural ambassadors, contributing to the theoretical understanding of teacher identity as a sociocultural and dynamic process, while also offering practical implications for institutions to strengthen mentorship, intercultural orientation, and professional support. Since this study focused exclusively on U.S. contexts, relied on single-time narratives, excluded student perspectives, and did not differentiate between assistants with and without prior international exposure, future studies are encouraged to explore different regions such as Europe and Asia, employ longitudinal designs to trace identity development over time, incorporate learners' viewpoints to capture interactional dynamics, and conduct comparative analyses across varying intercultural backgrounds.

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