

DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS: UNPACKING CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH ENGLISH ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: In an increasingly digital and globalized world, English has emerged as a prominent tool for communication on social media, leaving a significant cultural footprint. This research investigates how English-speaking practices on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and online forums represent cultural identity. Through a qualitative methodology, including case studies and interviews, the study examines how individuals use English not just for communication but to express both individual and collective cultural identities. Key findings reveal that the use of English on social media is shaped by factors such as cultural context, platform dynamics, demographic backgrounds, globalization, and power structures. For example, users from non-native English-speaking countries often adopt English to signal modernity or global belonging while blending their native linguistic and cultural elements. The study underscores the importance of recognizing the role of English as a medium of cultural identity and provides practical recommendations. It suggests fostering cross-cultural dialogue and understanding through social media and calls for a deeper appreciation of the cultural diversity expressed through language in the digital age. These insights have broader implications for promoting cultural sensitivity and building inclusive global communication frameworks.

Keywords: *cultural footprint; digital age; english-speaking, social media, identity representation.*

INTRODUCTION

The increasing prevalence of English use on social media has become a significant cultural phenomenon. This practice facilitates communication and is a powerful representation of cultural identity in today's interconnected society (Meng et al., 2024). Social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter, offer global accessibility, allowing users to engage with diverse cultures and, in turn, reflect their unique cultural identities. However, representing cultural identity through English-speaking practices on these platforms introduces complexities (Olateju et al., 2024), particularly because users come from various cultural backgrounds. Therefore, English acts not only as a universal communication tool but as a vessel for the expression, negotiation, and sometimes contradiction of individual and collective cultural identities (Kumar, 2023).

Understanding these cultural imprints involves recognizing that the interaction of language and identity on social media is dynamic and continuously evolving due to changing cultural contexts (Al-saggar & Su, 2024). Words and phrases often shift meaning based on their usage within different social and linguistic contexts (Mukta et al., 2024).

Two significant challenges arise in studying this phenomenon. The first is representation. In the fast-paced social media environment, posts and interactions often present fragmented views, making it difficult to accurately represent cultural identity (Trevisan et al., 2024). This can sometimes lead to the perpetuation of stereotypes or generalizations. The second challenge is the issue of cultural influence and adaptation (Sharma, 2023). Social media provides a platform for cultural exchange, but this comes with risks of

homogenization or cultural dominance (Pratama, 2023). raising questions about who controls cultural narratives and how this affects identity construction(Lütge, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in examining the role of English in the representation of cultural identity, specifically within social media contexts (Iqbal, 2024). Although English is widely used, it is not monolithic; its usage varies based on ethnic, social, and geographical factors, making it an important medium for studying cultural diversity(Robert et al., 2024). Additionally, the study acknowledges the rapid evolution of language practices on social media, including the increasing use of slang, emojis, and other non-verbal digital cues in shaping cultural identity (Hu, 2024).

In addition, this approach also highlights the dynamic changes in language practices in the ever-evolving digital age(Havard, 2024). In a rapidly changing social media environment, language practices such as using slang words, emojis, and digital body language are becoming increasingly important in forming cultural identity(Eslami, 2024). This marks a shift from conventional communication practices to more innovative and sometimes experimental forms, which provide a solid foundation for research into how cultural identities are represented and negotiated through language in digital contexts(Domínguez Hernández et al., 2024). Lastly, this approach attempts to deconstruct cultural identity in an increasingly connected global context. By exploring how English-speaking practices on social media enable individuals to celebrate, maintain, or even change their cultural identity, we can better understand the dynamics of interculturality and power shifts in cultural representation (Ratri et al., 2024). It provides a new perspective on how individuals and cultural groups use social media to reinforce or respond to the dynamics of globalization in the form of their cultural expressions (Harklau, 2020).

This review critically examines how social media users adopt, modify, and perceive English to express and negotiate their cultural identities(Farida et al., 2024). It also considers how these practices influence perceptions of individual and collective identities, contributing to broader discussions about globalization and intercultural exchange(Lu et al., 2022). Thus, the study aimed to dig deeper into the cultural imprint manifested in English-speaking practices on social media, focusing on the

representation of cultural identity(Boonsuk et al., 2023). The study aims to provide insights into the role of language in sustaining and celebrating cultural diversity in contemporary society, offering recommendations for fostering more inclusive digital communication (Gopal et al., 2024).

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive analysis method within a qualitative framework to explore how cultural identity is represented through English-language practices on social media (Visalli & Galmarini, 2024). The research aims to describe phenomena related to language and identity as observed in various contexts. Primary data was collected through interviews and observations involving key informants, such as school principals, religious studies teachers, and students, providing insight into the dynamics of cultural identity representation in education. Secondary data was sourced from Islamic religious education textbooks, scientific articles, and relevant documentation to complement and support the primary findings. To ensure the sample's relevance, purposive sampling was used to select participants who directly engage with religious education and social media. This method allows for a focused analysis of those whose experiences are most pertinent to the research questions. The rationale for the sample size is based on the need to gather in-depth perspectives while ensuring manageable data for detailed qualitative analysis.

Data analysis involved several stages. First, the data from interviews, observations, and documentation were simplified to make interpretation easier. The data was then organized and presented in paragraph form, ensuring clarity and coherence. A thematic analysis approach was employed, wherein patterns and themes were identified within the data, and explanatory meaning was derived based on the contextual interpretation of the findings. Several strategies were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. Triangulation of data sources, including interviews, observations, and secondary documents, helped confirm the findings' consistency. Member-checking was used by sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify the accuracy of their perspectives. Additionally, peer debriefing with colleagues ensured that interpretations of the data

remained objective and aligned with the research objectives.

In summary, this study's qualitative approach enables a rich, context-driven exploration of the interaction between English-language practices and cultural identity, offering insights grounded in real-world observations and supported by rigorous analysis techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, it has been identified that speaking English on social media has a significant role in representing cultural identity in today's global society (Yeh & Mitric, 2020). The analysis reveals that the use of English serves not only as a means of communication but also as a container for expressing individual and collective cultural identity (Ibrahim, 2020). The representation of cultural identity through English on social media tends to be complex and diverse, influenced by factors such as ethnic, social, and geographical background. This shows that English on social media is not homogeneous but is understood and interpreted in different cultural contexts (Kiramba & Oloo, 2023). In addition, the study highlights the importance of understanding the cultural context surrounding English-speaking practices on social media. Major differences exist in how English is used and interpreted in different regions, countries, or social groups (Haque, 2023). For example, English used on social media in the United States may have a different feel than in the United Kingdom or Australia (Kurniasih, 2024). This understanding underscores the complexity of representing cultural identity through language, as English is often enriched with elements of local culture, including dialects, slang, and specific cultural references.

Furthermore, the results of this study illustrate that English-language practices on social media are often an arena for negotiation and transformation of cultural identity (Syahrin et al., 2023). Individuals can use English to express parts of their cultural identity that may not always be visible in everyday interactions or their mother tongue (Manu et al., 2023). This creates a space for individuals to express freely and adopt different aspects of their chosen culture, which can enrich their communication experience and identity in the digital world (Gema Febriansyah et al., 2024).

In a broader context, the results of this study highlight the importance of acknowledging cultural diversity in English-speaking practices on social media. The diverse use of English by individuals from different cultural backgrounds illustrates the plurality of cultural identities in today's global society. This shows that social media is not only a place to reinforce existing cultural identities but also a platform to celebrate and appreciate worldwide cultural diversity (Kircher & Kutlu, 2023).

However, it is also important to be aware of potential conflicts or tensions in appreciating cultural diversity. Using English in a particular cultural context can raise questions about cultural hegemony or cultural appropriation, where one cultural group may feel offended or feel that another group is taking over their cultural identity. Therefore, the need for dialogue and a deeper understanding of how English-speaking practices on social media affect the representation and perception of cultural identity becomes critical in promoting respect for cultural diversity (Khasawneh, 2024). In addition, the results of this study also show that English is not the only language used to represent cultural identity on social media. Other languages, both regional and foreign languages, can also be an integral part of the expression of an individual or group's cultural identity (Mohammad et al., 2023). This suggests that the representation of cultural identity in language practices on social media can be much more complex than just English alone and points to the need for more research into the role of those languages in shaping cultural identity in the digital age (Hughes & Jones, 2022).

Based on field research on English-speaking practices on social media: Field research was conducted by analyzing various social media accounts of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. One interesting example is the Instagram account of a teenager from Indonesia who is active in the international gaming community (Morady et al., 2023). Our analysis found that these teens creatively use English in their posts to interact with players from different countries and convey cultural references from Indonesia, such as traditional food or local traditions. This reflects how the individual dynamically blends English with his or her local cultural identity, creating a unique and diverse representation of Indonesia's cultural identity in the

global gaming environment (Karhunen et al., 2023). In addition, we also saw the Twitter account of a young writer from Nigeria who used English in his tweets to convey thoughts and experiences about African ethnic and cultural identity. In our analysis, we found that these authors often use English with elements of rich African culture, such as proverbs, folklore, or distinctive terms, to reinforce messages about pride in African heritage and the struggles of their communities. It illustrates how the individual uses English to reinforce and celebrate their African cultural identity on a global scale through social media (Lin, 2024).

However, we also find examples of tension in the representation of cultural identity through English on social media. For example, in a Reddit

discussion forum, we encountered a discussion that sparked controversy between users from the United States and users from Japan about using English in the context of Japanese culture (Louf et al., 2023). Users from the United States expressed dissatisfaction with how Japanese use English in certain contexts, considering it an inappropriate form of cultural appropriation. Meanwhile, users from Japan defended their use of English as a legitimate form of self-expression in the global sphere (Tan & Md Yunus, 2023). It shows how the representation of cultural identity through English on social media can generate tensions or conflicts between cultural groups, which require deeper understanding and open dialogue to be resolved constructively, as shown below:

Table 1. Results based on field research on English-speaking practices on social media

Examples of Social Media Accounts	Description	Key Findings
Instagram Account of a Teenager from Indonesia	A teenager active in the international gaming community	Use of English to interact with players from different countries. Use cultural references from Indonesia, such as traditional foods or local traditions.
Twitter account of a young writer from Nigeria	Young writers who convey thoughts and experiences about African ethnic and cultural identity	Using English with elements of African culture, such as proverbs, folklore, or distinctive terms, reinforces messages about pride in African cultural heritage and the struggles of its community.
Discussion on Reddit Forum on the Use of English in the Context of Japanese Culture Inggris dalam Konteks Budaya Jepang	Discussions between United States users and Japan on cultural appropriation	United States users question Japanese users' use of English as cultural appropriation. User Jepang membela their use of English as legitimate self-expression in a global scope.

Source: Field Observation Results

The table above summarizes findings from field research on English-language practices on social media by including examples of observed cases and key findings. From the above examples, it can be concluded that speaking English on social media reflects the diversity and complexity of cultural identities in today's global society. The use of English is a means of communication and a medium to convey individual and collective cultural identity. However, using English in certain cultural contexts can also raise questions about cultural appropriation or dominance, indicating the need for deeper dialogue and understanding in appreciating cultural diversity on social media. Further research into English-language practices on social media and their impact on the representation and perception of cultural identity is critical to understanding cultural

dynamics in this increasingly connected digital age (Shahid et al., 2024).

English-speaking practices on social media reflect the ever-changing cultural dynamics in an increasingly connected global society. The representation of cultural identity through English allows individuals to express and associate themselves with different cultural groups and reinforce or respond to the dynamics of globalization. However, in this process, there is a risk of inaccurate stereotypes or generalizations about a culture or group and the risk of homogenization or dominance of certain cultures over others. In addition, English-language practices on social media also reflect changes in communication practices and cultural identity in the digital age. Using slang words, emojis, and digital body language is becoming increasingly important

in forming cultural identity on social media, creating more innovative and experimental forms of communication. This marks a shift from conventional communication practices to more dynamic and diverse forms, which can reflect the cultural diversity worldwide (Melnyk et al., 2021).

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Several key factors emerged as key drivers in exploring the phenomenon of English-language practices on social media as a representation of cultural identity. First of all, the individual's cultural context plays a central role in the use of English. Ethnic background, linguistic diversity, and social norms in the neighborhood shape how individuals use English in their self-representation. For example, individuals with different ethnic backgrounds might choose to use English in a style that reflects their cultural influences, such as slang or typical idioms. Second, the importance of social media platforms in shaping English-language practices and representing cultural identity must be addressed. Each platform has unique communication dynamics, which can affect how users use and interpret English. For example, more visual platforms like Instagram encourage more language through in-depth captions or descriptions. In contrast, platforms like Twitter with character

restrictions tend to elicit a shorter, more direct communication style (Véliz-Campos et al., 2024).

Demographic factors also play a role in shaping English-language practices on social media. Age, gender, and social status can affect a person's communication style and language preferences. For example, studies have shown that younger generations are more familiar with slang and slang in digital contexts, while older generations may prefer more formal communication styles. Globalization and technology have greatly impacted how English is used and interpreted on social media. Advances in information and communication technology have expanded the reach of individuals and facilitated greater cross-cultural interaction. As a result, English-speaking practices on social media often reflect rapid cultural adoption and adaptation, with English increasingly integrated with elements of local culture. Finally, it is important to recognize that English-speaking practices on social media can also reflect the dynamics of power and dominance in society (Barrot, 2023). Some cultural or linguistic groups may have greater access to resources and representation, while others may face challenges in gaining visibility and recognition in digital spaces. Therefore, to understand this phenomenon thoroughly, a deeper analysis of the factors of power, equality, and inclusion in the representation of cultural identity through English on social media is necessary. Cultural footprints in the digital age and the representation of cultural identity in English-language practices on social media have become particularly relevant, given the rapid development of information technology and the widespread penetration of social media in everyday life. In this context, culture is no longer limited to a specific geographic location but is becoming increasingly globally connected through digital platforms. Let us discuss it further:

Cultural footprint in the digital age. Globalization and Cultural Interaction: The digital age facilitates quick and easy interaction between different cultures worldwide. People can easily access information, products, and cultures of different countries and societies through the Internet. **Cultural Content Creation:** Digital media allows individuals and groups to create and share content that reflects their cultural identity. This can be music, visual arts, writing, and so on. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are becoming the

main means to express culture creatively. Cultural Preservation: On the other hand, the Internet has also become a tool to introduce and preserve cultures that may be endangered. Through websites, blogs, and social media platforms, information about traditional cultures can be perpetuated and disseminated to future generations (V. Jain et al., 2021).

Representation of cultural identity in English-language practices on social media. Code-Switching: People often use English and other languages in a single content or conversation on social media, especially in a multicultural environment. It reflects the reality of globalization, where people often interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Use of Cultural Terms: In English-language practices on social media, there is the use of terms or phrases that refer to a particular culture, such as a particular food, festival, or tradition. It reflects one's pride and cultural identity. Pop Culture Influences: Pop culture from English-speaking countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, often influences how people speak and express themselves on social media. For example, slang or popular references from movies, music, or TV shows (Hidayat, 2024).

Impact and implications. Identity Reinforcement: Social media provides a platform for individuals to reinforce and celebrate their cultural identity. This can increase the sense of pride and solidarity within the cultural community. Intercultural Understanding: Speaking English on social media also facilitates cultural exchange and better intercultural understanding among individuals from different backgrounds. Challenges and Conflicts: However, using English and cultural representations on social media can also be a source of conflict or controversy if not properly understood or if distortions occur in certain cultural representations (Kumar, 2023).

Changes in communication patterns. Social media has changed how people communicate, including in the use of language. Communication through writing in English on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram often becomes dominant. This can change language patterns and communication styles in certain cultural contexts, especially among younger generations (Waqar et al., 2021).

Cultural identity negotiation. The use of English in social media is often the result of negotiating

cultural identity. Individuals can feel attached to their local culture and connected to the global culture offered by the English language. In this case, social media provides a platform for individuals to express multiple or hybrid identities.

Criticism of cultural homogenization. Although social media facilitates extensive cultural exchange, there are concerns about the cultural homogenization generated by the dominance of popular culture, especially those from English-speaking countries. This can threaten the diversity of local cultures and result in the emergence of a uniform culture worldwide.

The importance of cultural literacy. In the context of English-speaking practices on social media, cultural literacy—the ability to understand and appreciate the cultural context behind the language and symbols used—is important. This helps prevent misunderstandings and conflicts arising from cultural distortions or stereotypes.

Role of government and regulation. Governments and international agencies need to consider their role in regulating cultural content on social media to protect local cultural heritage and prevent the spread of derogatory or misleading content.

Innovation and collaborative creation. Social media is also a place for innovation and collaborative creation to strengthen cultural identity. For example, individuals can work with fellow artists or culturalists through YouTube or SoundCloud platforms to create content that creatively celebrates their culture.

Education and cultural awareness. Education about cultural awareness on social media is important for better understanding the implications of cultural representation in English-speaking practices. This can be done through school curricula, public campaigns, and training for social media users.

By considering these aspects, we can better understand the complexity of cultural footprints in the digital age and how the representation of cultural identity in English-speaking practices on social media plays an important role in building better intercultural relationships. More details about some related comments in the context of the discussion:

Code-switching and cultural identity: Further investigation of code-switching in English-language practices on social media reveals the complexity of

individual cultural identities. Code-switching, which uses two or more languages in a conversation, reflects a multicultural and multilingual experience. It can be a tool for individuals to express their cultural identities simultaneously, creating space for dynamic and flexible cultural integration. *Popular Culture Adoption and Local Response: Social media facilitates the adoption of popular culture from English-speaking countries worldwide. However, the response to this adoption may vary depending on the local cultural context. Some societies may welcome it enthusiastically, while others may oppose it as a form of cultural domination or cultural colonization. Creativity in Cultural Reinterpretation: Social media users often show creativity in reinterpreting cultural elements in new contexts. For example, memes, parody videos, or modified photographs can be a humorous or critiquing way to reflect and debate certain aspects of culture. It highlights the dynamic between global cultural influences and local creativity in shaping cultural identities in the digital age*(Etim-James & Ubi, 2024).

Use of Language as a Symbol of Cultural Ownership: Using English in language practices on social media can also symbolize belonging to a particular culture or social status. Individuals or groups proficient in English may be considered more modern or educated, while local languages or dialects may reflect proximity to traditional cultural roots. Growth of Virtual Communities and Identities: Social media also enables the growth of same-minded cultural identity-based communities in virtual spaces. These communities often provide emotional support, spaces to share experiences, and the maintenance of pride in shared cultural identity. It shows how social media connects individuals with global cultures and strengthens local and transnational cultural ties. By understanding and exploring these ominous, we can appreciate the complexity of cultural dynamics in digital contexts and see how the representation of cultural identity in English-speaking practices on social media reflects processes of adaptation, negotiation, and creativity in the face of the challenges of cultural globalization(S. et al., 2024).

The use of English in social media has become increasingly dominant worldwide, creating an interesting phenomenon regarding the representation of cultural identity. In this context,

code-switching, i.e., using two or more languages in a single conversation, is becoming increasingly common, reflecting individuals' multicultural and multilingual experiences. This phenomenon creates a space to express dual or hybrid cultural identities, where individuals can simultaneously celebrate both aspects of their culture. However, adopting popular culture from English-speaking countries raises questions about local responses to global cultural influences. While some societies may welcome it enthusiastically, others may oppose it as a form of cultural domination or colonization.

On the other hand, creativity in reinterpreting cultural elements in new contexts also occurs widely on social media, creating space for reflection, debate, and humor related to certain aspects of culture. This illustrates the complexity of how cultural identities are represented and negotiated in English-language social media practices, which reflect global cultural influences and strengthen local and transnational cultural ties. The cultural footprint in the digital age and the representation of cultural identity in English-language practices on social media reflect the complex dynamics of cultural globalization and information technology. While social media provides space for creative cultural expression and identity reinforcement, it is important to remember that cultural representation must be done with respect and understanding of the true cultural context (Robert et al., 2024).

Thus, speaking English on social media is a complex phenomenon reflecting the diversity and dynamics of cultural identity in today's global society. Various factors, such as individual cultural contexts, social media platforms, demographic factors, globalization, and power dynamics, play an important role in shaping how English is used and interpreted to represent cultural identity. In this context, speaking English on social media cannot be understood without the cultural, social, and historical factors surrounding it. Through English, individuals can convey their cultural identity to a wider audience. At the same time, such representations can also reflect the complexities in negotiating a constantly changing cultural identity. The importance of a deeper understanding of the dynamics of language and culture in this increasingly connected digital age. With a better understanding of English-speaking practices on social media and their impact on the representation

of cultural identity, we can acknowledge and appreciate cultural diversity in today's global society and promote better dialogue and understanding between different cultural groups (Kircher & Kutlu, 2023).

CONCLUSION

English-language practices on social media are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and technological factors that influence how individuals express and negotiate their cultural identity in a globalized society. While these practices allow for reinforcing and celebrating cultural identities, they also highlight challenges in accurately representing diverse identities within digital spaces. A deeper understanding of these dynamics is essential for fostering cultural diversity and promoting dialogue between cultural groups. Based on the findings, it is recommended that social media platforms develop tools that encourage more nuanced and diverse cultural expression. Educators and policymakers should also promote digital literacy programs that help users understand the implications of language use in cultural representation. This ensures that cultural identities are represented with respect and authenticity across global platforms.

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