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Local Dialects as a Bridge to Intercultural Communication: Migrant Students' Linguistic Adaptation and Social Integration in an Indonesian University

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran Bahasa Melayu Palembang dialek Lubuklinggau sebagai bahasa penghubung komunikasi antarbudaya di kalangan mahasiswa pendatang di Universitas PGRI Silampari Lubuklinggau. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian studi kasus yang melibatkan dua mahasiswa pendatang yang dipilih secara *purposive sampling* dari latar belakang budaya dan bahasa yang berbeda. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Bahasa Melayu Palembang dialek Lubuklinggau sangat bermanfaat dalam komunikasi antara mahasiswa pendatang dan mahasiswa lokal. Dialek ini memungkinkan para mahasiswa untuk membangun hubungan sosial, meningkatkan keterampilan berkomunikasi, serta menumbuhkan rasa kebersamaan yang lebih kuat di lingkungan universitas. Hasil penelitian juga mengungkapkan bahwa mahasiswa pendatang menghadapi berbagai kendala, seperti kosakata yang asing, perbedaan pelafalan, serta kesulitan dalam memahami tuturan yang cepat. Para mahasiswa menggunakan berbagai strategi adaptasi untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, seperti mengajukan pertanyaan, melatih kosakata, mendengarkan penutur lokal, dan berpartisipasi aktif dalam interaksi sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Bahasa Melayu Palembang dialek Lubuklinggau bukan sekadar sarana komunikasi, melainkan juga penghubung sosial menuju pemahaman antarbudaya, integrasi sosial, dan adaptasi budaya bagi mahasiswa pendatang di Universitas PGRI Silampari.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Antarbudaya, Dialek Daerah, Adaptasi Kebahasaan, Analisis Tematik, Lubuklinggau

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the role of Palembang-Malay-Lubuklinggau dialect as a bridging language for intercultural communication among migrant students at Universitas PGRI Silampari. This study employed a case study design involving two purposefully selected migrant students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The data was collected

through semi-structured interviews and analyzed by using thematic analysis. The result showed that PMLD language was significantly useful in the communication between migrant and local students. The dialect enabled students to develop social relationships, improve their communication skills and foster a stronger sense of community at the university. The results also revealed that migrant students encountered a variety of problems, such as unfamiliar vocabulary, different pronunciation, and problems understanding fast speech. The students used a variety of adaptation strategies to cope with these challenges such as asking questions, practicing vocabulary, listening to local speakers, and actively participating in social interactions. The research finds that the Palembang-Malay-Lubuklinggau dialect is not only a means of communication but also a social bridge to intercultural understanding, social integration and cultural adaptation among the migrant students of Universitas PGRI Silampari.

Keywords : Intercultural Communication, Local Dialect, Linguistic Adaptation, Thematic Analysis, Lubuklinggau

INTRODUCTION

Language is a major aspect of communication, especially in the diverse setting of universities. Universities are made up of students from diverse cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds who interact in academic and social settings. Martin and Nakayama (2010) define “intercultural communication as the process in which people from different cultures create and share meanings that are bound to culture.” Local languages in Indonesia are not only used for communication but also serve as a symbol of cultural identity and social relations.

One of the local languages that are often used in Lubuklinggau is dialect Palembang-Malay Lubuklinggau Dialect (PMLD) or Linggau-Malay dialect. Seli et al. (2021) states that PMLD is used as lingua franca in multicultural communities in Lubuklinggau where the city consists of people with different ethnic and language backgrounds. The dialect is employed in friendship, neighbourhood and educational settings as it is perceived as being flexible and socially acceptable. Furthermore, the society of Lubuklinggau is multilingual and the people use more than one language depending on the social context, solidarity, prestige, politeness, and communication domains (Seli et al., 2021). Therefore, PMLD has important role in communication and social interaction among people with different cultural background.

PMLD is often used by students of Universitas PGRI Silampari in daily communication in the classroom and outside the classroom. The local dialect can help migrant students to adapt to a new cultural environment. Students from different regions find the first stage of adaptation difficult as they face problems with local communication styles, vocabulary and expressions. The migrant students have frequent interactions with the local students and gradually learn and adapt to the dialect. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argue that the process of continuous social interaction fosters the development of natural communicative adaptability in individuals. Therefore, PMLD can be a bridge that can help in communication between the indigenous and migrant students in the university environment.

Language is also a bridge in intercultural communication. It helps people from different cultures to understand each other and develop social relationship. A common language can help reduce social distance and promote solidarity in multicultural communities. Language use is helpful for people to adapt in multicultural settings and to understand each other (Liu et al., 2015). For higher education, the use of PMLD can increase the acceptance and comfort of migrant students in interacting with local students. In addition, the language provides an insight into the local cultural values and communication norms and social practices that support intercultural understanding amongst students.

However, it is not always easy to adapt to a new linguistic and cultural environment. Vocabulary, pronunciation, ways of speaking, and cultural perceptions can differ and lead to misunderstandings in social interactions. Cultural differences in verbal and non-verbal communication are often factors affecting the challenges of intercultural communication (Qulub and Rusmawati, 2024). Hence, migrant students may feel anxious, shy or nervous to make mistakes in using the local language. These challenges can affect their confidence and engagement in both academic and social setting.

Furthermore, in intercultural communication, adaptation strategy refers to a set of acts, behaviors, and adjustments that individuals employ to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds; this encompasses adapting language style, selecting communication channels, managing nonverbal cues, and aligning with social norms and expectations (Liliweri, 2003; Samovar et al., 2017). There are four adaptation strategies including style adjustment (language use, intonation, rhythm, and contextual nonverbal expression), uncertainty management (passive, active and interactive strategy, cultural awareness enhancement (learning the culture value, norm and symbol of interlocutors), and digital identity management (content curation, platform selection and online personal adjustment) (Adde, 2025). In this study, only three strategies that align with real-context communication.

Therefore, this research is important because it looks at the role of PMLD in supporting the social and cultural adaptation of migrant students in the university environment. Previous studies have looked at intercultural communication and language adaptation. However, limited research has investigated the role of local dialects in fostering intercultural communication among migrant students in higher education, especially at Universitas PGRI Silampari. Moreover, little attention has been paid to the role of dialect in helping students of different cultural backgrounds to build social relationships, to improve communication effectiveness and to adapt to the culture. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine the utilization of PMLD in the daily intercultural communication of migrant students and its role in establishing social interaction and cultural adaptation in the environment of the university.

Although previous studies have extensively examined intercultural communication and cultural adaptation in higher education, less attention has been given to how locally rooted dialects function as communicative and social resources in facilitating interactions between domestic migrant students and local communities. In particular, the role of regional dialects in negotiating linguistic differences, developing social belonging, and facilitating everyday intercultural encounters within Indonesian higher education institutions remains

insufficiently explored. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how migrant students experience, negotiate, and adapt to the use of PMLD variety in their everyday interactions at a multicultural university in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employed a case study approach to explore the role of the Lubuklinggau dialect of PMLD as a bridging mechanism in intercultural communication among migrant students at Universitas PGRI Silampari. The case study approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to gain a holistic understanding of a phenomenon within its real life context. According to Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon the “case” in depth and within its real world setting. Similarly, Stake (1995) defines a case study as ”the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case: coming to understand its activity within important circumstances”. Creswell and Poth (2018) further explain that a case study involves examining a bounded system through extensive and in-depth data collection from multiple sources of information. In this study, the case focused on migrant students’ experiences in PMLD as a means of intercultural communication and social adaptation within the university environment.

The data in this study were collected through semi-structured interviews. This method was selected because it enables researchers to explore participants’ experiences in depth while maintaining alignment with the objectives of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that semi-structured interviews provide flexibility for researchers to obtain rich and meaningful data from participants. The interview questions focused on several aspects, including how PMLD was used by migrant students, how they communicated with local students, the significance of the dialect in facilitating social interaction, and the challenges they encountered during the adaptation process.

The primary data sources were migrant students at Universitas PGRI Silampari who came from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because they possessed firsthand experiences related to intercultural communication and language adaptation within the context of the study. According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling involves selecting information-rich cases that can provide valuable insights into the phenomenon being investigated. All interviews were conducted with the participants’ consent, audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed into written form to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the collected data.

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analytical process began with familiarisation, in which the researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This was followed by generating initial codes by identifying significant statements related to language use and experiences of intercultural communication. The codes were then organised into categories based on recurring patterns and similarities, which were subsequently developed into broader themes. The resulting themes represented the participants’ experiences regarding the use of PMLD as a cultural bridge, its contribution to

fostering social interaction, and the challenges faced by migrant students in adapting to a new sociocultural environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analysed interview data from two migrant students at Universitas PGRI Silampari using thematic analysis. The researcher repeatedly read through the interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. Key statements were identified, coded, categorized, and subsequently interpreted within various thematic areas related to intercultural communication and language adaptation.

The thematic analysis revealed five main themes: the migrant students' use of PMLD, the role of this language in intercultural communication, the challenges they encountered during adaptation, strategies to overcome communication barriers, and suggestions for improving intercultural interaction within the university environment.

The findings demonstrate that PMLD forms an important bridge for intercultural communication at Universitas PGRI Silampari. The use of the local language in daily life helped the students build social relationships, improve their communication skills, and develop a sense of acceptance within the university environment.

Chart 1 Language Family Tree of PMLD

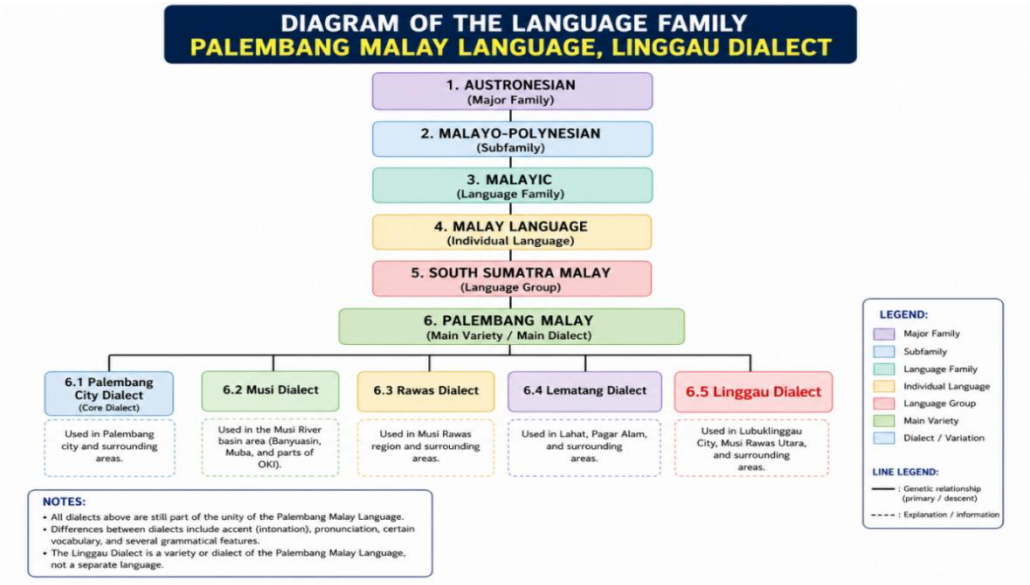


Chart 1 shows that PMLD belongs to the Malay language within the Austronesian language family. Several regional dialects spoken by the respondents, such as the Palembang dialect, the Musi dialect, the Rawas dialect, and the Lematang dialect, are also closely related to the Lubuklinggau dialect. According to Yasiroh et al. (2025), Malay variants generally share similar linguistic features because they belong to the same language family.

These similarities can be seen in certain vocabulary, sentence structures, and everyday expressions. Speakers of these dialects may therefore recognize familiar linguistic features, even if they notice differences in pronunciation or local vocabulary.

This linguistic similarity can help migrant students understand PMLD more easily and adapt to it in everyday situations. Although differences exist in vocabulary, pronunciation, and expression, shared linguistic roots promote smoother intercultural communication between students with different regional backgrounds. Prasatya et al. (2024) explain that languages of the same Malay branch tend to exhibit similarities in phonological and lexical features, which simplifies mutual understanding between speakers. Therefore, students from regions where related Malay variants are spoken may require less time to become familiar with the local dialect. This can contribute to more effective social interaction, reduce communication barriers, and foster the development of positive relationships between students in multicultural educational environments.

Overview of Themes

The thematic analysis revealed five main themes describing the experiences of migrant students using PMLD as a bridge for intercultural communication.

Table 1. Themes Identified from Thematic Analysis

Theme	Main Focus
Language Use Domain of PMLD	Solidarity domains in using PMLD within informal situation (domain)
Language as a Bridge of Intercultural Communication	The role of language in building relationships and social acceptance
Challenges in Adaptation	Difficulties in understanding and using PMLD
Adaptation Strategies	Efforts by students with a migration background to overcome communication barriers
Suggestions for Better Intercultural Communication	Recommendations for improving interaction between students

Table 1 provides a general overview of the topics that emerged from the interview data. Each topic is explained in detail in the following subsections, along with supporting insights from the experiences of the interviewees.

Theme 1: Language Use Domain of PMLD

The results showed that both respondents actively used PMLD in their daily interactions with local students. The language was primarily used in informal conversations, social contacts, and casual chats outside of class. Lubuklinggau was often combined with Indonesian to facilitate communication and improve comprehension. According to Rahmawati and Sari (2023), speakers in multilingual environments often use flexible language use, combining local languages and Indonesian to enable effective communication

and maintain social relationships. This practice allowed the respondents to participate more naturally in everyday conversations and connect with local students.

The respondents also became familiar with some commonly used expressions of the local students. Their language comprehension developed naturally through continuous interaction and observation within the university environment. Putri et al. (2024) explain that language acquisition in a social context is often promoted by repeated exposure to common expressions and direct interaction with native speakers. Through this process, participants gradually improved their understanding of local vocabulary, pronunciation, and conversation patterns without formal education. As participants became more familiar with the dialect, they gained more confidence in communicating in various social situations on campus.

The results also show that the use of PMLD not only served as a means of communication but also fostered the social integration of the participants. By using the local dialect in daily life, participants were able to participate more actively in conversations and build closer bonds with local students. Their willingness to use and understand the dialect reduced communication barriers and contributed to their sense of comfort in the university environment. This finding supports the argument of Seli et al. (2021), who established that the Lubuklinggau dialect functions as a lingua franca in Lubuklinggau and plays a crucial role in connecting people with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The dialect thus contributed to the integration of the respondents into the campus community and supported their intercultural communication experiences.

The respondents' experiences also demonstrate that language plays a crucial role in the process of adapting to a new social and cultural environment. As the students became more familiar with PMLD, they were able to act with greater confidence in their daily lives and participate more actively in campus life. Their growing knowledge of local expressions and communication patterns helped them understand the expectations and norms of the local community. Kim (2001) states that successful intercultural adaptation occurs when individuals gradually acquire the necessary communicative skills and cultural knowledge to function effectively in a new environment. In this study, the respondents' ability to use and understand the local dialect can be considered an important aspect of their adaptation to the multicultural university environment.The following table provides an overview of the contexts in which respondents used PMLD during daily communication.

Table 2. Solidarity Domain of PMLD

Participant	Solidarity domain of PMLD	Explanation
Respondent 1	Interaction with friends outside the university	Informal daily conversations
Respondent 2	Communication with friends from the same University	A mixed language of PMLD, Linggau dialects, and Indonesian language

As Table 2 shows, the PMLD was primarily used in solidarity domain in informal social interactions. The results suggest that the migrant students gradually adapted to the local language through repeated contact with local students in daily life.

Theme 2: Language as a Bridge of Intercultural Communication

The research showed that PMLD played an important role in fostering interaction between migrant students and students from other cultures. The respondents indicated that understanding and using the local language helped them feel more at ease, accepted, and connected to the university community. Gudykunst (2005) states that effective intercultural communication is fostered when individuals develop a shared understanding and reduce uncertainties in interacting with people of a different cultural background. In this study, the respondents' ability to understand and use the local dialects contributed to more confident communication and encouraged greater participation in academic and social activities on campus.

Furthermore, the use of PMLD reduced the social distance between migrant students and native students. Common language use fostered smoother communication and reduced the frequency of misunderstandings. According to Ting-Toomey (2012), language is an important resource for building interpersonal relationships and fostering mutual understanding in intercultural communication. The better migrant students mastered the local dialect, the better they were able to interpret messages, respond appropriately in conversations, and build positive relationships with local students. Consequently, the use of the dialect fostered the development of a more inclusive and harmonious communication environment within the university community.

The results also suggest that the use of PMLD strengthened the respondents' sense of belonging to the university community. Due to their increasing familiarity with the local language, they were able to participate more naturally in group discussions, informal gatherings, and daily interactions with local students. This increased participation enabled them to integrate better into campus social life and strengthened their interpersonal relationships. Ward et al. (2020) explain that successful socio-cultural adaptation is closely linked to an individual's ability to communicate effectively and build meaningful relationships in a new cultural environment. Therefore, the respondents' use of the local dialect can be considered an important factor in their social integration and adaptation to university life. The ability to communicate in the local dialect not only facilitated interaction but also fostered a stronger sense of belonging among students with diverse cultural backgrounds.

The findings further support the assumption that language acts as a bridge for intercultural understanding between students with different backgrounds. By using PMLD, respondents were able to communicate more effectively with local students and participate more fully in campus social life. Their familiarity with the local dialect enabled them to understand not only the linguistic aspects of communication but also the social significance of everyday conversations. Liu et al. (2015) state that language use promotes integration and mutual understanding in multicultural environments. In the context of this study, the use of PMLD facilitated mutual understanding between migrants and local students, thereby supporting positive intercultural communication and social integration.The social functions of PMLD, as determined on the basis of interview data, are summarized in the following table.

Table 3. Social Functions of PMLD

Aspect	Explanation
Social Acceptance	Students felt more accepted in the university environment
Strengthen the Solidarity	The language helped the students strengthen the solidarity tom the local language speakers
Effective communication	Having the mutual understanding in intercultural, formal and academic communication
Cultural Adaptation	The students adapted more easily to the local culture

According to Table 3, PMLD contributed not only to the effectiveness of communication but also to the social integration and cultural adaptation of students with a migration background. These results are consistent with the study by Rahmawati et al. (2021), which demonstrated that adaptation to the local language significantly reduces social distance and strengthens intercultural communication among students. Sari and Putri (2022) also explained that the use of the regional language helps students with a migration background feel more integrated and socially connected in multicultural educational institutions.

Theme 3: Challenges in Adaptation

Although PMLD facilitated communication, participants still experienced some adaptation problems. These were particularly noticeable when understanding unfamiliar words, pronunciation differences, and the rapid speaking style of the local students. Such challenges are typical of intercultural interactions, as language differences can create barriers to understanding and interpretation. As Samovar et al. (2017) explain, people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds interpret words, meanings, and expressions differently. Migrant students may therefore require extra time to adapt to local communication patterns and become familiar with common expressions.

These communication barriers sometimes led to confusion and misunderstandings during interactions. The results suggest that language differences remain one of the biggest challenges in intercultural communication between students with different regional backgrounds. In some situations, participants had to ask for clarification or use Indonesian to ensure that their message was understood correctly. Such difficulties often arise in communication between people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as differences in language use can influence the interpretation and understanding of messages. According to DeVito (2019), effective communication can be disrupted when conversational partners do not share the same language knowledge and communication conventions. Despite these challenges, the respondents' continued interaction with local students gradually helped them overcome communication problems and improve their understanding of the local dialect.

The results show that, despite the communication problems, the respondents did not cease their interaction with the local students. Instead, they gradually developed strategies such as observing conversations, asking for clarification, and learning new vocabulary

through daily communication. Over time, these efforts helped them become more familiar with the local dialect, and misunderstandings occurred less frequently. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) state that successful intercultural interaction requires individuals to become aware of linguistic and cultural differences and to continuously adapt their communication behavior to the social environment. Therefore, the respondents' willingness to learn and use PMLD played a crucial role in overcoming communication barriers and supporting their intercultural adaptation.

The challenges described by the respondents correspond with previous studies on intercultural communication among students with diverse cultural backgrounds. Difficulties understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication styles can hinder the effectiveness of interaction, particularly in the initial phase of adaptation. These challenges can cause migrant students to hesitate to actively participate in conversations, fearing that they might misunderstand others or be misunderstood themselves. Qulub and Rusmawati (2024) state that intercultural communication problems are often rooted in cultural differences that influence verbal and non-verbal communication in social interactions. In this study, such challenges were clearly present in the respondents' initial experiences, although continued interaction gradually helped them gain more self-confidence and assurance in interacting with local students. The challenges faced by the respondents are shown in the following table.

Table 4 Challenges Experienced by Migrant Students

Challenges	Description
Unfamiliar Vocabulary	Difficulty understanding local expressions and words
Pronunciation Differences	Problems pronouncing certain words in Palembang Malay and the Lubuklinggau dialect
Speaking fast	Difficulty understanding local learners who speak fast
Misunderstandings	Confusion due to different meanings or expressions

As Table 4 shows, the greatest challenges lay in language differences and communication styles. These difficulties hampered respondents' understanding during conversations, particularly in the initial phase of adaptation.

The results also showed that migrant students faced various linguistic challenges during the adaptation process, including unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation differences, and difficulty understanding fast spoken English. These challenges sometimes led to misunderstandings. This finding supports the study by Nugroho and Hidayati (2023), which demonstrates that language barriers remain one of the greatest difficulties faced by migrant students when adapting to a new socio-cultural environment.

Theme 4: Adaptation Strategies

The results showed that both respondents actively attempted to overcome communication difficulties through various adaptation strategies. The students learned the language by listening attentively to conversations, asking native speakers about unfamiliar

words, and regularly practicing vocabulary in everyday situations. These strategies enabled them to gradually improve their understanding of the local dialect and gain more confidence in interacting with native speakers. The respondents did not rely solely on formal education but also used everyday communication as a valuable source for language acquisition. This finding aligns with the view of Oxford (2017), which states that successful language learners actively employ various learning strategies to improve their language proficiency and communication skills in authentic social contexts.

Furthermore, active participation in social interactions helped the respondents deepen their understanding of local communication patterns and cultural expressions. Through frequent contact with native speakers, they became more familiar with common vocabulary, conversational norms, and culturally appropriate expressions. This experience not only improved their language proficiency but also increased their awareness of the social and cultural values embedded in the local dialect. The participants gradually learned how native speakers express agreement, humor, politeness, and solidarity in daily life. These experiences demonstrate that language acquisition is closely linked to social participation, as language skills are acquired through meaningful interactions with others. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that learning takes place through active participation in social practices and interactions within a community. This enabled the participants to communicate more effectively and integrate more easily into the multicultural environment of the university.

In intercultural communication, adaptation strategy refers to a set of acts, behaviors, and adjustments that individuals employ to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds; this encompasses adapting language style, selecting communication channels, managing nonverbal cues, and aligning with social norms and expectations (Liliweri, 2003; Samovar et al., 2017). There are four adaptation strategies for a successful adaptation in intercultural contexts, but there are only three strategies align with this research, including style adjustment (language use, intonation, rhythm, and contextual nonverbal expression), uncertainty management (passive, active and interactive strategy), and cultural awareness enhancement (learning the culture value, norm and symbol of interlocutors) (Adde, 2025).

The participants' adaptation strategies further emphasize the importance of communicative skills in intercultural interactions. Through increasing experience interacting with native-speaking students, they were better able to interpret meanings, respond appropriately, and adapt their language use to different social situations. This development helped them participate more confidently in academic and non-academic activities on campus. Their growing communicative skills reflect not only language acquisition but also the acquisition of intercultural communication competencies, which support successful integration in a multicultural environment. According to Chen and Starosta (1998), intercultural communication competence encompasses the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The respondents' efforts to learn and use the local dialect contributed to the development of their communication skills and facilitated their integration into the university community.

Furthermore, the results show that the respondents' knowledge regarding understanding and using PMLD did not improve immediately, but developed gradually

through continuous interaction with local students. The more frequently they participated in conversations and social activities, the more opportunities they had to observe language use in authentic contexts and apply newly learned expressions in daily life. This process enabled them to acquire both linguistic knowledge and practical communication experience. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explain that continuous social interaction naturally promotes the development of communicative adaptability, as respondents become familiar with the norms, behavior, and communication patterns of a new environment. The increasing ability of the respondents to communicate in the local dialect therefore reflects their gradual adaptation to the social and cultural environment of the university. The adaptation strategies employed by the respondents are summarized in the following table.

Table 5 Adaptation Strategies Used by Respondents

Strategy	Actions	Purpose
Style Adjustment	Asking Questions	To Understand Unfamiliar Words
	Actively participating	To improve understanding and cultural adaptation
Uncertainty management	Listening to native speakers	To improve comprehension and pronunciation
Cultural awareness enhancement	Learning and practicing language items (vocabulary)	Aware to the new culture and to build confidence in communication

Table 5 shows that migrant students used interaction-oriented strategies to improve their language comprehension and communication skills. Continuous practice and social participation proved to be important factors in the adaptation process.

The study also demonstrated that migrant students employed various adaptation strategies to overcome communication barriers, such as asking questions, practicing vocabulary, and actively participating in conversations. These strategies suggest that language adaptation develops through social interaction and repeated communication experiences. This finding is consistent with the research by Prasetyo and Lestari (2022), who emphasized that peer interaction and joint communication activities promote students' language acquisition and intercultural competence..

Theme 5: Suggestions for Better Intercultural Communication

The respondents indicated that the university should promote collaboration between local and immigrant students. Activities such as group discussions, joint projects, and social interaction programs were considered important for improving intercultural communication. These activities offer students with diverse cultural backgrounds the opportunity to connect regularly, exchange perspectives, and develop mutual understanding through shared experiences. Cooperative learning environments can also help reduce communication

barriers by encouraging students to work together on common goals. Johnson and Johnson (2009) state that cooperative learning fosters positive interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and mutual support among participants with different backgrounds. Expanding opportunities for collaboration can therefore contribute to more effective intercultural communication within the university context.

The respondents also emphasized the importance of an open communication environment in which students feel comfortable asking questions and learning from one another. A supportive atmosphere can encourage students to express their opinions, ask for clarification when misunderstandings arise, and explore different cultural perspectives without fear of negative judgment. Such an environment can also increase students' self-confidence to participate in academic and social interactions. Hyland (2013) explains that supportive communication environments foster participation, engagement, and the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships among students. An open and inclusive communication climate can therefore play an important role in promoting intercultural adaptation and strengthening relationships between native and immigrant students.The suggestions proposed by the respondents are presented in the following table.

Table 6 Suggestions from respondents for improving intercultural communication

Suggestions	Expected Benefits
Group Discussions	Promote interaction among students
Collaborative Activities	Strengthen intercultural relationships
Open Communication	Reduces misunderstandings
Stimulating Questions	Help students learn unfamiliar expressions

Based on Table 6, respondents emphasized the importance of supportive interaction and collaborative communication for improving intercultural relations. These activities can help students adapt more easily and reduce communication barriers in the university environment.

Respondents also suggested promoting collaborative activities and open communication among students with different cultural backgrounds. These findings support the research by Fitriani et al. (2023), which showed that collaborative interaction programs have a positive influence on intercultural understanding, communication confidence, and social integration in higher education. Collaborative activities offer students the opportunity to connect with people from different cultural groups and develop mutual respect through shared experiences. Such interactions can help students be more open to cultural differences and improve their ability to communicate effectively in multicultural contexts. According to Allport (1954), meaningful contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice and foster positive social relations, provided it is supported by appropriate social conditions. Promoting intercultural interaction programs can therefore contribute to stronger social cohesion among students with diverse backgrounds.

Overall, the results confirm that PMLD language serves not only as a means of communication but also functions as a social bridge that fosters intercultural understanding, relationship building, and social acceptance among students with a migration background. Despite initial adaptation difficulties, these students gradually develop communicative skills through continuous interaction, active participation, and support from local students in the university environment. The findings demonstrate that language plays a crucial role in facilitating students' ability to bridge cultural differences and establish meaningful social connections. By using a shared local dialect, students with a migration background can participate more actively in campus life and feel more integrated into the university community. Kramsch (1998) argues that language is closely linked to social identity and cultural participation, causing individuals to become more involved in the communities with which they interact. This suggests that the use of the Lubuklinggau dialect of the Palembang Malay language not only promotes the effectiveness of communication but also the broader process of intercultural adaptation and social integration.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that PMLD language serves as an important bridge for intercultural communication among the migrant students of Universitas PGRI Silampari. The results showed that the dialect is advantageous for communication, improves social relationships, increases students' sense of belongingness and contributes to cultural adaptation within the university environment. The migrant students faced the barriers of new vocabulary, differences in pronunciation and difficulty in understanding the fast speech. However, the migrant students overcame the barriers through active participation, expanding their vocabulary and working with local peers. Hence, dialect is not only a means of communication but also a tool of social integration and intercultural understanding for students with different cultural backgrounds. It is recommended that future studies involve a larger number of participants from different cultural backgrounds to obtain a broader understanding of the role of local dialects in supporting intercultural communication and adaptation in higher education settings.

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