

**MEDIATING COLONIAL MEMORY: AN
ETHNOGRAPHY OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS'
IDENTITY NEGOTIATION THROUGH ENGLISH-
SUBTITLED BUMI MANUSIA**

SKRIPSI



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**By:
Thoriq Audah
22120060**

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS EDUCATION
IKIP PGRI BOJONEGORO
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APPROVAL SHEET

The skripsi entitled “**MEDIATING COLONIAL MEMORY: AN
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is compiled by:

Name : Thoriq audah

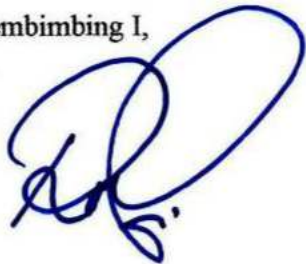
NIM : 22120060

Department : English Education

Has been approved by the advisors.

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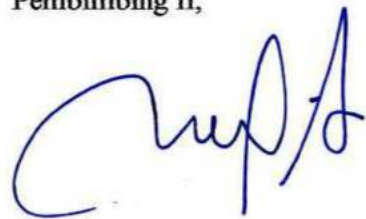
Pembimbing I,



Dr. Refi Ranto Rozak, M.Pd.

NIDN. 0702058403

Pembimbing II,



Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd.

NIDN. 0725058403

LEGITIMATION

The thesis entitled **“MEDIATING COLONIAL MEMORY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS’ IDENTITY NEGOTIATION THROUGH ENGLISH- SUBTITLED BUMI MANUSIA”**

is compiled by:

Name : Thoriq Audah
NIM : 22120060
Study Program : English Education

This is to certify that this skripsi has been approved by the Board of Examiners as the requirement for the degree of Sarjana in English Education Departement, Faculty of Languages and Arts Education, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro on 16 July 2026

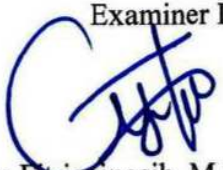
Bojonegoro, 16 July 2026

Chairman,

Dr. Cahyo Hasanudin, M.Pd.
NIDN. 0706058801

Secretary,

Ayu Fitrianiingsih, M.Pd.
NIDN. 0720049101

Examiner I,

Ayu Fitrianiingsih, M.Pd.
NIDN. 0720049101

Examiner II,

Oktha Ika Rahmawati, M.Pd.
NIDN. 0701108602

Rector,

Dr. Dra. Junarti, M.Pd.
NIDN. 0014016501

MOTTO

“Keep going whatever life throw at you, make it to fuel your dream so that it become reality.”

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Bojonegoro, 05 July 2026

The Writer



Thoriq audah

NIM. 22120060

DEDICATION

With deep gratitude and love, this humble thesis is dedicated to:

1. **Myself**, who endured exhaustion, doubt, and tears that were not always seen by others. Thank you for continuing to fight, for never giving up along the way, and for carrying yourself all the way to this point. A small achievement worth celebrating.
2. **My beloved mother**, whose prayers have never ceased in every night's prostration, and whose sweat and sacrifices can never truly be repaid by anything, including this thesis. Thank you, Mom, for your unconditional love and the trust you have always given me, even when I often stumbled and complained. This work is a small manifestation of the love you have always instilled in me.
3. **My beloved father**, Who my father, though gone, never faded the example you left behind. Your dedication and responsibility are my unshakable foundation, and now it is my duty to carry on and fulfill what you had hoped for until the very end.
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May all the kindness, prayers, and support that have been given be repaid with something far more beautiful by Allah SWT. This work is dedicated to everyone who has believed in me, even though I may not always be able to repay it in equal measure.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I, the undersigned bellow:

Name : Thoriq Audah

NIM : 22120060

Department : English Education

Faculty : Languages and Arts Education

In order to uphold academic integrity, sincerely and without coercion from any parties, I hereby declare that skripsi entitled:

**MEDIATING COLONIAL MEMORY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF
INDONESIAN STUDENTS' IDENTITY NEGOTIATION THROUGH
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Is the result of my own original work, and all sources of information used have been clearly cited in the reference list according to the scientific and academic code of ethics. I am aware that if any violations of scholarly ethics regarding to the authenticity of this work are found, **I personally** accept the consequences in accordance with the applicable regulations and I am prepared to bear legal sanctions

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The Researcher

A yellow rectangular official stamp from the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education (Kemendikbudristek) is visible. It features the Garuda Pancasila emblem and the text 'KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK' and 'METAL TEMPEL'. A handwritten signature in black ink is written over the stamp. The stamp also contains the alphanumeric code '17AOX054660756'.

Thoriq audah

NIM. 22120060

ABSTRACT

Audah, Thoriq. 2026. *From Mediating Colonial Memory: An Ethnography Of Indonesian Students' Identity Negotiation Through English-Subtitled Bumi Manusia* Undergraduate Thesis, English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts Education, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. Advisors: (I) Dr. Refi Ranto Rozak, M.Pd. (II) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd.

Keywords: *Keywords: decolonial pedagogy, English subtitles, Bumi Manusia, national identity, English learner identity, collaborative negotiation, postcolonial Indonesia*

This research is motivated by the tension between English as a global tool and its embedded colonial legacy, particularly among pre-service English teachers in Indonesia, using the film *Bumi Manusia* (2019) as a medium that presents Dutch colonial narratives visually and dialogically yet is accessed through English subtitles that potentially filter meaning, thus this study aims to examine how members of the United English Club (UEC) at IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro collaboratively negotiate discourses of colonialism and resistance in the film and how this negotiation process influences their national identity and identity as English language learners. Employing an ethnographic approach involving six core participants through observation, three Focus Group Discussions, reflective journals, and field notes, along with thematic analysis grounded in postcolonial theory, cultural memory studies, audiovisual translation studies, and sociocultural theory, this study reveals four key findings: English subtitles function as both a bridge and a barrier—what participants termed the "80-20 rule"; participants relocated the antagonist from individual Dutch figures to the colonial legal system, identifying "bureaucratic evil" and the "education trap"; resistance was redefined beyond armed struggle to include writing, strategic nativism, quiet survival, and constrained agency; and fire and cinematic semiotics became polysemic collective symbols of purification, truth, and the machinery of power, which in turn transformed national identity from textbook-based narratives toward critical ownership and English learner identity from pursuing native-like perfection toward critical effectiveness with a rejection of native-speakerism. This study concludes that collaborative and critical discussion of *Bumi Manusia* with English subtitles functions as a decolonial pedagogy that enables students to renegotiate historical memory and contemporary postcolonial identity, while contributing to postcolonial media studies, audiovisual translation studies, language learner identity theory, and Indonesian cultural studies, as well as offering practical implications for English language teaching, teacher education, curriculum design, university club management, and student self-directed learning.

ABSTRAK

Audah, Thoriq. 2026. *From Mediating Colonial Memory: An Ethnography Of Indonesian Students' Identity Negotiation Through English-Subtitled Bumi Manusia* Undergraduate Thesis, English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts Education, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. Advisors: (I) Dr. Refi Ranto Rozak, M.Pd. (II) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd.

Kata kunci: pedagogi dekolonial, subtitle bahasa Inggris, Bumi Manusia, identitas nasional, identitas pembelajar bahasa Inggris, negosiasi kolaboratif, Indonesia pascakolonial

Penelitian ini dimotivasi oleh ketegangan antara bahasa Inggris sebagai alat global dan warisan kolonial yang tertanam di dalamnya, khususnya di kalangan calon guru bahasa Inggris di Indonesia, dengan menggunakan film *Bumi Manusia* (2019) sebagai media yang menyajikan narasi kolonial Belanda secara visual dan dialogis namun diakses melalui subtitle bahasa Inggris yang berpotensi menyaring makna. Oleh karena itu, studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti bagaimana anggota United English Club (UEC) di IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro secara kolaboratif menegosiasikan wacana kolonialisme dan perlawanan dalam film tersebut dan bagaimana proses negosiasi ini memengaruhi identitas nasional dan identitas mereka sebagai pembelajar bahasa Inggris. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnografi yang melibatkan enam partisipan inti melalui observasi, tiga Diskusi Kelompok Fokus, jurnal reflektif, dan catatan lapangan, bersama dengan analisis tematik yang berlandaskan teori pascakolonial, studi memori budaya, studi penerjemahan audiovisual, dan teori sosiokultural, studi ini mengungkapkan empat temuan utama: subtitle bahasa Inggris berfungsi sebagai jembatan sekaligus penghalang—apa yang disebut partisipan sebagai "aturan 80-20"; Para peserta mengalihkan antagonis dari tokoh-tokoh Belanda individual ke sistem hukum kolonial, mengidentifikasi "kejahatan birokrasi" dan "jebakan pendidikan"; perlawanan didefinisikan ulang melampaui perjuangan bersenjata untuk mencakup tulisan, nativisme strategis, kelangsungan hidup yang tenang, dan agensi yang terbatas; dan api serta semiotika sinematik menjadi simbol kolektif polisemik dari pemurnian, kebenaran, dan mesin kekuasaan, yang pada gilirannya mengubah identitas nasional dari narasi berbasis buku teks menuju kepemilikan kritis dan identitas pembelajar bahasa Inggris dari mengejar kesempurnaan seperti penutur asli menuju efektivitas kritis dengan penolakan terhadap penutur asli. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa diskusi kolaboratif dan kritis tentang *Bumi Manusia* dengan subtitle bahasa Inggris berfungsi sebagai pedagogi dekolonial yang memungkinkan siswa untuk menegosiasikan kembali memori sejarah dan identitas pascakolonial kontemporer, sekaligus berkontribusi pada studi media pascakolonial, studi terjemahan audiovisual, teori identitas pembelajar bahasa, dan studi budaya Indonesia, serta menawarkan implikasi praktis untuk pengajaran bahasa Inggris, pendidikan guru, desain kurikulum, manajemen klub universitas, dan pembelajaran mandiri siswa.

PREFACE

First and foremost, the Writer expresses profound gratitude to Allah SWT for His grace and guidance, which enabled the completion of this undergraduate research proposal entitled "Mediating Colonial Memory: An Ethnography of Indonesian Students' Identity Negotiation through English-Subtitled Bumi Manusia." This research proposal is submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Sarjana Pendidikan degree.

The Writer extends sincere appreciation to the academic advisors, Dr. Refi Ranto Rozak, S.Pd., M.Pd., and Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, S.Pd., M.Pd., for their invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support. Deep gratitude is also conveyed to the Writer's beloved family, particularly parents, for their endless love, prayers, and sacrifices, as well as to all friends and colleagues who offered encouragement and assistance throughout this academic journey.

The Writer acknowledges that this thesis has limitations and welcomes constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement. It is hoped that this research will contribute meaningfully to the fields of English Education, Postcolonial Studies, and Media Reception in Indonesia, while serving as a useful reference for future studies.

Bojonegoro, 05 July 2026



Thoriq Audah
NIM 22120060

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

The film adaptation of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel, *Bumi Manusia* (2019), serves as a potent cinematic text that reconstructs the late colonial era of the Dutch East Indies. It critically engages with hegemonic colonial discourses such as racial hierarchy, legal injustice, and cultural inferiorization while simultaneously foregrounding discourses of resistance through intellectual awakening and national consciousness (Rijadi, 2022). The availability of English subtitles for this intrinsically Indonesian narrative adds a layer of complexity to its reception, transforming it into a transcultural object accessible to a global audience and, notably, to local viewers who encounter their own history through the prism of the English language (Nugroho & Hafizah, 2023).

This dynamic is particularly salient within academic communities like the English Language Club (United English Club) at IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, whose members are skilled in literary and cultural critique. For such a group, collective viewing and discussion of *Bumi Manusia* with English subtitles constitute a multifaceted process of collaborative meaning-making. Participants must simultaneously decode the film's visual narrative, its socio-historical context, and the linguistic-cultural mediation performed by the subtitles (Setyaningsih, 2022). This process is inherently dialogic; through discussion and debate, members co-construct interpretations of the film's themes, thereby shaping their understanding

of national history and identity (Pratama & Wijaya, 2023). As English Language Learners (ELLs), this activity positions them at a critical intersection: using a global language to engage with a foundational national narrative, which may reconfigure their relationship with English from a foreign skill to a tool for critical cultural articulation and global citizenship (Norton & De Costa, 2018).

Consequently, this study is compelled to investigate the discursive and identity processes within this specific community, examining how collaborative interpretation of an English-subtitled national film facilitates the negotiation of historical memory and contemporary identity.

B. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background described, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do members of the English Language Club (United English Club) at IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro collaboratively negotiate the meaning of the discourses of colonialism and resistance presented in the film *Bumi Manusia* through English subtitles?
2. How does the process of watching and discussing the film with English subtitles influence the participants' construction of national identity and their identity as English language learners?

C. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore how members of the English Language Club (United English Club) at IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro collaboratively negotiate and interpret the discourses of colonialism and resistance presented in the film *Bumi Manusia* through English subtitles.
2. To investigate how the experience of watching and discussing the film with English subtitles influences participants' construction of national identity and their identity as English language learners.

D. Significances of the Study

This research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions.

1. Theoretical Significance

1) For Post-Colonial Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study provides an empirical, "*on-the-ground*" case of how post-colonial subjects in the digital age actively re-appropriate colonial history through multimedia. It shifts focus from textual analysis to the reception and re-negotiation of colonial discourses by contemporary youth, contributing to a more dynamic understanding of post-coloniality (Rijadi, 2022; Susanto, 2023).

2) For Sociocultural Theory and Collaborative Learning

The research operationalizes Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in a transcultural context, demonstrating how complex historical meanings are socially constructed through peer interaction, mediated by

cultural tools like film and subtitles (Setyaningsih, 2022; Lantolf, Poehner, & Swain, 2020).

3) For Language Learner Identity

It enriches theories of language learner identity (e.g., Norton's 'Investment') by illustrating a context where learners invest in English as a medium for cultural and historical critique. This challenges simplistic binaries between local and global identities, showing how such investment can strengthen, rather than threaten, national identity (Norton & De Costa, 2018; Darvin & Norton, 2023).

4) For Audiovisual Translation (AVT) Studies

It contributes to AVT studies by prioritizing the receptor's perspective. Instead of assessing translation quality, it investigates how subtitles function as an active, mediating filter that shapes the interpretation of culturally dense narratives, adding a vital sociolinguistic dimension to the field (Díaz-Cintas & Nikolić, 2023).

5) Practical Significance

a. For Educational Practice (TEFL/CLIL)

The study serves as a model for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), providing educators with a framework for using local cinematic content with English subtitles to teach critical thinking, historical awareness, and advanced language skills simultaneously (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2020).

b. For Curriculum Development

Findings can inform the design of more engaging curricula for English Literature and Education departments, advocating for the study of local narratives through a global lens (English) to prepare culturally grounded and globally competent future teachers (Pratama & Wijaya, 2023).

c. For University Club Management

It demonstrates the value of academic clubs as laboratories for identity exploration and intellectual community-building, offering insights for structuring meaningful extracurricular programs that complement formal education.

d. For Students and English Language Learners

The research process can empower participants by raising critical consciousness about their history and their agency as language users, helping them reconceptualize English as a tool for articulating cultural identity on the global stage (Nugroho & Hafizah, 2023).

A. Definition of Key Terminologies

1. Collaborative Negotiation of Meaning This concept originates from sociocultural theory, which posits that learning and understanding are socially mediated processes. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that higher mental functions develop through interaction with more knowledgeable others, a process occurring within the Zone of Proximal Development. In the context of language and literacy, this is operationalized as collaborative dialogue, where learners jointly solve problems and construct knowledge (Swain, 2000). Donato (1994) further illustrated this through the concept of collective scaffolding, where peers in group settings pool their linguistic and intellectual resources to co-construct meaning they could not achieve individually.

For this study, Collaborative Negotiation of Meaning refers to the dialogic process through which members of the English Literature Club, engaging in

discussion and debate, collectively interpret, challenge, and build shared or contested understandings of the themes in *Bumi Manusia*.

2. Discourses of Colonialism and Resistance The term "*discourse*" is used here in a Foucauldian sense, referring not merely to language but to systems of thought, knowledge, and practice that constitute reality and power relations (Foucault, 1980). Colonial discourse, as analyzed by post-colonial scholars like Said (1978), is a system of representation that produces and legitimizes colonial power by constructing the colonized as "*Other*" inferior and in need of control. Resistance discourses, conversely, are the counter-narratives and practices that challenge this hegemony. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2013) describe resistance as the appropriation of the colonizer's tools (e.g., language, literary forms) to articulate opposition and envision independent identities.

In this research, Discourses of Colonialism and Resistance encompass the interrelated systems of power and counter-power presented in the film *Bumi Manusia*, including ideologies of racial hierarchy and cultural erasure (colonialism) and the opposing narratives of intellectual defiance, assertion of human dignity, and nascent nationalism (resistance).

3. National Identity

National identity is a form of collective identity rooted in the sense of belonging to a nation. Benedict Anderson (1983) famously theorized the nation as an "*imagined community*," constructed through shared symbols, narratives, and communicative practices. Smith (1991) further argues that this identity is often built upon a sense of common history, myths, and cultural heritage. In the context of post-colonial nations like Indonesia, national identity formation is deeply

intertwined with the narrative of anti-colonial struggle and the ongoing project of defining a unified self amid diverse cultures (Liu & Hilton, 2005).

For the purposes of this study, National Identity refers to the participants' sense of shared belonging to Indonesia, which is actively shaped and negotiated through their critical engagement with the historical narrative and symbolic content of *Bumi Manusia*.

4. Identity as English Language Learners

Moving beyond a static view of the learner, contemporary applied linguistics understands learner identity as multiple, dynamic, and socially constructed. Norton (2013) conceptualizes identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future." Central to her theory is the concept of "*investment*," which captures how learners' commitment to language learning is tied to their desire for symbolic and material resources and their right to speak. Darvin and Norton (2015) further frame this within an evolving model of identity, ideology, and capital, showing how learners navigate their positioning within structures of power.

In this research, Identity as English Language Learners refers to the participants' evolving, multifaceted sense of self in relation to English, encompassing their motivation, investment, perceived agency, and the complex negotiation between their Indonesian identity and their role as users of a global language.

5. English Subtitles

Within Audiovisual Translation (AVT) studies, subtitling is defined as "a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that aims to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image... and the information contained in the soundtrack" (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021, p. 8). However, subtitles are not merely a neutral transfer of meaning. Gottlieb (1992) classifies subtitling as a form of "*diagonal translation*," crossing both language and mode (from speech to writing), which inherently involves reduction and transformation. From a reception perspective, Pérez-González (2014) emphasizes that subtitles act as a "*mediating filter*," actively shaping the viewer's comprehension and cultural interpretation of the audiovisual text

For this study, English Subtitles are analyzed as this active, mediating filter a culturally and linguistically transformative layer that influences how the participants decode and interpret the dialogue and socio-historical context of Bumi Manusia.