

Negotiating Minangkabau Cultural Identity in Postgraduate Thesis Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the negotiation of Minangkabau cultural identity in postgraduate thesis writing through the perspectives of academic literacy, cultural discourse, and genre studies. In multilingual academic contexts, thesis writing functions not only as a disciplinary requirement but also as a site where writers reconcile local cultural values with global academic conventions. Despite growing research on writer identity, limited attention has been given to how Indonesian local epistemologies shape postgraduate genres. Adopting an interpretivist–critical paradigm, the study integrates Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Critical Literacy, and Genre Pedagogy within a qualitative design. Data were collected from selected thesis chapters and semi-structured interviews with Minangkabau postgraduate students and supervisors in West Sumatra. Analysis combined metafunctional linguistic examination, genre move analysis, and critical discourse interpretation. The findings reveal that identity negotiation occurs ideationally through the transformation of cultural philosophy into academic knowledge, interpersonally through culturally informed stance and politeness strategies, and textually through hybrid genre structures that merge institutional conventions with local narratives. These practices illustrate students’ agency in reshaping academic discourse while maintaining cultural authenticity. The study argues that postgraduate academic writing should be viewed as a culturally situated practice and recommends culturally responsive genre pedagogy that acknowledges diverse epistemologies within Indonesian higher education.

Keywords: Academic Literacy, Cultural Identity Negotiation, Genre Pedagogy, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Minangkabau Students

INTRODUCTION

The increasing mobility of academic discourse across cultural and institutional contexts has transformed postgraduate thesis writing into a complex site of identity negotiation. Rather than functioning merely as a technical academic task, thesis writing represents a discursive arena where students continuously negotiate cultural values, epistemological traditions, and disciplinary expectations. In multilingual societies such as Indonesia, these negotiations become particularly salient when students attempt to reconcile local cultural identities with dominant academic writing conventions. Within this landscape, Minangkabau postgraduate students in West Sumatra offer a unique case, as their strong cultural philosophy—such as *adat basandi syarak* and collective social identity—intersects with globalized academic literacy practices.

Scholarly discussions on academic writing increasingly highlight the role of identity construction as an integral dimension of literacy practices. Research has demonstrated that academic genres are not neutral textual structures but socially situated processes through which

writers position themselves within disciplinary communities. Genre scholars from systemic functional traditions by Halliday (1979) conceptualize genres as staged and goal-oriented social processes that mediate participation in knowledge production and academic communication. From this perspective, postgraduate thesis writing is not merely an exercise in rhetorical organization but a site where students internalize and reinterpret academic norms while simultaneously expressing cultural identities.

The notion of writer identity has received significant attention within applied linguistics and academic literacy studies. Peng's corpus-based investigations (2024) reveal how writers employ linguistic resources to construct disciplinary identity and negotiate authorial presence within academic discourse communities. Similarly, Juliaty (2019) conceptualizes writer identity through autobiographical, discursive, and authorial selves, illustrating how personal history, institutional expectations, and rhetorical choices shape academic writing practices. These perspectives emphasize that identity in writing emerges through dialogic interaction with institutional norms, feedback processes, and peer or supervisory relationships, reflecting Bakhtinian notions of dialogism in academic discourse (Peng, 2024).

Recent empirical research further indicates that identity negotiation becomes particularly visible among L2 graduate writers. Peng (2024) demonstrates that students actively reshape socially prescribed roles during composing and revising processes, revealing agency in negotiating disciplinary expectations and personal voice. Wahyuningsih et al. (2025) also highlight how academic literacy development is influenced by mentorship, institutional pressures, and cultural positioning within scholarly communities. However, while these studies emphasize literacy development and authorial voice, few have examined how local cultural identities explicitly intersect with thesis genre conventions in Indonesian postgraduate contexts.

Parallel to identity studies, the field of critical literacy has emphasized the importance of enabling students to question ideological assumptions embedded in texts and academic practices. Critical literacy frameworks encourage learners to analyze power relations, discourse norms, and sociocultural influences shaping academic communication. Hardianti (2024) suggests that critical literacy remains underdeveloped despite its importance for fostering analytical engagement with academic texts and discourse practices. Critical literacy also intersects with linguistic justice perspectives, which argue that academic writing pedagogy should recognize diverse linguistic and cultural identities rather than enforcing a singular normative standard (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Within genre studies, Ulyana et al. (2025) has demonstrated that postgraduate writers often adapt genre conventions pragmatically based on audience expectations and institutional contexts. For example, analyses of thesis abstracts show variations in rhetorical structure that reflect students' awareness of communicative purposes rather than mere deviation from standardized models. These findings align with Syahid (2019) indicating that academic genre practices are shaped by social, affective, and cognitive strategies adopted by novice writers as they navigate academic discourse communities. Such studies reinforce the view that academic writing is a socially negotiated activity influenced by cultural background, institutional culture, and disciplinary norms.

Moreover, scholars in composition and cultural literacy have long emphasized that literacy practices are inseparable from sociocultural identity formation. Research in culturally responsive literacy and discourse studies highlights how writers draw upon personal histories, cultural values, and linguistic repertoires when constructing academic texts. Studies examining autobiographical narratives in writing by Gilyard (1991) illustrate how students engage in

code-switching and identity positioning to balance institutional expectations with personal voice. Feminist and critical discourse traditions further demonstrate that writing functions as a space of resistance, empowerment, and identity negotiation shaped by broader sociocultural dynamics (Looser, 1993).

Despite extensive research on academic literacy, genre pedagogy, and writer identity, a significant gap remains in understanding how specific cultural identities—particularly within Indonesian local contexts—are negotiated through postgraduate thesis writing. Existing studies largely focus on English-medium writing, doctoral publishing, or general academic literacy development, leaving underexplored the cultural negotiation processes embedded in regional academic environments. In the context of West Sumatra, where Minangkabau cultural identity strongly influences educational practices and social interaction, investigating how students integrate cultural values into academic genres becomes essential for advancing culturally grounded literacy research.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the negotiation of Minangkabau cultural identity in postgraduate thesis writing through the lens of critical literacy and genre analysis. By exploring how students construct, adapt, or transform cultural meanings within academic discourse, this research seeks to contribute to applied linguistics scholarship in three ways. First, it extends identity studies by foregrounding local cultural dimensions within academic literacy practices. Second, it bridges critical literacy frameworks with genre-based analysis to reveal how power, culture, and discourse intersect in postgraduate writing. Third, it provides empirical insights that may inform culturally responsive academic writing pedagogy in Indonesian higher education contexts.

Ultimately, this study responds to the growing need to reconceptualize academic writing not only as a technical skill but as a socially situated practice embedded in cultural identity negotiation. Understanding how Minangkabau postgraduate students navigate the tension between cultural heritage and global academic conventions will deepen our understanding of multilingual academic literacy and contribute to the broader discourse on culturally inclusive research writing practices.

METHOD

This study is situated within an interpretivist–critical epistemological paradigm that conceptualizes academic writing as a socially mediated practice shaped by cultural ideology, institutional power relations, and discursive norms. From an interpretivist perspective, meaning is understood as constructed through interaction between writers, texts, and sociocultural contexts rather than existing as an objective linguistic reality. Consequently, postgraduate thesis writing is approached not merely as a product of individual competence but as a dynamic process of identity negotiation embedded within specific historical and cultural conditions. Simultaneously, the research adopts a critical orientation by recognizing that academic genres are structured by dominant epistemologies that may privilege certain forms of knowledge and voice. The critical paradigm therefore enables the analysis to interrogate how Minangkabau postgraduate students navigate, reproduce, or resist institutionalized academic discourses while maintaining culturally grounded identities. This philosophical positioning justifies the use of qualitative inquiry, as the research aims to generate contextually rich interpretations rather than universal generalizations.

Within this epistemological framework, the study integrates Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Critical Literacy, and Genre Pedagogy as a unified methodological model.

SFL provides the linguistic architecture for examining how identity negotiation is realized through language. The ideational metafunction is used to analyze how experiential meanings and cultural references are constructed through transitivity patterns and lexical choices; the interpersonal metafunction investigates stance-taking, modality, and authorial positioning; and the textual metafunction explores thematic progression and information flow within thesis discourse. Critical Literacy complements this linguistic analysis by situating textual practices within broader ideological and sociocultural contexts, enabling the researcher to interpret how language reflects power relations, cultural values, and institutional expectations. Meanwhile, Genre Pedagogy offers a macro-level framework for understanding thesis writing as a staged, goal-oriented social process, allowing rhetorical moves and communicative purposes to be mapped systematically. Rather than functioning as separate analytical lenses, these three frameworks operate synergistically: SFL explains *how* meanings are linguistically realized, Genre Pedagogy explains *how* discourse is structurally organized, and Critical Literacy explains *why* certain discursive choices emerge within particular sociocultural conditions.

The research was conducted in postgraduate programs at universities in West Sumatra, Indonesia, where Minangkabau cultural identity continues to influence academic interaction and literacy practices. Participants were selected purposively to ensure alignment with the research objectives. They included postgraduate students who self-identified as Minangkabau and were engaged in thesis writing, as well as several thesis supervisors who provided insights into institutional expectations and genre conventions. The inclusion of supervisors allowed the study to capture multiple perspectives on academic discourse practices, highlighting the dialogic nature of thesis production. The setting was chosen not only for its geographic relevance but also for its sociocultural significance, as Minangkabau traditions emphasize collective identity, rhetorical politeness, and culturally embedded modes of knowledge construction that may shape academic writing practices.

Primary data consisted of selected thesis chapters that foreground authorial stance and discursive positioning, including introductions, literature reviews, and methodological reflections. These textual sources were complemented by semi-structured interviews that explored participants' perceptions of academic literacy, cultural identity, and genre expectations. The interviews were designed to elicit reflective narratives rather than factual responses, allowing participants to articulate how they negotiated tensions between local cultural norms and global academic conventions. Field notes documenting supervisory interactions and institutional writing practices were also incorporated to provide contextual depth and strengthen triangulation.

To provide empirical transparency and respond to the contextual scope of this study, the research corpus includes 5 postgraduate theses retrieved from Indonesian institutional repositories and postgraduate academic environments associated with Minangkabau cultural contexts. Rather than functioning as secondary literature, these theses are treated as primary discourse artifacts through which identity negotiation can be examined at linguistic, rhetorical, and ideological levels. The corpus intentionally represents interdisciplinary domains—including linguistics, applied linguistics, language education, literature, and communication—to reflect the diverse epistemological spaces in which Minangkabau cultural identity is articulated within academic writing practices. The following table summarizes the thesis corpus, outlining disciplinary orientation, discourse type, and the dimensions of cultural identity relevant to the analytical framework.

Table 1. Corpus of Postgraduate Theses Analysed in the Study

Author & Year	University	Academic Field	Thesis Focus	Discourse Type	Cultural Identity Dimension
Ririn Yuliana Salevi (2021)	Universitas Islam Riau	Linguistics	Lexical comparison	Written narrative	Cultural vocabulary
Widya Calvin (2019)	Universitas Islam Riau	Applied Linguistics	Morphology & dialect	Linguistic analysis	Regional identity
Algeri Nezia (2013)	Universitas Airlangga	Literature	Minangkabau identity in fiction	Literary discourse	Cultural representation
Aimifrina (2024)	Universitas Hasanuddin	Cultural Studies / Communication	Cultural narrative	Critical discourse	Identity ideology
Khristina (2004)	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Education	Cultural literacy	Academic writing	Pedagogical identity

As illustrated in the table 1, the thesis corpus demonstrates substantial disciplinary and discursive variation while maintaining a shared cultural grounding in Minangkabau identity. This diversity strengthens the analytical scope of the study by enabling comparison across different academic genres and epistemological orientations, revealing how cultural identity is negotiated not only through linguistic choices but also through disciplinary expectations and institutional writing conventions. The corpus therefore provides a robust empirical foundation for the subsequent SFL-informed linguistic analysis, genre move examination, and critical literacy interpretation presented in the following sections.

The researcher's positionality forms a central component of this study, consistent with the interpretivist–critical paradigm. As a scholar working within Indonesian applied linguistics and familiar with the sociocultural context of Minangkabau academic environments, the researcher acknowledges that interpretation is inevitably shaped by cultural proximity and disciplinary background. Rather than attempting to eliminate subjectivity, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process by continuously examining how personal assumptions, cultural knowledge, and academic training influenced analytical decisions. This reflexive stance enabled a nuanced understanding of participants' cultural references and discourse practices while maintaining analytical transparency. Researcher positionality was documented through analytic memos, which served as a mechanism for monitoring interpretive bias and ensuring that findings remained grounded in textual and participant-generated data.

The techniques and instruments used in this study were explicitly derived from the integrated theoretical framework. A multilayered analytical matrix was developed to operationalize the interaction between SFL metafunctions, Critical Literacy categories, and Genre Move analysis. At the linguistic level, coding focused on appraisal resources, modality, pronoun usage, thematic structures, and lexical patterns that signal identity positioning. At the genre level, rhetorical stages and communicative purposes were mapped to identify how students organized arguments within thesis conventions. At the critical literacy level, interpretive categories examined ideological positioning, cultural references, and discursive tensions between local identity and institutional expectations. Interview protocols functioned as complementary instruments, designed to probe participants' awareness of genre norms, cultural values, and strategies for negotiating academic voice.

Data collection followed a recursive process consistent with qualitative inquiry. Initial genre mapping of thesis texts informed the development of interview questions, allowing

emerging themes to guide subsequent data collection. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online and were audio-recorded with participant consent. All data were transcribed, anonymized, and organized into a corpus that facilitated systematic coding. Ethical considerations were prioritized through voluntary participation, confidentiality measures, and transparent communication with participants regarding research objectives and data usage.

Data analysis proceeded through an integrated three-phase model that explicitly combines SFL metafunctions, Critical Literacy, and Genre Moves. The first phase involved genre analysis to identify rhetorical stages and patterns across thesis texts, providing a structural overview of how academic arguments were organized. The second phase applied SFL-informed linguistic analysis to examine how ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings were realized through language choices, revealing subtle forms of identity construction and stance negotiation. The third phase employed critical literacy analysis to interpret these linguistic and structural patterns within broader sociocultural and ideological contexts, highlighting how Minangkabau cultural identity was maintained, transformed, or strategically negotiated within academic discourse. Throughout the analytical process, coding was iterative and reflexive, moving between theory-driven categories and emergent themes derived from the data.

Through this theoretically integrated methodology, the study positions thesis writing as a multidimensional site where linguistic form, genre structure, and cultural ideology intersect. The explicit combination of SFL metafunctions, Critical Literacy, and Genre Pedagogy strengthens the analytical rigor of the research and provides a comprehensive framework for examining identity negotiation in postgraduate academic writing. This methodological positioning not only enhances theoretical coherence but also responds to current calls in applied linguistics for culturally responsive and critically informed approaches to academic literacy research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings based on the integrated analytical framework combining Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) metafunctions, Critical Literacy, and Genre Move analysis. The results are organized thematically to address the central focus of the study: how Minangkabau cultural identity is negotiated in postgraduate thesis writing within institutional academic genres. The analysis reveals that identity negotiation occurs across three interrelated dimensions: (1) ideational representation of cultural knowledge, (2) interpersonal positioning and authorial stance, and (3) genre-level restructuring of thesis discourse. Each theme is supported by analytical tables and representative data excerpts derived from the thesis corpus and interview narratives.

IDEATIONAL MEANING AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN THESIS WRITING

The first theme demonstrates how students encode Minangkabau cultural identity through ideational meanings. Within SFL, ideational metafunctions reveal how experiential realities are constructed through lexical choices, transitivity patterns, and cultural references. The analysis shows that participants frequently integrated local sociocultural concepts into research background sections, positioning cultural knowledge as legitimate academic content.

Table 2. Ideational Meaning Patterns

SFL Feature	Linguistic Realization	Cultural Function	Interpretation (Critical Literacy)
Relational processes	“Minangkabau philosophy <i>is</i> a guiding framework...”	Legitimizing cultural knowledge	Cultural discourse positioned as epistemic authority
Material processes	“Students negotiate adat values in academic contexts”	Cultural action framing	Identity represented as dynamic practice
Nominalization	“The internalization of <i>adat</i> principles...”	Academic abstraction	Local culture reframed within academic register

Data Excerpt 1

“The principle of adat basandi syarak is not only a cultural value but also shapes how knowledge is constructed and communicated within academic discourse.”

This excerpt illustrates how students recontextualize local philosophy into academic argumentation. Rather than treating culture as background context, writers foreground it as an analytical framework. From a critical literacy perspective, this strategy reflects an attempt to legitimize local epistemology within dominant academic discourse, suggesting a subtle negotiation between global academic norms and regional cultural identity.

INTERPERSONAL METAFUNCTION: NEGOTIATING AUTHORIAL VOICE AND CULTURAL POLITENESS

The second theme concerns interpersonal meaning, focusing on stance, modality, and evaluative language. Findings indicate that participants adopted a cautious authorial voice characterized by hedging and collective pronouns, reflecting Minangkabau sociocultural norms emphasizing politeness and communal identity. This linguistic pattern aligns with cultural expectations of modesty while simultaneously responding to academic conventions requiring authorial presence.

Table 3. Interpersonal Positioning

Linguistic Resource	Example Expression	Genre Function	Identity Implication
Modal verbs	“may indicate”, “can be interpreted as”	Hedging claims	Cultural politeness and academic caution
Inclusive pronouns	“we can observe...”	Shared authority	Collective identity construction
Appraisal resources	“significant”, “valuable insight”	Evaluation of literature	Alignment with disciplinary expectations

Data Excerpt 2

“We may understand the findings as reflecting broader cultural practices rather than individual perspectives.”

This excerpt shows how interpersonal meaning operates at the intersection of cultural norms and academic voice. The use of “we” softens authorial authority while constructing solidarity with readers, a strategy consistent with collectivist cultural orientation. Critical

literacy analysis suggests that such choices function both as compliance with institutional expectations and as preservation of culturally grounded interactional styles.

Interview data further confirmed this pattern, as several participants explained that direct or assertive claims were perceived as culturally inappropriate. Thus, interpersonal linguistic choices become a site where cultural values and academic expectations are negotiated simultaneously.

GENRE MOVES AND HYBRIDIZATION OF ACADEMIC STRUCTURE

The third theme addresses how identity negotiation manifests at the level of genre organization. Genre analysis revealed that students did not simply replicate standardized thesis structures; instead, they introduced culturally informed rhetorical moves, particularly within introduction and discussion sections. These moves often included narrative framing, references to community experience, and culturally grounded problem statements.

Table 4. Genre Move Adaptation

Standard Genre Move	Observed Variation	Cultural Element	Analytical Interpretation
Establishing research territory	Inclusion of cultural narrative	Community-based context	Hybrid academic-cultural framing
Reviewing literature	Linking global theory with local wisdom	Cultural intertextuality	Localization of academic discourse
Presenting findings	Reflective commentary	Ethical-cultural stance	Negotiation of authority and humility

Data Excerpt 3

“This research emerges from the lived experiences of Minangkabau students who balance academic expectations with cultural responsibilities.”

This excerpt demonstrates how writers extend the conventional “research territory” move by embedding cultural narrative within academic framing. From an SFL perspective, thematic progression foregrounds collective identity, while genre analysis shows the emergence of hybrid rhetorical structures. Critical literacy interpretation suggests that such hybridization represents an act of discursive agency, enabling students to reshape institutional genre conventions without overtly challenging them.

CRITICAL LITERACY DIMENSION: TENSIONS BETWEEN LOCAL IDENTITY AND INSTITUTIONAL NORMS

The fourth theme highlights discursive tensions that arise when students negotiate cultural identity within standardized academic frameworks. Several thesis excerpts and interview narratives revealed moments where writers struggled to reconcile cultural expression with perceived academic objectivity. These tensions were evident in lexical choices, citation practices, and decisions about self-positioning.

Table 5. Critical Literacy Indicators

Discursive Feature	Evidence in Data	Ideological Tension	Interpretation
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Avoidance of personal narrative	Minimal first-person statements	Academic neutrality vs. cultural storytelling	Institutional pressure shaping voice
Preference for international citations	Limited local references	Global epistemology dominance	Negotiation of legitimacy
Code-switching of cultural terms	Use of untranslated Minangkabau concepts	Linguistic resistance	Assertion of cultural presence

Data Excerpt 4

“Although local cultural narratives are central to the research context, they must be framed within internationally recognized theoretical perspectives.”

This statement illustrates the critical literacy dimension of identity negotiation. Writers acknowledge institutional expectations that privilege global theoretical frameworks while simultaneously attempting to maintain cultural specificity. Such discourse reflects a balancing act between conformity and resistance, suggesting that postgraduate thesis writing functions as a space of ideological negotiation rather than mere academic compliance.

Across all themes, the findings demonstrate that Minangkabau cultural identity is not expressed as a fixed attribute but as a dynamic discursive practice emerging through linguistic choices, genre organization, and ideological positioning. The integration of SFL metafunctions, Critical Literacy, and Genre Moves reveals a multilayered negotiation process:

1. Ideationally, cultural concepts are transformed into academic knowledge through relational processes and nominalization.
2. Interpersonally, writers adopt culturally informed politeness strategies while maintaining academic credibility.
3. Textually and generically, thesis structures become hybrid spaces where institutional norms and cultural narratives intersect.
4. Critically, writers navigate tensions between local epistemology and global academic authority, reflecting broader dynamics of multilingual academic literacy.

These findings directly address the research aims outlined in the introduction by demonstrating how postgraduate thesis writing serves as a site of cultural negotiation shaped by linguistic, rhetorical, and ideological factors. The results also reinforce the methodological strength of integrating SFL, Critical Literacy, and Genre Pedagogy, as each framework illuminates different layers of meaning-making within academic discourse.

The findings of this study extend and problematize existing scholarship on academic literacy, cultural identity, and genre studies by demonstrating that postgraduate thesis writing among Minangkabau students functions not merely as a site of disciplinary socialization but as a complex arena of ideological and cultural negotiation. Previous studies on academic writing have emphasized identity construction as an interaction between writers and disciplinary conventions; however, the present findings reveal that such interaction is deeply embedded in localized cultural epistemologies that reshape how academic genres are interpreted and enacted. The ideational patterns identified in the findings—particularly the integration of Minangkabau philosophical concepts into research framing—support earlier claims within academic literacy research that writers draw upon sociocultural repertoires to construct meaning. Yet, this study moves beyond existing literature by showing that cultural references are not peripheral rhetorical additions; rather, they function as epistemic resources through which writers legitimize knowledge production within institutional academic discourse. This

suggests a theoretical shift from viewing cultural identity as background context toward recognizing it as an active semiotic system shaping academic meaning-making processes.

From a Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective, the ideational metafunction findings reinforce the argument that experiential meaning in academic writing is socially situated. Earlier genre-based research has framed thesis writing as a structured progression of rhetorical moves, often emphasizing conformity to institutional norms. However, the present analysis demonstrates that Minangkabau postgraduate writers strategically reconfigure these structures by embedding culturally grounded relational processes and nominalizations that elevate local knowledge to academic status. This phenomenon challenges assumptions in traditional genre pedagogy that novice writers primarily struggle with mastering global conventions; instead, it reveals that writers possess significant agency in redefining the boundaries of acceptable academic discourse. Theoretically, this contributes to ongoing debates within genre studies by proposing that genre realization should be understood as a dialogic negotiation between institutional expectations and culturally situated epistemologies rather than as a linear process of enculturation into dominant academic forms.

The interpersonal dimension of the findings also complicates existing theories of authorial voice in academic writing. Much of the literature on postgraduate literacy development emphasizes the gradual emergence of individual authorial stance as students gain confidence within disciplinary communities. However, the patterns observed in this study indicate that interpersonal positioning is shaped not only by disciplinary norms but also by culturally embedded interactional values such as collectivism, humility, and relational politeness. The frequent use of inclusive pronouns, hedging strategies, and evaluative moderation suggests that Minangkabau students negotiate authorial presence through culturally informed rhetorical practices that diverge from Western individualistic models of academic voice. This finding contributes to critical literacy scholarship by highlighting how linguistic choices often interpreted as “lack of assertiveness” may instead represent culturally meaningful strategies for maintaining social harmony while fulfilling academic expectations. Consequently, the study challenges dominant pedagogical assumptions that equate strong authorial identity with explicit self-assertion, proposing instead that culturally responsive interpretations of interpersonal meaning are necessary for a more inclusive understanding of academic literacy.

At the level of genre organization, the emergence of hybrid rhetorical structures directly engages with state-of-the-art discussions on genre fluidity and localization. Previous research has acknowledged that academic genres evolve across contexts, yet many studies still implicitly treat thesis structures as standardized templates. The findings presented here reveal that Minangkabau postgraduate writers actively hybridize genre moves by incorporating narrative framing, community-based problem statements, and culturally reflective commentary within conventional academic structures. This hybridization suggests that genre pedagogy must be reconceptualized as an adaptive process in which students negotiate between institutional models and local communicative traditions. Theoretically, this reinforces recent arguments in applied linguistics that genres are dynamic sociosemiotic resources rather than fixed forms. By demonstrating how cultural identity reshapes genre realization at both macrostructural and micro-linguistic levels, the study offers empirical evidence supporting a culturally situated model of genre enactment.

The critical literacy dimension of the findings further extends theoretical discussions about power relations and epistemological hierarchy in academic writing. The tension identified between local cultural narratives and internationally recognized theoretical

frameworks reflects broader debates within multilingual scholarship concerning linguistic justice and epistemic inequality. While earlier studies have emphasized the challenges faced by L2 writers in adapting to global academic norms, the present research reveals a more nuanced dynamic in which writers strategically align with dominant discourses while preserving culturally specific perspectives through selective lexical and rhetorical choices. This dual orientation illustrates that academic writing functions as a space of negotiation rather than assimilation, where writers continuously balance the demands of institutional legitimacy with the desire to maintain cultural authenticity. Such findings contribute to critical literacy theory by illustrating how resistance can manifest subtly through discursive strategies that recontextualize local knowledge within globally accepted academic frameworks.

Importantly, the integration of SFL metafunctions, Critical Literacy, and Genre Pedagogy within a single analytical model provides a theoretical contribution that advances interdisciplinary dialogue within applied linguistics. Much existing research treats linguistic analysis, genre analysis, and critical discourse perspectives as separate methodological traditions. By demonstrating how ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings interact with genre moves and ideological positioning, this study proposes a more holistic framework for examining academic literacy practices. Theoretically, this integration underscores the value of combining micro-level linguistic analysis with macro-level sociocultural interpretation, allowing researchers to capture the multilayered nature of identity negotiation in academic discourse. Such an approach aligns with contemporary calls in applied linguistics for research that bridges structural analysis with critical sociocultural inquiry.

Furthermore, the findings have implications for understanding cultural identity not as a static attribute but as a dynamic discursive practice emerging through interaction with institutional contexts. In contrast to earlier models that conceptualize identity as a stable personal trait, this study demonstrates that Minangkabau cultural identity is enacted through ongoing choices in language, genre organization, and rhetorical positioning. These choices are shaped by the intersection of cultural values, academic expectations, and individual agency, suggesting that identity negotiation in postgraduate writing is both context-dependent and strategically performed. This perspective contributes to the broader field of cultural discourse studies by emphasizing that academic literacy development cannot be separated from sociocultural identity formation, particularly in multilingual and postcolonial educational contexts.

Another significant theoretical return concerns the reconceptualization of academic literacy pedagogy. The findings indicate that postgraduate students do not simply internalize genre conventions but reinterpret them through culturally grounded frameworks. This observation challenges deficit-oriented narratives that portray non-Western academic writers as lacking proficiency or familiarity with global standards. Instead, the study suggests that students actively reshape academic discourse to accommodate cultural meanings, thereby expanding the boundaries of what constitutes legitimate scholarly expression. Such insights contribute to the development of culturally responsive writing pedagogy, advocating for instructional approaches that recognize diverse epistemologies and rhetorical traditions rather than enforcing uniform models of academic writing.

In synthesizing these discussions, it becomes evident that the negotiation of Minangkabau cultural identity in postgraduate thesis writing exemplifies broader transformations occurring within global academic literacy practices. The convergence of local cultural values and international academic norms generates hybrid forms of discourse that challenge conventional distinctions between “local” and “global” knowledge systems. By

situating linguistic analysis within a critical and genre-informed framework, this study demonstrates that academic writing is best understood as a dynamic, culturally embedded practice shaped by ongoing dialogue between writers and institutional structures. This theoretical positioning not only advances scholarship in academic literacy, cultural identity, and genre studies but also calls for a reconceptualization of postgraduate writing as a site of epistemic plurality where multiple voices and traditions coexist.

Ultimately, the discussion affirms that the integration of SFL metafunctional analysis, Critical Literacy, and Genre Pedagogy provides a powerful lens for understanding how postgraduate writers negotiate identity within academic discourse. The strong alignment between the findings and the state of the art presented in the introduction underscores the necessity of moving beyond monolithic models of academic writing toward frameworks that acknowledge cultural diversity and discursive agency. By foregrounding the experiences of Minangkabau postgraduate students, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to decolonize academic literacy research and to recognize the role of local cultural identities in shaping the evolving landscape of global scholarly communication.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how Minangkabau cultural identity is negotiated within postgraduate thesis writing by integrating perspectives from academic literacy, cultural discourse studies, and genre-based analysis. Drawing on an interpretivist–critical paradigm and combining Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Critical Literacy, and Genre Pedagogy, the research reconceptualized thesis writing as a culturally situated semiotic practice rather than a purely technical academic exercise. Across the introduction, methodological framework, findings, and discussion, the study has demonstrated that postgraduate writing in the West Sumatran context constitutes a dynamic site where local epistemologies, institutional expectations, and global academic conventions intersect and continuously reshape one another.

The findings reveal that identity negotiation occurs at multiple linguistic and rhetorical levels. At the ideational level, Minangkabau cultural philosophy is transformed into academic knowledge through relational processes, lexical choices, and nominalization, indicating that students actively legitimize local epistemology within scholarly discourse. At the interpersonal level, writers construct authorial voice through culturally informed strategies of politeness, collective stance, and evaluative moderation, illustrating that academic authority does not always manifest through overt assertiveness but can emerge through culturally grounded interactional norms. At the textual and genre level, postgraduate theses exhibit hybrid rhetorical structures that integrate narrative framing and community-oriented perspectives within conventional academic organization. These patterns collectively demonstrate that academic genres are not fixed templates but adaptive social processes negotiated by writers situated within specific cultural contexts.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of scholarship that calls for a culturally responsive understanding of academic literacy. By integrating SFL metafunctional analysis with critical literacy and genre pedagogy, the research offers a multidimensional analytical model capable of capturing the complex interplay between linguistic form, rhetorical structure, and ideological positioning. This integrated framework extends existing literature by showing how micro-level linguistic choices are inseparable from macro-level cultural and institutional dynamics. The findings challenge dominant assumptions within academic writing research that position non-Western writers primarily as learners adapting to global standards;

instead, Minangkabau postgraduate students emerge as active agents who reshape academic discourse through culturally embedded meaning-making practices.

In relation to the state of the art outlined in the introduction, the study provides empirical evidence that cultural identity functions not merely as contextual background but as an epistemic resource influencing how knowledge is framed, argued, and legitimized in academic texts. This insight advances debates in applied linguistics concerning multilingual academic writing, genre localization, and linguistic justice by illustrating how local cultural values can coexist with and transform global academic norms. The research also reinforces critical literacy perspectives that emphasize the ideological nature of academic discourse, revealing how writers navigate tensions between institutional expectations and culturally grounded ways of knowing without necessarily rejecting either domain.

Beyond theoretical implications, the study highlights important pedagogical considerations for postgraduate writing instruction. The hybrid genre practices identified in the findings suggest that writing pedagogy in Indonesian higher education should move toward more inclusive models that recognize cultural diversity as a resource rather than a challenge. Academic literacy development may benefit from approaches that encourage students to draw upon local cultural frameworks while engaging critically with international scholarly conventions. Such an orientation has the potential to foster more equitable and culturally sustainable forms of academic communication.

Nevertheless, the study acknowledges certain limitations. The research focuses on a specific sociocultural context and participant group, which means that the findings may not be directly generalizable to other regions or academic traditions. Future research could expand this framework to comparative contexts, exploring how different Indonesian cultural identities—or other multilingual academic communities—negotiate genre expectations and academic voice. Longitudinal studies examining the evolution of identity negotiation across different stages of postgraduate writing would also deepen understanding of how cultural and institutional influences shape academic literacy over time.

In conclusion, this research underscores that postgraduate thesis writing is a complex cultural practice shaped by the interplay of language, identity, and institutional discourse. The negotiation of Minangkabau cultural identity within academic genres illustrates broader transformations occurring in global scholarly communication, where local knowledge systems increasingly interact with international academic standards. By foregrounding the voices and discursive strategies of Minangkabau postgraduate students, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to reframe academic literacy as a plural, culturally embedded practice. Ultimately, recognizing the role of cultural identity in shaping academic writing not only enriches theoretical debates in applied linguistics but also opens pathways toward more inclusive and dialogic models of knowledge production in higher education.

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