

## THE NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITIES IN MULTILINGUAL SETTINGS AS DEPICTED IN *INDONESIA DALEM API DAN BARA*

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### Abstract

The present study focuses on the negotiation of identities of Kwee Thiam Tjing, the author of *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* 'Indonesia on Fire and Charcoals'. This study aims to investigate ways in which Kwee responds to others' positioning and repositions himself to fit in a particular circumstance under certain dominant power. The results show five domains of identities that may be subject to negotiation: linguistic, ethnic, cultural, role, and social identities. We argue that some identities are negotiable in colonial Indonesia while others are forcefully imposed. Kwee's translingual practice in writing and daily life has given him a space to fully express his non-negotiable identities. Our study shows how his translingual practice serves as a mediational tool to better negotiate identities, especially in a multilingual environment.

**Keywords:** identity, translingual practice, identity negotiation, positioning, multilingualism

### Abstrak

*Studi ini membahas negosiasi identitas Kwee Thiam Tjing, penulis novel Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki strategi Kwee dalam menanggapi pemosisian orang lain dan bagaimana ia memposisikan ulang dirinya agar sesuai dengan keadaan tertentu di bawah kekuatan dominan tertentu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan lima domain identitas yang dapat dinegosiasikan: identitas linguistik, etnis, budaya, peran, dan sosial. Kami berpendapat bahwa beberapa identitas dapat dinegosiasikan pada konteks Indonesia kolonial, sementara yang lainnya dipaksakan. Praktik translingual Kwee dalam menulis dan kehidupan sehari-hari telah memberinya ruang untuk sepenuhnya mengekspresikan identitasnya yang tidak dapat dinegosiasikan. Penelitian kami menunjukkan bagaimana praktik translingual Kwee berfungsi sebagai alat mediasi untuk menegosiasikan identitas dengan lebih baik, terutama di lingkungan multibahasa.*

**Kata Kunci:** identitas, praktik translingual, negosiasi identitas, pemosisian, multibahasa

## INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses a character's translingual practice and how it is used to negotiate multiple identities. Translingual practice is how bilinguals or multilinguals communicate with two or many separate language systems that are viewed as one linguistic repertoire (García, 2009). Since a single feature of language can be used to index one's identity (Tabouret-Keller, 2017), speaking many languages could also lead to the construction of multiple identities. In this paper, negotiation can take place within a multilingual individual who is depicted to have multiple identities. This research, therefore, focuses on how multilinguals make sense of their identities

with regard to the languages they speak by exploring the translingual practice performed by the author of *Indonesia dalam Api dan Bara* (hereafter IdAB) 'Indonesia on Fire and Charcoals' (Berdoeri, 1947).

The novel is set over three eras: the end of the Netherland East Indies colonialism in Indonesia (1941-1942), the occupation of Japan (1942-1945), and the two turbulent years after the proclamation of Indonesia (1945-1947). IdAB was written by Kwee Thiam Tjing under the pen name Tjamboek Berdoeri 'a whip into which thorns are imbedded'. As a polyglot himself, Kwee incorporated multiple languages in the book, which depicts the linguistic situation of Indonesia of the era. The narration and dialogues in the book are written in Malay, Dutch, Javanese, Hokkien, Madurese, as well as Japanese. In this way, the interaction between the characters in the book and the way the author narrates the story that constantly moves from one language to another illustrates a translingual practice in multilingual settings, which also sparks issues of language and identity.

Identity construction presents a challenge between an individual self-reflective identity and the more social one. The idea of one identity can be contested and resisted in different discursive practices (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Kiramba & Oloo, 2020; Read, & Bartkowski, 2000; Swann et al., 2000). When the characters and the narrator of IdAB perform translingual practices, they are in the process of making sense of themselves for particular circumstances which in turn is referred to as a way of negotiating one's identity. While negotiation is common in social interactions with other people, the idea of negotiating from one identity to another identity also happens within oneself (Kiramba & Oloo, 2020). In other words, negotiation is possible when an individual possesses multiple identities. Here negotiation is used as a strategy to project a certain identity to fit into certain practices (Kiramba & Oloo, 2020). Negotiation is considered the common concept in identity discussion, especially within a multilingual society where various discourses are contested.

The context of negotiation is common in communication as individuals need to make sense of their identity while performing themselves in front of others. The IdAB novel is a representation of how identity negotiation happens in a written discourse from the author to its readers. In fact, identity in a written discourse appears as a complex phenomenon that includes the portrayal of empirical and phenomenological reality (Matsuda, 2015). Kwee tried to assert his multiple identities portrayed in multiple contexts through his writing. In other words, Kwee projected and mediated his social construct on written discourse. That aligns with the idea that the negotiation of identities in communication is an effort to affirm the identities that an individual wants others to recognize (Janík, 2017). In the book, Kwee showed the process of identity negotiation through language shifting to assert his identity as a polyglot. For further identification, direct claims are also made to prove his identity.

Swann et al. (2000) describe an interesting case of identity negotiation in a classroom. It analyses the self-verification of each member in the group and how it affects the performance of the group. The results implicitly define an idea of identity negotiation whether the positioning is resisted or forcefully accepted. Other studies by Kiramba & Oloo (2020) and Read & Bartkowski (2000) also portray a similar issue where identity negotiation is performed as an act of challenging the positioning by others. Kiramba & Oloo (2020) depict the life of an African immigrant student in the United States who needs to negotiate her identities because of the misidentification imposed on her. Meanwhile, the study of Read & Bartkowski (2000) illustrates the life of Muslim women in Texas in negotiating their identities related to the use of

the veil. Both studies illustrate the process of negotiating identity by resisting, challenging, redefining, and accepting without any questions.

In this study, the categorization is based on Blackledge & Pavlenko's (2001) domain of identities in everyday interactions. Whilst the five domains of identity include linguistic identities, ethnic identities, cultural identities, role identities, and social and class identities. Identity as the product of negotiation between individual claims and the availability of identity choices determined by the power relations in social contexts (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004); Norton (Norton, 2000). As the book captures social situations in three different eras, different social situations (including who is in charge of power during the era) are proposed as factors that may lead to a different way of perceiving and performing identity. Taking these issues into account, we believe IdAB could serve as a significant source of data to discuss the interplay between language and identity by also considering the context of power in a society.

Our study primarily investigates the negotiation of identities during translingual performance and how these results could contribute to the study of identity negotiation in a multilingual environment. The use of writing as a medium of identity negotiation could perform a different perspective and provide a safe space for the author. As shown in Pavlenko (2001), a text, which includes memoirs of bilingual writers, can provide ideal discursive spaces for the negotiation of identities. The form of writing thus gives an individual to gain full control over themselves and how they should perform their identity for the readers.

More specifically, our study aims to answer the following questions: (1) which identities of the author are subject to negotiation?; (2) how is the negotiation of identities portrayed by the author of IdAB?; and (3) how is the negotiation of identities performed in relation to the author's translingual practice?

### **Translingual practice and identity**

Translanguaging, also referred to as translingual practice, allows multilingual speakers to constantly and unconsciously move between languages (Garcia, 2009). In so doing, the speakers do not switch languages between discourses, instead they cross freely among different languages that are considered as one entity within the speakers' linguistic repertoire. In such view, language difference is no longer considered a barrier to overcome or seen as errors made by bi/multilingual writers (Homer et al., 2011). The translingual practice goes beyond individual languages and encompasses varieties of semiotic resources and ecological affordances (Canagarajah, 2007).

The movement between languages creates a space where multilingual speakers engage in multiple discursive practices in order to make sense of their worlds (García, 2009). Within the translingual space, multiple dimensions of the speaker's background, experience, identities, perspectives, values, relationship, and ideology are compiled into a meaningful performance (Wei, 2011). Translanguaging space highlights the speaker's cognitive capacity and has a transformative power, beyond the bounds of linguistic structures, system, and modalities – including speaking, listening, and writing (Wei, 2011). It allows different identities, values, and ideologies to co-exist and generate new ones. Identity is dynamic, fluid, and multiple dimensions of self (Varghese et al., 2005).

## METHOD

Data for this study were collected from the novel *Indonesia dalam Api dan Bara* 'Indonesia on Fire and Charcoals' written by Kwee Thiam Tjing (1947) under the pen name Tjamboek Berdoeri. We used a digital version of the novel previously compiled in our digitalisation project.

In order to analyse how identities are negotiated and produced, we apply "positioning theory" suggested by Davies & Harré (1990) as the main analytical tool. Following the theory, once an individual has claimed particular subject positions, they naturally view the world from the perspective of those positions. It is used to identify the views of identities in discursive practices including narratives. Thus, it provides the systematic steps that will be used to perform the data analysis.

We first performed a comprehensive reading on the narrative of *IdAB*. We then identified three types of references related to the connection between language and identity: (1) explicit attempts at negotiating identities; (2) references to the links between language and identity; and (3) implicit alignments with a certain group of communities. These references were subsequently categorized to a domain of identity (e.g., ethnic, culture, or social identities). The domain of identities helps discover the identities of the author that are subject to negotiation. Further, we did comprehensive interpretation and explanation of identity negotiation for each domain of identities and how they are performed in relation to translingual practice.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Our analysis refers to language and identity in the narratives of *IdAB*, using Blackledge & Pavlenko's (2001) five domains of identities in everyday interactions that are subject to negotiation. They include: (1) linguistic identities; (2) ethnic identities; (3) cultural identities; (4) role identities; and (5) social and class identities. We first separated each identity into five main domains in order to highlight each interaction and circumstance, but it is important to note that in most cases these identities are inseparable as language always lies behind the process of negotiation.

### Linguistic identities

Linguistic identities mainly refer to speaker's language ownership and their experience in creating meaning Blackledge & Pavlenko's (2001). In his narrative, Kwee is often seen to be implicitly claiming his rights as a speaker of certain languages. In (1), Kwee asserted his self-identification as a Dutch speaker by claiming that he had the rights to use the language.

- (1) .... *di zamannja stadswacht poen serdadoe dan onder officernja jang boekan orang Belanda, djoega haroes dinamaken imitatie selagi marika imiteeren militair Belanda. Saja tidak maoe seboet siapa-siapa, hanja saja sendiri sadja. .... Sampepoen tjara oetjapken "Godverdomme!" Sebrapa bisa dilakoeken dengan intonatie jang dibikin totok satotok-totoknja bisa.* [page 297]

'... during the era, the city guard, the soldiers and the subordinate officers who were not Dutch were also called imitators as they were indeed the copycat of the Dutch military. I won't mention anyone else but me myself... Even the way I say, "Goddamn it!" as best as I could pronounce it with the intonation like a Dutch native.'

In (1), Kwee realized that his genuine identity as the Dutch military was doubted regardless his position as a sergeant in the *stadswacht* 'city guard'. As a minority among the Dutch, he was seen only as a copycat who tried to belong by imitating. Instead of feeling insecure, Kwee embraced the foreign identity and positioned himself as a legitimate speaker of the Dutch language. In most cases, a speaker of a foreign language is considered a deficient and incompetent speaker, because of their accent or grammatical varieties (Pavlenko, 2001); therefore, Kwee's attempt to sound like a native speaker can be seen as an act to claim a 'voice' in the Dutch language and prove himself that he was not only a product of imitation, but a legitimate speaker with the ability to mimic the intonation of a native Dutch speaker.

In another case, as shown in (2), Kwee narrated his experience when he was having a conversation with a group of British soldiers who speak English.

- (2) *Djika sekarang saja toelis mengobrol, djangan pematja lant kira bahoea pertjakepan kita bisa saling mempewasken kedoewa fihak. Kalo getolnja tjoekoep getol, tapi masing-masing goenakan bahasanja sendiri. .... Djika soedah kewalahan, sebagi pembalesan kita poen goenakan bahasa jang sedikitnja kita bisa oetjapken dengan sama lantjarnja, jai toe bahasa Melajoe.* [page 147]

'Although I mention it as a conversation, don't you (readers) think that it would satisfy both sides. We both were excited to talk to each other but each of us spoke our own language. .... Once we felt overwhelmed, in turn we would switch to a language that we both knew well, that was the Malay language.'

Excerpt (2) depicts a conversation between speakers of two different languages. Despite not fully understanding each other, both groups continued to speak their own mother tongues. Upon realizing that the conversation was becoming more difficult to comprehend, they switched to Malay as another language that they can speak. Being multilingual speakers had enabled the speakers to move from one identity to another, from their native identity to the identity of colonial Indonesian citizens.

### **Ethnic identities**

Throughout the novel, Kwee mostly identifies his ethnicity as Chinese. Not only that he directly claims his identity, but he also tries to negotiate his image of being Chinese every time he receives ethnic stereotyping, as shown in (3). He then tries to redefine and break the stereotype that defines the Chinese people as moneylenders.

- (3) *Tapi nonsense adanja itoe dongengan jang bilang, orang Tionghoa maka oemoemnja bisa simpen doeit, kerna ia ada satoe pemeres, satoe linta darat, satoe orang jang tjoema bisa perhatikan doeit, doeit dan lagi sekali doeit sadja. Jang kita oemoemnja ada lebi koeat ekonomie kita, itoe disebabkan kerna kita bisa lebi himat di mana tida perloe hamboerkan oewang; kita lebi oelet bekerdjja.* [page 312]

'But this is nonsense to say that Chinese people are best at earning and saving money, because there are some (Chinese) who like to exploit, others are moneylenders, and those only care and think about money. The reason why our economy is better is because we spend less, don't spend too much money, and we work harder.'

The situation in (3) is related to the position of Chinese as immigrants or non-native in Indonesia. The society saw them as more powerful economically. Most of them were merchants and they were in control of the local market. This is in line with the view that hatred towards ethnic Chinese in Indonesia was often based on economic sentiment (Muntholib, 2008).

In (4), Kwee was positioned by a group of Javanese boys as Dutch because of his position as the sergeant of the city guard. He and his colleagues did not say anything back because they were ordered to stay calm.

- (4) *Kita diprentah haroes tinggal tenang, tida bole briken perlawanan, tida bole lepas tembakan dan laen-laen tida bole lagi. Saja toch djoega tida bisa bilang pada itoe katjoeng-katjoeng: Akoe iki Tjino rèk! Doedoe Londo!?* [page 155]

‘We were instructed to remain calm, were not allowed to fight back, were not allowed to fire a gun, and so on. I could not even say to those lackeys: Hey, I am a Chinese, guys! I am not Dutch!’

- (5) *Dan djika saja mati dalem lakoeken apa jang saja anggep ada koeadjiban saja terhadap pada masjarakat Tionghoa, saja poenja keloearga tida oesa dikasi toendjangan apa-apa, kerna semoea risico saja pikoel sendiri.* [page 336]

‘And if later I die while carrying out my duties towards the Chinese community, don’t give my family any allowances because I would bear all the risks.’

However, Kwee believed that every individual had the rights to claim one’s ethnicity. The narrative in IdAB provided him the chance to clarify his identity. Kwee’s act of denying others’ positioning, when they simply referred to him as Dutch, could be considered an attempt to negotiate his identity when experiencing a dilemma in relation to his roles and sense of morality.

Kwee also used IdAB to challenge certain stereotypes addressed to the Chinese. He showed how the Chinese had received ethnic discrimination both from the Dutch and the natives as well. Kwee discussed that discrimination against the Chinese happened under different rulers anyway, as shown in (6).

- (6) *Kenapa saja tjoema seboet wijk Tionghoa sadja dan tida laen-laen bagean? Kerna, seperti jang saja soedah bilang di atas, roepanja tjoema orang-orang Tionghoa sadja jang teriket contract boeat saben-saben didjadiken telenan, tida perdoeli pamerentahan mana jang berkoeasa, tida perdoeli warna bendera bagimana jang dikibarken.* [page 169]

‘Why did I only mention Chinese and no other ethnicities? As I have told previously, it turned out that it was only the Chinese who would always become the victim, no matter which government is in power and what flag colour is raised.’

Excerpt (6) shows that it was impossible for the Chinese to portray their own self-identification as long as the label of ‘immigrant’ was still attached to them. Kwee was led to think that his identity as a Chinese is meaningless and that he needed to reposition himself in order to be meaningful. Kwee then explicitly described how the Dutch value the existence of the Chinese during the period, as shown in (7).

- (7) *Marika pandeng si Chinese dan si Inlander sebagai groote kinderen, tjoema toeboehnja sadja jang volwassen, tapi pikirannja masih minderjarig. Iaorang kira, kita ini soedah terlaloe girang bole tjampoer gaoel sama orang-orang koelit poetih, bole doedoek berdjèdjèr, bole makan bersama, bole bahasain jij en jou, boeat gantinja itoe traditioneele Meener en U.* [page 162]

‘They see the Chinese and the native people as big children, their body sizes are like grown-ups, but their minds are still immature. They think that we should have been thankful for being able to socialise with white people, sit side by side, eat together, and address them with *jij* and *jou* ‘you’ instead of having to traditionally call them as *Meneer* ‘Sir.’

The discrimination faced by Kwee shows his powerless identity in front of the dominant discourse. Instead of challenging the imposed identities, Kwee decided to remain silent and accept the condition. The identity negotiations shown in (3)-(6) suggest that the process of claiming and renegotiating becomes more complex for those who are seen as ‘others’ in their environment. Here we see how the process of finding meaning and identity will be a continuous one amidst challenges and contestations from others.

### Cultural identities

The narrative of the novel demonstrates that identity was also expressed through attachment to certain culture. It is defined as a loyalty towards a certain culture through which an individual tries to maintain their long association with the culture they were born into (Kobinah et al., 2003). Culture can be understood as a set of values and meanings by which an individual could define others as a member of society (Kobinah et al., 2003). Here culture can be a crucial factor in the process of national identification, as shown in (8).

- (8) *Tapi lambat laoen kita orang djato di bawah pengaroe Djepang poenja massa suggestie dan berubah mendjadi djepang-djepangan.* [page 240]

‘But gradually we fell under the influence of Japanese and we turned to be like them.’

- (9) *Saja rasa, itoe Seikerei jang kita orang saben-saben pertoendjoeken ada bikinannja orang-orang dari kalangan kita sendiri jang ingin kaliatan lebi djepang dari Djepangnja.* [page 254]

‘I think, we practiced the *Seikerei* (Japanese ritual of bowing towards the sun) with so much enthusiasm, as if we want to look more Japanese than the Japanese itself.’

In excerpts (8) and (9), Kwee highlighted how practicing other’s culture can draw them closer to the respective country. Instead of as assimilation, he valued the Japanese culture imposed to Indonesian as a means of colonising. He believed that culture is an essential symbol of nationalism, but it was interesting to see how he viewed the Dutch culture differently. As he grew accustomed to the Dutch, Kwee regarded the Dutch culture as a form of diversities nurtured by a partnership. This is reflected in (10).

- (10) *Boeat tjega salah mengerti, saja hendak djelaskan di sini, jang saja tangisin itoe boekannja Belanda, hanja Pamerentahan Belanda, jang soedah berabad-abad lamanja pegang kekoeasa’an di sini, hingga waktoe ada bajang-bajangan hendak berpisah,*

*kerna reopanja dateng gilirannja Djepang, hati saja dirasaken amat piloe djoega seperti moesti lagi perpisahan sama sobat karib jang lama. [page 154]*

‘To prevent any misunderstandings, I would like to explain that what I am upset about was not the Netherlands but the Government of Netherlands that had been in power in Indonesia for centuries, so that when the time came for Japan to take the power, my heart ached as if I was about to part with an old friend.

Excerpts (9) and (10) show that Kwee had little power to negotiate identities that are forcefully imposed on him. In (8), he could not deny that he was also influenced by the Japanese culture. Instead of asserting his self-identification, his image became powerless in front of the dominant discourse. Kwee tried to show his confrontation and disagreement in (9), depicting his way of positioning and defending his cultural identity that could be in danger.

### **Role identities**

The fourth important domain where Kwee often redefined himself is role identities. This identity is defined as a role or character that an individual perceives for themselves as an occupant of a certain social position (Carter & Mangum, 2020). In role identities, Kwee redefined his identity based on his position as a sergeant in the city guard. The negotiation of role identities is mainly performed as the entanglement between non-negotiable identities as in (11) and accepted identities as in (12).

- (11) *Saja djawab, bole ia pergi, asal sadja larinja lebih tjepat dari larinja pelor saja. Kerna saja aken tembak ia djika ia berani ‘mbolos. Saja piker, ini orang terlaloe koerang adjar. Saja sendiri poen itoe waktoe tida tahoe anak istri saja berada di mana, saking beratnja ikoet Belanda lakoekan koeadjiban. [page 155]*

‘I said, he could go only if he could run faster than my bullet, because I would shoot him if he dared to skip. I thought, this person was too impolite. At that time, I did not even know where my family was because of the heavy duties of joining the Netherlands (army).’

- (12) *Tjintaken dengen sepenoehnja hati. Kerna dengen pakean jang seroepa, hati kita poen terikat oleh seroepa perasa’an, ja itoe menghormat dan menjajang pakean itoe sebagi symbol dari kekoesa’an jang itoe waktoe soedah ada. [page 154]*

‘Love them with all my heart. Because when we are wearing the same uniform, our hearts are bound by the same feelings, that is respecting and cherishing the uniform as a symbol of the existing power.’

The condition where Kwee could not negotiate his identity was inescapable as he had no power in front of the Dutch as the dominant power. During that period, Kwee had no other choice aside from taking the provided identity, as a sergeant who had to follow any order given to him, as he mentioned in (13):

- (13) **“Odjoh wedi, lawong tjoema sorodadoe Londo wae! Opo maneh Londo wis kalah!”**  
*Dan sembari oetjapken itoe perkata’an-perkata’an, marika liwat di precise pinggir kita seperti tida ada apa-apa, kita orang dianggep sebagi angina meloeloe. .... Tapi apa*



*maoe dikata, pematja? Tenang, tinggal tetap tenang, tenang dalem segala keada'an, begitoelah boenjinja order. [page 174]*

“No need to be afraid, they’re only Dutch soldiers! Moreover, the Dutch had surrendered!” While those words were said, they passed right beside us as if nothing happened, we were just like a wind. . . . . But what to say, dear readers? Calm, stay calm, and remain calm under all circumstances as ordered.’

As seen in (13), the way Kwee maintained himself to keep calm and retained his emotion not to challenge the given identity as *Londo* (Dutch) by Indonesian suggests that he had no other options to claim his identity. This is related to Pavlenko & Blackledge’s (2004) argument about how the dominant power could interfere with someone’s ability to express their identity as how they perceive themselves. In other words, the identity of being part of the Dutch is forced upon him.

As a sergeant, Kwee accepts the given and provided identity for him as shown in (14) and (15).

- (14) *Tapi bagi siapa jang bisa liat, itoe tjoema boeat camouflaje sadja, kerna **“wij willen ons niet laten kennen door die vuile Jas, meneer!”** [page 220]*

‘But for those who can see, that attempt was only a camouflage because “we didn’t want to be known by that dirty coat, Sir!”’

- (15) *Katanja pasoean-pasoean Djepang soedah menjerboe di mana-mana, sedeng balatentara kita teroes-meneroes moendoer saja. [page 167]*

‘It was said that the Japanese troops had invaded everywhere while our troops kept on retreating.’

The boundaries of becoming an Indonesian and Dutch became blurred as described in (14) and (15) because he perceived himself not only as an Indonesian but also a member of the Dutch troops. The way he used the pronoun *kita* ‘we.inclusive’ when referring to the Dutch signifies that he put himself based on his role identities and his duties. The use of language to show negotiation is shown in (16).

- (16) *Dalem sepandjangnja ini toelisan, tentoe pematja soedah sering tanja pada diri sendiri, kenapa saja begitoe kasar oentoek saben-saben goenaken perkata'an **“Godverdomme”** Ja, apa jang saja moesti djawab? Dalem penghidoepan di tangsi dan pergaoelan sama orang-orang Belanda jang teeken serdadoe, roepanja perkata'an Godverdomme itoe soedah mendjadi lalatnja bibir, hingga marika tidak bisa ini da itoe zonder tjangking sekali itoe perkata'an jang bikin pematja keroetkan djidatnja atawa meremkan matanja bila sampe di perkata'an jang taboe itoe. Apa lagi sebagai sergeant, rasanja koh koerang gagah bila tida goenakan itoe perkata'an. [page 152]*

‘Throughout this writing, you (readers) might be wondering why I am so rude by often saying words like “God damn it!” What can I say? During my life in the barrage and associating with those Dutch soldiers, these words had become so commonplace that it was difficult not to say this taboo word, even when it must have been hard for you to hear without frowning or closing your eyes. Especially as a sergeant, it would be less manly if I do not use that phrase.’

While discussing the word *Godverdomme* ‘God damn it’, Kwee implicitly changed the way he saw the world behind his role as a sergeant. This demonstrates an example of how an individual negotiates his identity while at the same time holding specific social positions in groups (Andriot & Owens, 2012). It is important to note here that the connection between language and role identity perceived by Kwee is a reflection through which an individual is unconsciously positioned by the dominant discourse of language and identity.

### Social and class identities

The process of identity negotiation is also portrayed in relation to social and class identities. Kwee, who was a sergeant in *stadswacht* ‘city guard’ during the Dutch occupation as well as a figure of a loyal companion for anyone mentioned in the book, demonstrates various ways of negotiating his identity depending on the relationship towards others. His action reflects the view that an individual inevitably performs different self-identification in different space and time (Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1987).

Kwee performed his translanguaging practice by moving from one language to another. In doing so, Kwee showed a certain pattern of language use depending on his addressees. Kwee mostly used the Javanese language to communicate with his Indonesian acquaintances or friends, shown in (17) and (18).

(17) *Saja kenal sato orang Indonesier jang bekerdja di sala-satoe restaurant, di mana saja doeloenja sering dateng.*

*Loo, rikò koh malih matjak ‘nggowò bedil! kata saja dengan ketawa.*

*Inggih, koelò dipoen kèngkèn ‘ndjagi meriki! djawabnja itoe bekas djongos dengan ketawa ketawa djoega. [page 289]*

‘I know one Indonesian that works in a restaurant in which I was a regular.

“So you are carrying a gun now!” I said while laughing.

“Yes, I was asked to guard this area!” said him while laughing as well.’

He used Javanese in (17) when he was engaged in an informal situation. In this case, Kwee had full control over his identity and chose how to perform his image through the language choice. Javanese language during that period was considered to be one of the most powerful languages among indigenous people in addition to Malay as the lingua franca (Groeneboer, 1999).

However, he switched from Javanese into Malay/Indonesian when upward social mobility is involved, shown in (18).

(18) *Saja mampir, pertama boeat bikin seneng hatinja itoe kenalan, jang saja tahoe, sebagi orang jang kajah baroe, tentoe sadja ingin banggaken iapoenja kemadjoean materiel; kedoewanja, orangnja masih tetap baik pada saja, kendati ia sekarang roepanja soedah mendjadi toean-besar dan sekarang goenakan bahasa Indonesia dalem pertjakepan sama saja. [page 290]*

‘I decided to visit him, firstly because I wanted to make my acquaintance happy, as a new rich, he must have wanted to show off his wealth. Secondly, he is still humble to me despite his elevated position, and he also uses Indonesian language when talking to me now.’

As described in (18), Kwee's friend used Indonesian to acquire a new identity as a member of a higher social class. This can be highlighted as a scene where speakers would automatically increase their use of language level as they are aware of the upward shift in their social class (Snell, 2014). In this way, social mobility could shape the perception of self-identification and use of language.

## REIMAGINING THE NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITIES

The main idea about identity negotiation develops within the concept that it appears when an attempt to perform one's identity is challenged. The subsequent act during this process mainly revolves between two feedback actions – be it challenge the positioning or inevitably accept the positioning as no alternative choice is available.

The narrative of *IdAB*, which depicts various ways to negotiate identities, propounds another interesting idea that the process of identity negotiation is not only about challenging, contesting, or unavoidably accepting the positioning. The analysis also reveals another form of negotiation where a positioning by others can also be accepted comfortably. The way an individual values the dominant discourse and the one who is in power could be the main factor in how they perceives the positioning and acts accordingly (Kiramba & Oloo, 2020). This condition could be seen from Kwee's act towards the Dutch and Japanese government – while Kwee viewed the Dutch as a group of friends, he considered the Japanese as suspicious strangers. Therefore, the idea of identity is not about the identity alone but also tied to the existence of power relation in society.

As a result, the analysis of the references to language and identity above figured out three different types of identity according to how the author (Kwee) proceeds and responds to the situation where his identity is put into action. The three types of identities include assumed identities, negotiable identities, and imposed identities.

Assumed identities refer to those that an individual feels comfortable with and has no intention of challenging the identity. Frequently, these identities are the ones that are considered as dominant and most valued (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). Kwee's perspectives on viewing the Dutch language as a language that makes him look manly is one of the examples of assumed identities (see Role Identities section). In turn, negotiable identities point out to all options of identities available to be contested or resisted by individuals. In the previous analysis, these identity options are also available mostly during the occupation of the Netherlands such as in the area of linguistic identities where Kwee could have a choice to use which language he is comfortable with while conversing with the soldiers from English.

Finally, the imposed identities are those non-negotiable identities that an individual has no power and choice to resist the identities given to them. In this analysis, this type of identities is shown when Kwee said that he could not resist becoming like a Japanese (see Cultural Identities section). Oftentimes, these identities are the ones that have been provided by the dominant at a particular point in an era (Pavlenko, 2002).

Obviously, all three categories are inseparable from the social circumstances in which the choices that are acceptable and non-negotiable depend on the context of the situation. This idea is well-described in the narrative of *IdAB* through which the different eras of power (Netherlands, Japan, Indonesia) influence the way Kwee perceives his identity. The era during

the Netherlands and Japan occupation is taken as the most interesting cases as the story mostly tells during this period.

The number of assumed and negotiable identities are mostly available in the Netherlands occupation while there are only imposed identities during the occupation of the Japanese. In addition to that, the way Kwee assessed the image of Dutch and Japanese also matter in the process of negotiating his identity, whether to accept comfortably or challenge the imposed identities. This image can be seen in the excerpt below.

(19) .... *hati saja dirasaken amat piloe djoega seperti moesti lagi berpisah sama sobat karib jang lama. Ini sobat karib soedah tahoe habis isi peroet kita, seperti djoega kita kenal betoel watek dan bathinnja. Sedeng jang bakal dateng itoe masih belon tentoe beroepa kawan atawa lawan.* [page 154]

‘... my heart ached as if I was about to part with an old friend. This close friend has known me inside out as I know his very character and his soul. Meanwhile, we still do not know whether those coming would be friends or foes.’

There are times when an identity is imposed on Kwee but, in most cases, Kwee has no problem with the positioning given by the Dutch to him as he sees them as a close friend as mentioned in (19). On the other hand, there are mostly identities that are forcefully imposed on Kwee during the Japanese occupation. He even mentions in (20) how the Japanese had limited his freedom of life during their era.

(20) *Samendjak Pamerentah Balatentara Dai Nippon tentjepken kekoesa’annja di Indonesia, habislah segala kamerdika’an dalem pikiran dan perboeatan marika jang menjadi rajat dari lingkoengan baroe.* [page 269]

‘Since the army of Japanese government instilled its power in Indonesia, there had been no freedom of thoughts and actions for the people who had become part of a new environment.’

This representation of identity negotiation in the narrative of IdAB illustrates a picture where identity may be contested or not depends on the power relation with the existing dominant discourses and which identities available for individuals. It opens another nuance for the discussion of how identity negotiation is performed. Yet, the idea of negotiating identity remains a dynamic concept. There may be other ways to negotiate identities as identities that are considered to be non-negotiable at the present may have been taken as assumed or negotiable identities in the future.

## **THE NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITIES AND TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICE**

IdAB has shown how identity negotiation is performed while engaging in the translanguaging practice. In this section we show that Kwee’s translanguaging practice, that is his ability to create meanings across languages and language varieties (Canagarajah 2007; Garcia 2008; Ishinara 2018), performed within the process of identity negotiation, has opened another sphere for him. Kwee could fully represent his multiple identities through his multilingual writing. We identify the translanguaging practice in the narrative by taking into account both verbal and non-verbal means that come from more than one language during the negotiation of identity.

Writing provides a private space in which the author could have full control over his writings, allowing Kwee to retrieve control over the world and himself (Pavlenko, 2001). Those powerful imposed identities in his daily life are challenged through his writing. Writing therefore appears as a media that may protect Kwee from the identities enforced by the dominant discourse, as shown in (21).

- (21) *Saja toch djoega tida bisa bilang pada itoe katjoeng-katjoeng: Akoe iki Tjino rèk! Doedoe Londo!?* [page 155]

‘I could not even say to those lackeys: Hey, I am a Chinese, guys! I am not Dutch!’

For Kwee, working as a sergeant in *stadswacht* did not erase his identity both as an Indonesian or even a Chinese. However, the condition in a real-world does not allow him to clarify, resist, and challenge the positioning as he mentioned in (21). Meanwhile, writing on another side has given him a chance to explain that he had no other choice aside from accepting the positioning from others. The excerpt in (21) unveils an idea of how writing could be a safe space where voices and identities could be proposed.

At the same time, writing also offers full access for Kwee to fully represent his multiple identities including performing his translanguaging practice freely. Being a polyglot makes him switch and move from one to another language comfortably and even unintentionally. Kwee had the ability to control the whole arena in his writing to fully present his identities as the way he perceives himself, as shown in (22) and (23).

- (22) *Tapi tentang masoek saja sebagai anggota stadswacht di Soerabaja benar-benar kedjadian vrijwilig, soeka-rèla, zonder oesa perdoelikan djidatnja chef mana djoega. Om de doodeenvoudige redder, itoe waktoe saja buiten baan, alias boo thauwlo.* [page 102] (Malay – Dutch – Hokkien)

‘But regarding the reason why I became a city guard member in Surabaya, it was truly for voluntary reasons, not because of any chiefs. Only with a simple reason, because at that time I had no work, or was unemployed.’

- (23) *Boeat marika, baek siang maoepoen malam, tida ada bahaya jang begitoe besar hingga sampe bisa bikin iaorang minggir, djangan seantara boeat lari sipat koeping. Althans, ini anggepan orang dapet djika batja riwayat perang Koempenie di Bali, di Lombok, di Borneo, mala poen sampe di Atjeh.* [page 113] (Malay – Japanese – Dutch)

‘For them, there is no danger both in a day or night that could make them concede, or even scamper. At least, this assumption could be found by reading the history of the Dutch war in Bali, Lombok, Borneo, even in Aceh.’

The excerpts in (22) and (23) are the depiction of how Kwee easily wrote in one language then moves to another language without any specific patterns. The essential thing about translanguaging practice, that distinguishes it from multilingualism, is that the speaker can constantly moving between or among languages. Kwee does not see each language as an individual or separate element, instead it is valued as a new integrated element of language.

Kwee’s translanguaging practice as performed through his writing is also presented through the way he provides clarity for the readers. Despite his choice to write in multiple languages that might not be easily understood by everyone, Kwee also tries to present meaning in multiple languages as an alternative meaning. Frequently, he uses a word *alias* to present meaning in two

different languages. Though rarely, Kwee attempts to be informative to people of different language backgrounds, as shown in (24) and (25).

- (24) *Saja doedoek di roempoet, tida djaoe dari stadswachter jang djadi klerknja itoe chef jang gagang senapannja oendjoekan njata tanda habis kelanggar naimin* (Madurese) *alias poep* (Dutch). [page 142]

‘I was sitting on the grass, not far from that city guard who was a clerk of that chief whose rifle was stained with poop.’

- (25) *Ini hal pasti timboelken inflatie seperti belon perna dialamken. Kettinghandelaars* (Dutch) *alias toekang tjatoet* (East Javanese) *moelai moentjoel di mana-mana*. [page 273]

‘This will inevitably lead to inflation that has never happened before. Chain traders started appearing everywhere.’

Following the act of translanguaging practice through the writing medium, Kwee also illustrates how this practice becomes a mediational tool in his daily life which means that it becomes media for him to communicate. As a person who can speak multiple languages in a multilingual environment, his ability serves as a mediational tool to communicate with people from various backgrounds. Excerpt (26) describes a situation where Kwee becomes an interpreter between Dutch soldiers and Indonesian people. His ability to speak in many languages has acquired him a position where language differences could not be barriers in a communication anymore.

- (26) *Saja sengadja bermoela bitjara dalem bahasa Belanda dan kamoedian saja oelangkan poela maksoed pembitjara'an saja dalem bahasa Melajoe. Itoe kawan Indonesier tertjengang koetika denger saja goenakan bahasa Belanda dan ia mendjadi lebi tertjengang lagi waktoe tahoe maksoed pembitjara'an saja sasoedahnja saja terangken itoe dalem bahasa Melajoe*. [page 200]

‘I was deliberately speaking in Dutch and then repeated the conversation in Malay. That Indonesian man was shocked when he listened to me speaking in Dutch and was even more shocked when he realized the meaning of the conversation after I explained it in Malay.’

The analysis of the references to how negotiation identities are performed while also engaging in translanguaging practice suggests that translanguaging practice is well-practiced through Kwee’s writing and daily life. Writing provides another world for him where his voices and identities could be fully accommodated, where his translanguaging ability could be best practiced. In daily life, his translanguaging practice could be a mediational tool that enables him to better communicate within a multilingual environment. Yet, writing yields better results for Kwee to perform his translanguaging practice where it could be a place for discourses of resistance to dominant power.

According to the previous analysis, the study inferred that there are five main domains of identities that are negotiated, challenged, and resisted by Kwee: (1) linguistic identities, (2) ethnic identities, (3) cultural identities, (4) role identities, and (5) social and class identities. The process of identity negotiation for these identities is intrinsically linked to language as well as how these aspects of identities intertwined with the notion of language and identity.

From the five domain of identities that are subjected to negotiation, Kwee portrayed every identity in different ways. It is showed and categorized under three types, namely assumed identities, negotiable identities, and imposed identities. The assumed identities refer to those identities that are accepted freely as mostly portrayed by Kwee during the Dutch occupation, such as in Role Identity. In addition, there are some identities that can be resisted and challenged by Kwee and those are part of negotiable identities, such as the available choice to use the language he speaks. On the other hand, imposed identities are identities that are forcefully given by others, mostly dominant power, to individuals by which they have no power to deny or challenge it. Kwee portrays that imposed identities become common during the Japanese occupation.

Our analysis demonstrates the continuity of the fact that certain identities are hardly negotiated and even imposed on Kwee. It shows that there is a significant relation between Kwee's translingual practice and how it affects his identity negotiation. Kwee's translingual practice has opened another chance for him to redefine and reassert his self-identification. The results show that Kwee's translingual practice is performed through his writings and during his everyday life. Yet, writing appears as a better place for him to define his identities fully without being contested or challenged by others. The media of writing has acquired Kwee full control over himself and his world.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate how the negotiation of identities is portrayed by a polyglot writer with regard to his translingual practice in *IdAB*, a historical novel filled with the author's first account of events. Our analysis regards different social situations as factors that may lead to a different way of perceiving and negotiating self-image. We then reveal various ways of performing identity negotiation by considering the context of dominant discourse and the available choices of identities.

The analysis on the strategy of identity negotiation performed by Kwee suggests that the notion of identity remains fluid, dynamic, and are continuously contested by others. However, Kwee's ability as a polyglot who can communicate in many languages and, thus, be able to perform translingual practice has enabled him to further negotiate his identities. Nevertheless, this result may speak differently in other circumstances especially when the social situation in the future is as uncertain as it is in the twenty-first century. Future research needs to investigate how identity negotiation and repositioning of oneself take place in the era of digitalization where barriers of language become blurrier and the media to express identities is more accessible.

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