

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CROSS-CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE
ADAPTATION IN INDONESIA
(AN ANALYSIS OF TURKISH AND KYRGYZ STUDENTS OF ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT AT STATE UNIVERSITY OF SEMARANG)**

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions of various countries have perceived the importance of international student recruitment, have studied the problems that these students encounter when they study abroad, and have searched for methods and strategies to assist them in adapting to local culture, lifestyles, and languages. This study analyzed the international students' cross-cultural and language adaptation in Indonesia. International students experienced culture shock when they have to face three different languages in Indonesia. At campus, lecturers use English, but use Indonesian language when talking personally. Meanwhile, local students around them use Javanese language in daily conversation. This study put emphasis on the level of cross-cultural and language adaptation experienced by international students of English Department at State University of Semarang. To achieve this, the qualitative approach was used as the method of this study by developing a questionnaire, conducting a follow-up interview, and observing the Turkish and Kyrgyz students' cultural activities and communication in Indonesia. In all, there were five Turkish students and one Kyrgyz student participated in this study, both in the questionnaire and in the follow-up interview. It was found that international students' language and cross-cultural adaptation concerning the dimension of local culture has the highest level among five dimensions that were observed in this study. This dimension include the Indonesian culture such as local language and traditional show and food. Meanwhile, the dimension of social life has the lowest score of adaptation. In all, there was a need of support and help for the Turkish and Kyrgyz students to achieve better result in cross-cultural and language adaptation in Indonesia.

Keywords: cross-cultural adaptation, international students, language adaptation

Background of The Study

There are some reasons for Turkish and Kyrgyz students in continuing their study in Indonesia. One of the reasons is that the study of English in Indonesia is considered more advanced than in Turkey. English has been taught to students in formal education since elementary school in Indonesia; while in Turkey, it has been taught lately in senior high school. Therefore, it is believed that Turkish students will experience more by learning English in Indonesia.

Another reason is that characteristics of Indonesian who are friendly and like to work together. The main reason that affects significantly to the decision of the international students in continuing study in Indonesia is related to religion in Indonesia. Indonesia is known as a country in which the differences on religion is very tolerated. People of Islam, Christianity, Catholic, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism live in harmony without discrimination in many aspects of life. For example, women who adhere to Islam can wear their veil in the daily life, whether they are students, teachers, police, governors, labour, secretary, and many others.

However, the differences between Indonesian and Turkish/Kyrgyz culture make the international students have experienced culture shock, especially in the beginning of their living in Indonesia. Culture shock itself is defined as a state where one is not able to stand with a

variety of cultural influences that comes from outside, causing imbalance in one's self to the society concerned. This may include the anxiety about how to dress, how to use public services, the differences of norms and ethics, relationships model, and many others that often cause various social problems, including socio-economic inequality, environmental degradation, and juvenile delinquency. We use the phenomena of the culture shock in the current study to analyze the adaptation of language and cross-cultural that is experienced by Turkish and Kyrgyz students of English Department at State University of Semarang.

Theoretical Review

Second Language Learning

Second language learning is a conscious process of trying to learn another language that is different from mother language, within the awareness of the learner that he is learning the language (Krashen, 2013). In order to complete the process of learning second language, there should be meaningful interaction in the target language. Meaningful interaction means natural communication, that is the condition in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances, but with the messages they are sharing and understanding (Krashen, 1981).

The proficiency of second language becomes one of the factors for academic success of international students (Speck and Carimical, 2002). It means that language proficiency is necessary, even important, especially when classes are not offered to be spoken in one's native language, as well as the language that is used in daily conversation.

Cross-cultural adaptation

Schumann (1978) viewed the process of a second language learning as the adaptation that occurs gradually to the culture of target language, considering the close relationship between language and culture. Moreover, Schumann suggested that second language learning is a part of cross-cultural adaptation and that second language learners' level of adaptation to the culture of the target language (cross-cultural adaptation) can determine the level of understanding of the target language (language adaptation).

According to Sezrle and Ward (1990), cross-cultural adaptation includes two major dimensions, "psychological adjustment" and "socio-cultural adjustment". Psychological adjustment refers to the perceived levels of happiness and satisfaction. Some of its factors, such as "pressure", "local friends", "life changes", "attitude towards interactions with local friends", and "other individual factors", will affect psychological adjustment. Meanwhile, factors affecting socio-cultural adjustment are mainly based on social learning theory and thus include assessments on the bases and models of interactions, such as "cross-cultural contact", "cultural distance", "previous cross-cultural experiences" and "length of residence".

Relevant studies on international students' language and cross-cultural adaptation

Chang (2011) studied about the relationship between international students' cross-cultural adaptation and dominant language in Taiwan. This study focused on the relationship between the linguistic competence acquired from studying abroad and the level of cross-cultural adaptation, as well as how they affect each other. The dimensions of scale include "studying and researching", "health and emotions", "interpersonal relationship", "local culture", and "financial conditions". It was found that international students' cross-cultural adaptation concerning the dimension of "studying and researching" was closely related to their Chinese proficiency.

There is also study by Supianoski (2012) on the cross cultural interactions of international students in college. This study was conducted on the campus of Midwestern by giving questionnaire and conducting interview. The results of the study indicated that cross cultural interactions of international students often occur, and cross cultural interactions affected students academically, socially, and psychologically.

Research Methodology

Participants

In all, there were six international students of English Department at State University of Semarang who participated in this study. Among them, five students are Turkish, while the other one is Kyrgyz. The demographic characteristics of the students are shown in Table 1. From the international students of English Department at State University of Semarang, five students are female (83,3%), and one is male (16,7%). All of them are 21 years old, and has been living in Indonesia for about three years. Meanwhile, related to the language proficiency, the students have studied Indonesian language at college for one year.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of International Students Surveyed

Characteristics	Number	Percentage	
Gender	Male	1	16,7
	Female	5	83,3
Age	21 years old	6	100
Length of Residence	3 years	6	100
Residence environment	Turkish	5	83,3
	Indonesian	1	16,7
Language Proficiency	Turkish	5	83,3
	Kyrgyz	1	16,7
	Indonesian	6	100
	Arabic	1	16,7
	Russian	1	16,7

Instruments

In order to reach the purpose of this study, the survey method was used since it provided a general picture of the cross cultural and language adaptation of international students of English Department at State University of Semarang. The survey method itself has long been used to probe the perceptions of a group concerning a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 1990).

There are two kinds of survey method that are adopted in this qualitative study: a written questionnaire and a follow-up face-to-face interview. The questionnaire was closed, while the instruments were based on the model used by Chang (2011). The questionnaire includes four dimensions of language and cross-cultural adaptation, they are dimension of studying and researching, health and emotions, social life, and local culture. Each dimension consists of some items. All of the international students participated in this questionnaire, with a return rate of 100%.

As the follow-up action to the questionnaire, face-to-face interview was conducted. It was aimed to confirm/clarify the participants' language and cross cultural adaptation identified in the questionnaire and to explore further about their language and cross-cultural adaptation. In all, six international students participated in this interview.

After giving questionnaire and conducting interview, the data that have been collected were analyzed by Holsti's content analysis method. Holsti (1969) defined content analysis as any technique to make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. The items of language and cross-cultural adaptation are presented to provide a qualitative description of the data collected in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Table 2. Dimensions and items of the adaptation

No	Dimensions	Items	N
1	Studying and Researching	I have been feeling happy since the first time I studied at Unnes	2
2		I feel happy recently with my study at Unnes	6
3		My study achievement is growing better	3
4		I am satisfied with the result of my study	3
5		I understand the study easily	5
6		I enjoy the process of learning in the classroom	5
7	Health and Emotions	I have had good health since the first time I came here	4
8		I have had a good health recently	5
9		I do not feel anxiety about the weather	5
10		I have stable mood	6
11		I do not often feel homesick	3
12	Social life	I have many local friends	4
13		I have many friends from other countries	2
14		I often get along with many local friends	2
15		I do not have difficulty in communication with local people	6
16		I can communicate well with the lecturers	5
17	Local culture	I understand and can integrate Indonesian culture in my life	5
18		Although I am a foreigner, I have integrated into the local life	5
19		I can easily participated in the Indonesian activities	1
20		I enjoy watching traditional show at Unnes	2
21		Indonesian are friendly, even to foreigner like me	6
22		I eat Indonesian food more often than my own country food in the daily life	6
23		I can eat Indonesian food recently	6

After giving questionnaire and conducting follow-up interview, there are some points that can be concluded from the four dimensions of language and cross-cultural adaptation that was observed. The dimensions are studying and researching, health and emotion, social life, and local culture that are shown in Table 2. Overall, time is the key factor of language and cross-cultural adaptation that experienced by international students of English Department at State University of Semarang, both Turkish and Kyrgyz students.

In the dimension of studying and researching, the participants conveyed their feeling about their study at Unnes and learning process in the classroom. All of them feel happy recently with their study at State University of Semarang, or known as “Unnes”. However, only two of them have been feeling happy since the beginning of the study. In the learning process in the classroom, five of them said that they enjoy it and can understand the lecture well. However, only three of them who are satisfied with the result of their study.

There are some factors that may contribute to the feeling of happiness of the participants with their study at Unnes. During lecture, lecturers tend to be patient in teaching the

international students, and understand the international students' problem as well. The learning standard between local students and international students is also different since they have different educational background in learning English. Moreover, local students in the same class often involve them in the group discussion. However, few of them feel happy since the beginning of their study because they have to experience adaptation related to the system of study in Indonesia.

The next dimension is about health and emotion, in which the participants do not express much anxiety. Although the seasons between their countries and Indonesia are different, they conveyed that their health tends to be good recently, even since the beginning of their living in Indonesia. They can adapt the two seasons in Indonesia well, that is dry and wet season, as well as adapt the weather in Semarang, that is relatively hot. This might be because seasons in Indonesia is less extreme than seasons in their countries. Adaptation from four seasons (autumn, spring, winter, summer) to two seasons (dry and wet) is not as difficult as adaptation from two seasons to four seasons. Meanwhile, psychologically, there was no participant who revealed that they have unstable mood. They also do not often feel homesick. One of the participants even said that it has been ten years since she lives apart from her family.

The participants expressed similar problem related to social life dimension. Although they did not express any difficulty in communication with local people, they can not easily participated in the daily conversation with local students. The main problem is that there are three different languages used at Unnes. In the classroom, the lecturers use English and sometimes Indonesian language. However, when they are talking to the lecturers personally, Indonesian language is considered formal. Meanwhile, local people, including other students, use Javanese language in the daily conversation. Both English and Indonesian language do not become problems because the international students have been learned these languages. The participants said that Indonesian language is considered easy, despite the different grammar and phonetic system between Indonesian and their source language. But Javanese language is widely-used dialect, and they have not learned this language yet.

The differences between Indonesian and their countries' culture lead to local culture dimension, that was also observed in this study. Five participants conveyed that they can understand and integrate to the Indonesian culture in their daily life. One of the reason is maybe because Indonesian are friendly, such as expressed by all six participants. In the interview, they said that in Turkey and Kyrgyzstan, people tend to be individual, but in Indonesia, people often easily greet and smile at them. This makes them easier in the process of adaptation with local culture in Indonesia. However, they tend to be inactive in Indonesian cultural activities, do not really enjoy in watching traditional shows, like traditional dance and music shows that are often held at Unnes. On the contrary, they still like listening to their own songs and watching their countries' movies.

This study also investigated the adaptation of food as the part of cultural adaptation. At the beginning of their living in Indonesia, the participants have difficulty in eating Indonesian food. This is caused by the differences of recipe and material for the food, especially on the use of spices. Indonesian food always use many spices, such as garlic, onion, pepper, etc.; on the other hand, Turkish and Kyrgyz food do not often use these. This makes the international students think that the taste of Indonesian food is too much rich with spices. Even in the interview, some of them said that at first, they often felt nausea when eating Indonesian food. Five participants conveyed that they still more often eat their food than Indonesian food, but one of them more often eat Indonesian food than their food. However, after some months living in Indonesia, they get accustomed to the food. Even they like the very famous Indonesian food, *rendang*, that is spicy beef made by using mixture of various spices and cooked in coconut milk.

Conclusion

From the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that international students' language and cross-cultural adaptation concerning the dimension of local culture has the highest level among four dimensions that were observed in this study. This dimension include the

Indonesian culture such as local language, traditional show, and Indonesian food, and so on. Meanwhile, the dimension of social life has the lowest score of adaptation. This is mainly triggered by the international students' frequency of getting along with local students, and also the distance between the international students' boarding house and local students' dormitory. The use of language plays role in this problem as well. Local students usually use Javanese language in the daily conversation, while international students learn only English and Indonesian.

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