

**The Study of Culture Shock Experienced by International Students Studying  
in Yogyakarta**

*A Skripsi*

Submitted to the Faculty of Language Education in a Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree Sarjana Pendidikan



Annisa Larasati

20150810107

**English language Education Departement**

**Language Education Faculty**

**Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta**

**2019**

## Abstract

In this globalization era, study abroad program are everywhere worldwide. Many international students from all around the world participate this program in order to study in a whole new environment and gain new experiences. The program allows the international and local students interact to one another. The interaction would likely cause culture shock and some people considered that as challenges. Meanwhile, international students, during the study, face different challenges. The aim of this study is to find out the international students perspective towards sources of culture shock as a challenge and their strategies to overcome those sources. This study was conducted in one private Islamic University in Yogyakarta. The researcher used qualitative approach and apply case study as the design. Case study was used because it is aimed to find out about certain phenomenon at a certain time. The participants of this study are one Taiwanese student from exchange program and one Thai student who took a bachelor degree. After taking the data, the result of this study showed that the sources of culture shock come from daily life basis and academic basis. The researcher divided the challenges into seven different items, which are; weather, outfit, people's character, custom, food, traffic, and language differences. These two participants have their own ways to overcome the challenges. Most of the ways to overcome the challenges is to accept and adapt with it.

*Keywords:* International students, sources of culture shock, strategies to overcome culture shock

## Background of the Study

To study and to live outside the country is a dream for some people. Since the globalization term exists it also brought a new term in the educational field which is study abroad (SA) (Falk & Kanach, 2015). As time goes by, globalization opens a wider chance for those who really want to study in other countries. From the year 2000 to 2010 the growth of study abroad increased, as can be seen from this statistic below (“The numbers of internationally mobile students”, 2018)

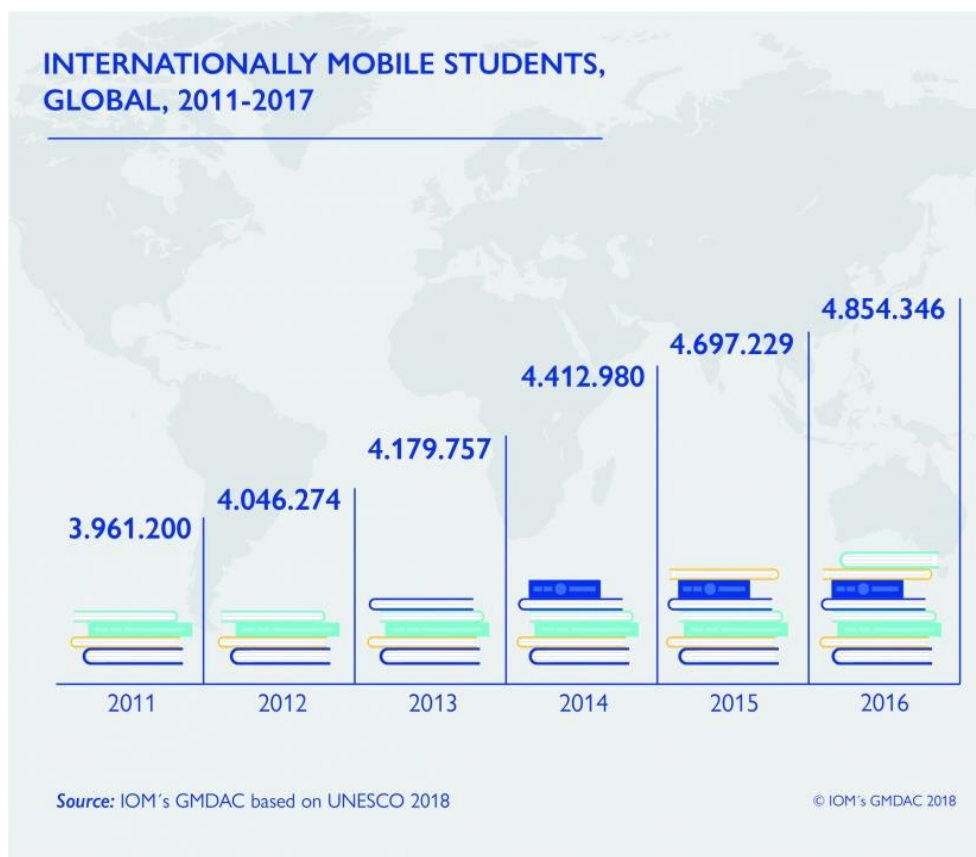


Figure 1 Internationally Mobile Students Global 2011 - 2017

Every country has its own specialties, characteristics, and values. Based on the table below, it showed the differences between Australia, China, Egypt, and Indonesia in several dimensions. The six dimensions are power, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation, and indulgence. Power is related to the government inequalities amongst the citizen. Individualism is about the level of interdependence in a society. Masculinity shows about competition in daily activities. Uncertainty avoidance has to do with what is the perspective from the people related to the future. Long term orientation deal with how people keep contact with the past. The last points talks about the desire which is an indulgence. From this, it reflects how one country differs between countries (“Hofstede Insight”, n.d).

In Indonesia alone, there are many institutions that receive international students from all around the world to study and stay in Indonesia for a particular time. Especially in Yogyakarta, the city is well-known as the city for the students in Indonesia. There are many international students that stay and study in Yogyakarta. Unfortunately, due to cultural differences with the host and home culture, some of the international students have to face culture shock during the program. The culture shock that the students faced exists when they have miss-communication with the local people, having trouble to find food due to different taste, and having problems in making friends with the local students.

Zakeer (2016) showed that the culture gap that existed between international students and the social behavior in Indonesia create challenges for them. This study aimed to find out the sources of culture shock faced by the

students who come to join the international program in one of the Islamic private universities in Yogyakarta and follow some courses to study for one semester. Not only the challenges the researcher tries to investigate, but also how they manage or adapt in order to handle their problem during their exchange program.

## **Methodology**

This research used the qualitative approach as the research design in order to get the data. Creswell (2012) examined that one of the characteristics in qualitative research is to seek to a problem and expand a more detailed perceptive of a phenomenon. In accordance with Creswell, qualitative research can be a way to explore a variation of dimensions of the social life such as; daily activities, the cycle of social life, and experiences (Mason, 2002)

This study wanted to explore more about culture shock phenomenon. The appropriate design to apply in this research is case study. Merriam (2009) pointed out that case study tends to focus more on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. A case study is used when the study is aimed to reveal a connection between certain conditions with a phenomenon under study (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

This study was conducted in one private Islamic university in Yogyakarta. The university is located in a suburb area, which need a fifteen to twenty minutes ride to the centre of the city. The university itself accepts international students from many countries such as Italy, Thailand, Turkey, America, Australia, and

Taiwan, and Africa. The international students can apply any major that available at the university.

The participants were selected based on several characteristics. The first is the participant should be an international student studying in selected private Islamic University in Yogyakarta. Second, the international students should stay in Indonesia for at least three or six months. The last, the international students should have at least one experience related to culture shock in Yogyakarta such as struggling with understanding the local culture. In order to make sure that the participants already qualified, the researcher asked the participants personally.

The first participant, which the data taken from preliminary research is a female Taiwanese student participating an exchange program for one semester in one private Islamic University in Yogyakarta. At 2018 she was already stay in Yogyakarta for one semester. The second participant also use pseudonym name and it is Clementine. When the research is conducted, Clementine was on the 3rd year.

The first instrument is reflective essay. This instrument was used because the researcher wants the reader to know the participant's true belief, assumptions, goals, and subjective (Ortlipp, 2008). The second instrument is interview. Correspondent with the purpose of this study, the interview's construction of the schedule applied in this study is open-ended items. Open-ended item means that there are no limitation for participant to answer all questions.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **The sources of culture shock that are faced by international students studying at one private Islamic University in Yogyakarta**

There are seven main answers found by the researcher which happen to know as the source of culture shock of International students who study in one of the Islamic private university in Yogyakarta.

**Weather differences.** From all of the two participants, only Lara Jean that faced culture shock related to weather. Clementine did not have an issue with the weather. It is likely because she is from Thailand which is also a tropical country like Indonesia.

**Outfit differences.** Both participants have an issue with the outfit differences. "I never see any female students wearing just jacket or short pants". Lara Jean still thinks that what the Indonesian students' habit in wearing the proper outfit to university is good.

**People's character.** Both participants mentioned that they have culture shock related to the people's character in Yogyakarta. Lara Jean said, "I think that Indonesian are very friendly, kind, enthusiastic, and love to helps stranger, unlike Taiwanese".

**Custom .** This source of culture shock was experienced by the second participant which is Clementine. The authentic culture in greetings from Thailand did not involve handshake, instead they putting their hands creating a prayer-like gesture and raise it between their chest and forehead then they bowed.

**Food differences.** Both participants Lara Jean and Clementine have their own Indonesian food problems. Lara Jean which happens to be a vegetarian is struggling to get veggie meal near the university area.

**Traffic Differences.** Only Lara Jean has problems in dealing with the traffic. Lara Jean stated that she thinks the traffic in Yogyakarta is too crowded, “I think that Indonesia’s traffic is so crowded and the driver is careless”.

**Language differences.** Both Lara Jean and Clementine have the same issue, which are language differences. Not all of them were fluent in Bahasa Indonesia before they stay in Yogyakarta. Lara Jean has to think when she talks to someone that does not speak Taiwanese or English.

### **The strategies that are used by international students to overcome culture shock?**

There are five main answers found by the researcher. It is shown that every participant has their own strategies in particular culture shock.

**Dealing with people's character differences.** After collecting the data, the researcher found two main different points related to people's character differences. All the participants mentioned ways to overcome this issue and the researcher divided the answer in terms of communicating with the local people and accepting the culture. Lara Jean and Clementine has their own way of overcoming their issue.



**Dealing with food differences.** From all the states from the participants, it shows that the best way to face culture shock in a different taste of food between the home cuisine and host cuisine is by cook the meal by themselves.

**Dealing with traffic.** Based on the findings from the first research question, it shows that only Lara Jean has trouble in facing traffic in Indonesia. Lara Jean said that she will just be careful to face the crowded traffic and careless driver.

**Dealing with language differences.** Both participants have the same strategy to face this issue. Lara Jean said that she take a course in the University “I took Bahasa Indonesia course at the University”. Same with Lara Jean, Clementine also learns the Indonesian language and even the traditional language. “I learn Indonesian language with my friends”.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings in chapter four, the researcher found several international students’ source of culture shock during the study program. Mostly the sources of culture shock tend to happen outside the classroom. The findings show that there are six different sources of culture shock that the participants faced. Differences from the aspect of weather, traffic, wearing, society’s culture, language gap, and food, those aspects were likely to become the major problems that the international students faced. Although, not all culture shock are negative reactions. Both participants gave positive reaction towards the certain source of culture shock. As an example, they think that it is very shocking to them to see

how Indonesians are very helpful and at the same time, Indonesian can live among differences. In fact, one of the participants thinks that different weather is a good thing for her because she thinks that every new experience is good for her. In conclusion, even though most of the culture shock shows negative reaction, there are still some of the reactions that positive to a particular situation.

The strategies that the international students use to overcome their culture shock during their stay at Indonesia are adapted with the culture such as; communication with the local people, food differences, weather, and cultural differences. One of the participants said that she wants to consider culture shock as a challenge so that he can create something better from it. This is very positive energy, both from the international students and all parties in the institute. The other participant said that he just adapt to all those differences and move on.

## References

- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researcher. *The Qualitative Report* , 544-559.
- Bellini, M, A, S. (2014). The four stages of culture shock. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.squaremouth.com/travel-advice/the-four-stages-of-culture-shock/>
- Compare Studies (n.d.). Retrieved January/February, 2019, from  
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>
- Creglia, N. (2016, 12 1). *www.hastac.org*. Dipetik 05 13, 2018, dari Impact Cultural Shock on Mental Healt: <https://www.hastac.org/blogs/natali-creglia/2016/12/01/impact-cultural-shock-mental-health>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). Research methods in education. 7th ed. London: Routledge, ch.21, p.409 s.d 443 (Interview)
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational reasearch: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th Edition ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- English, A. S., Zheng, Z. J., & Ma, J. H. (2015). The stress of studying in China : primary and secondary coping interaction effects. *Springer Plus* , 2-14.

- Fakir, M, S. (2018). Intercultural adaptation strategies to culture shock of international students in China: A Case Study. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 13(2), 1-14
- Falk, R., & Kanach, N. A. (2015). Globalization and Study Abroad: An Illusion of Paradox. *The Interdisciplinary Study* .
- Gayatri, N. M., & Andhini, I. N. (2016). International Students' Cross-Cultural and Language Adaptation in Indonesia an Analysis of Turkish and Kyrgyz Students of English Department State University of Semarang. *International Seminar Prasasti III*, (hal. 585 - 590). Semarang.
- Hansen, H, R., Shneyderman, Y., McNamara, G, S., Grace, L., (2018). Assessing Acculturative Stress of International Students at a U.S Community College. *Journal of International Students*, 8 (1).
- Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2012). Member Checking: Can Benefits Be Gained Similar to Group Therapy?. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(2), 510-517.  
Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss2/1>