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DEVELOPING HARMONY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN ELT

A Study of Indonesian Students' Culture Shock and Adaptation to The Malaysian Education System

Aini Nabila Ikhwanudin, Masrupi, Eri Rahmawati

Aininabill@gmail.com

Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Serang, Indonesia

masrupi@untirta.ac.id

Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Serang, Indonesia

eri.rahmawati@untirta.ac.id

Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Serang, Indonesia

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Abstract

This research aims to determine Indonesian students' culture shock toward the Malaysian Education System while studying at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The researcher used qualitative methods and employed participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. The subject of this research was Indonesian students at Universiti Sains Malaysia. More than 20 Indonesian students studied at USM, but only selected participants whom being observed by the researcher. Based on observation and interviews, it appears that students are experiencing culture shock, especially in education. There are several differences between the education systems in Indonesia and Malaysia, which led to this situation. One of them is the tutorial class, which is different from Indonesia. While experiencing cultural shock, students can adapt to the new environment by hanging out with friends and asking their friends or locals to help them deal with their problems, making student life easier. Thus, the researcher concludes that Indonesian students have experienced culture shock at Universiti Sains Malaysia but have managed to cope.

Keywords: Adaptation; Malaysian Education System; Student's Culture Shock

INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad has become popular and interesting for students; students are studying across the nation for higher education to experience the life changing from their home country to a different country target. In addition, they believe that studying abroad gives them more advantages, for instance, enhancing intercultural awareness and enlarging their future life in the globalization era (Sabaruddin, 2019). Thus, because of the student's demand for studying abroad, many universities worldwide accomplished the internalization of higher education (HE), or else universities are developing student mobility so they can accept students from worldwide yet universities can support their students abroad. Hence, in 2017, more than 5 million students were studying abroad (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). In the few decades, the demand of studying abroad has become popular in Indonesia and, most Indonesian students prefer English-speaking countries to pursue their study to enhance their English skills such as Australia, the United States, Canada, and England (Primadhyata cited in Sabaruddin, 2019). Nonetheless, not only English-speaking countries as preferred countries but also English as a Second

Language countries. Malaysia is one of the ESL-Country chosen by the student proven by data conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (cited in Hendriana et al., 2019) which stated that Indonesia is listed as the top 5 sending country for international students in Malaysia. Malaysia is one of the listed countries that students want to study. Because, in Malaysia, the student also tends to speak in English because of the language barrier between the Malay language and the Indonesian Language, and the lecturer session is in English, hence, this will help students to enhance their English Language.

Studying abroad may give students benefit where they can boarder their knowledge along with international exposure they get, but students also tend to face difficulties while studying overseas because of the differences, which is called culture shock. Research conducted by Ernofalina (2017) entitled “Culture Shock Experienced by Indonesian Students Studying Overseas” found that most Indonesian students face academic and non-academic difficulties such as language differences where it makes them hard to survive. Another research by Bahri& Sitorus (2022) in their research titled “ An Analysis of Cultural Shock of Education System by Indonesian Students in Singapore” found that most students face cultural difficulties such as academic differences. Moreover, another research conducted in the U.S with the title “ Culture Shock Experienced by Indonesian Student in the U.S” by Hasyim & Nur (2022) shows that Indonesian students facing culture shock in the U.S in non-academic terms such as language, food, religions, time orientation, tradition, weather, dress, individualism, and structure. Based on the findings above, the researcher wants to understand what causes culture shock among Indonesian students at the University of Sains Malaysia, specifically when it comes to the educational system there. The researcher chooses the title because first, Untirta students rarely research the case. Second, the researcher wants to discover if there is any culture shock faced by Indonesian students in the education system in Malaysia. Third, how do Indonesian students adapt to Malaysia’s Education system? Whereas this research uses qualitative data for the research method. Thus, the research only focuses on Indonesian students at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

In this study, the researcher focuses on Indonesian students’ culture shock and adaptation to the Education System used at (USM) University Sains Malaysia. The researcher chooses USM as a focused university because USM is known as top 5 Universities in Malaysia, and the top 10 top universities in Southeast Asia (QS University Rankings). Yet, USM also is known as an APEX (Accelerated Program for Excellence) university in Malaysia. This means that the educational system and academic performance at USM are excellent, and it is a rapid development initiative that aids tertiary institutions in becoming world-class institutes (Li & Zaaba, 2022). Therefore, the researcher is interested to limit the student of Indonesian students that study at USM.

METHOD

Research Design

This research utilized a Qualitative study with a case study research design. Qualitative design means to discover and investigate the group of people influenced by the environment. Creswell (in Anas, 2022) stated that the qualitative approach is used to observe an individual experience, attitudes, behavior, beliefs, and interaction. As a result, an in-depth interview is the best research design for this study. This research utilized a case study research design. Sagadin (in Adrijana, 2013) case study is used to analyze and describe each individual (e.g., activities, special needs, life situations, life histories, etc.), a group of individuals (e.g., a department of the school, a group of special needs students, a teaching staff), an institution, or a problem (or several problems), a process, a phenomenon or an event within an institute. The researcher tries to look at students' culture shock faced when they study in a different environment yet with different academic fields.

Subject of the Research

There are 20 Indonesian students at University Sains Malaysia. The researcher chooses 7 Indonesian students at the University of Sains Malaysia. The research employed a purposive sampling method, where the researcher chooses participants according to a set of criteria (Andrade, 2021). The participant's criteria are (1) students who always gather with the local community because when they gather with the locals, their exposure will be more to Malaysian culture and its language. (2) Students who are in the same major as the researcher, because to simplify the observation, the researcher chooses these students to also be observers for their engagement with the lecturer. The participants of this study were Indonesian students who studied at the University of Sains Malaysia.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher used three data collection techniques: Participants Observation, semi-structured Interview, and Documentation. Moreover, in this research, the researcher utilized three instruments, which are observation sheets, interview guidance, and documentation. First, the researcher observed the classroom activity, which focused on the student engagement with the lecturer, then outside the classroom. Second, the researcher interviewed the participant via google meet, then documented the classroom session, and during the online interview. To analyze the data, this research used Miles and Huberman's (2014) three data analysis: Data Condensation, Data Display, and Drawing Conclusion.

RESULT

The result of data in this study was obtained from the resources namely observation, interview, and documentation. The data was described by drawing a table and narratively explained by the researcher.

Table 1. Observation Report at Digital Communication 101 Class

Date of Observation	Students Engagement
1/2/2023	Students answer the teacher's questions about related material before the class begins.
1/9/2023	Students are shocked because they should finish a project within an hour and present it before the class ended.
1/16/2023	Students continuously do questions and answer with the lecturer.
1/23/2023	Students endlessly do questions and answer with the lecturer.
1/30/2023	Students ask a question as well during the session.

From the observation sheet above, it can be concluded that during the lecture every weekend, the student always asks a question to the lecturer about the material given, and the lecturer always asks a question to the student before the class begins about the material that they learned. Yet, the lecturer is full in English, there is no "Bahasa Melayu" in every session.

Table 1. Student daily activity at Minden Library, Tekun Dormitory, and Ivory Plaza

Date of Observation	Place	Students Engagement
1/2/2023	Minden Library	Students are feeling overwhelmed because they have tons of assignments such as projects to do that they never experience before.
1/9/2023	Minden Library	Students doing group projects by recording both local and international students about an issue.
1/16/2023	Ivory Plaza	Students are having dinner with Thailand and Malaysian food, and they love Roti Canai, which is quite hard to find in Indonesia.
1/23/2023	Tekun Dormitory	Students are shocked by one Malaysian cuisine called Nasi Kerabu because of its taste.
1/30/2023	Tekun Dormitory	Because of the never-ending project, students continued their project until midnight at the dormitory right after back from the library.

From the observation sheet above, it can be concluded that most of the students are having difficulties coping with the assignment given by the lecturer. They have to finish the assignment every day until midnight. As for the non-academic activities, although students are quite shocked by one of Malaysia dishes called "Nasi Kerabu", but they love the dish called "Roti Canai", which is quite rare to find in Indonesia.

The researcher interviewed Indonesian students and asked about culture shock in academic and non-academic field. The interview data is being used to strengthen and clarify the observation result. The interview was conducted online via Zoom meeting, and there are seven questions related to the topic. The interview content is all about culture shock in academic and non-academic fields.

The first interview question was used to obtain data on why Indonesian students choose University Sains Malaysia as a target university to study.

Q1: "As part of your exchange program, why did you choose USM as your target university?"

RQ1M.A: “I choose USM because they rank 143rd on QS World University. Other than that, they have many good facilities such as a working space, sports area, cafeterias, etc. Malaysia is a very diverse country which interested me in learning about their cultures.”

The second question was used to obtain data about the respondent’s first impression when they attend USM, yet at the same time to see if there are any differences, in their comfortableness with the situation.

Q2: “Does USM feel different when you first attend, or do you feel comfortable with the nuance?”

RQ2R.K: “Even though physically the campus has the same characteristics as my home university, the environment, and the people are very different. I got pretty shocked when I realized that Malaysia is populated by a very wide range of races, and especially in USM, a lot of people from around the world study there. That’s why USM is very diverse, but eventually, I got used to it and even liked it because I get to know many new things.”

The third questions were about acquiring data about language difficulties that probably Indonesian student face when they are studying at USM

Q3: “As a student in Malaysia, did you experience any language difficulties?”

RQ3A.R: “...I had difficulty when I tried to talk in English and Malay to some Malaysia-India locals because they seem don’t use both of that languages and use the Indian language in their daily conversation

The fourth question is about acquiring education differences between Education in Indonesia and Education in Malaysia

Q4: “Does the education system at USM shock you? If so, how does it differ from your own?”

RQ4R.I: “...the differences are, in USM there are tutorial sessions where we don’t have that in Indonesia, and in USM they are more structure in terms of teaching plan.”

The fifth question is to discover any aspect that might make the participant shocked in non-academic fields

Q5: “Have you experienced anything else that shocked you? (e.g foods, lifestyle, Environment)”

RQ5A.V: “The food. The food in Malaysia uses lots of spices, especially curry! and it shocked me that Penang is very diverse, there are Chinese, Indian, Malays, and Arab.”

The sixth question was about how the participant coped with the difficulties they faced when they are studying at USM.

Q6: “What did you do to deal with the challenges you encountered during your studies?”

RQ6R.I: “I would go to a cafe near my dorm and just write everything that I need to know about the topic. I sometimes also ask my local friends how to do certain assignments.”

The seventh question was used to obtain data about the benefits of studying abroad because even though there are a lot of difficulties they faced, they must get the benefit.

Q7: “Are there any benefits you experience when studying with a learning system that is different from what you are used to?”

RQ7R.I: “There are so many benefits that I got from the experience. I could understand more about pharmacies in Malaysia and how they are regulated and so. I could also learn that to survive the academic

year sometimes there is stuff that we need to sacrifice such as time, money, and experience. But it was all worth it to me!”

It can be concluded that the majority of the student felt the cultural shock they faced while studying abroad at University Sains Malaysia; such as learning style differences, food, and the environment. Yet, some students do not feel the cultural shock in terms of language. In addition, most of the students also found solutions to facing the difficulties, which then successfully brought them advantages.

DISCUSSION

Based on the result findings, the researcher can conclude that studying abroad in Malaysia caused students experienced culture shock in terms of education and non-education. For the first observation, the researcher finds that student engagement with the lecture was quite good because the students seemed ready to engage in the class by answering the lecturer questions. Although not all students answered the lecturer’s questions, but, again, it is because most of the students prepared themselves, so, it makes the Indonesian students got triggered by the classroom nuance. Thus, they tended to ask a question to the lecturer about the related material. This means that students were having behavioural and cognitive engagement, whereas behavioural engagement is when students attend the lectures and participate in the session (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, and Paris drew on Bloom cited in Trowler, 2010). Yet, in non-academic terms, the students went to the library to finish their work. Students anticipated in the learning process and in finishing their project before the due date.

1. Indonesian Student’s Culture Shock

The first culture shock experienced by the student was the exam regulation. Students in USM are mandatory to be less plagiarism, and when they enter the examination hall, they are not allowed to bring their bags, even their smartphone, they should put it beside their feet, and, there are four or more exam proctors, so the student they cannot cheating to each other. A student with initial A.R. stated, “The exam regulation quite makes me a shock, because we held our exam inside a very big hall, which I never experienced before in my home university, and we have to bring our exam card otherwise we cannot follow the exam or we have to pay to the administration office.”

The second culture shock experienced by Indonesian students was the tutorial class. A tutorial class is a small version of each classroom, where each regular class is divided into three or four tutorial classes depending on the student and they will usually discuss the topic that has already been discussed in the regular class. A tutorial class is a class with a small version of several students usually consisting of 10-20 to discuss a subject that is also taught in a regular class. In a tutorial, the students most likely will face exercises and activities that will be different each week.

2. Indonesian Student Adaptation

Syamsul & Sitorus (2022) stated that it is needed for every international student to adapt and understand the surrounding condition, so they can back to normal and can accept the situation. In this interview, the result shows that two adaptation processes usually did by the students.

The first adaptation process usually done by the student is that Socialize with other friends because it makes, them accept the situation without any hesitation. One of the participants, R.K., said,

Having fun with my friends, Ni. Since I got a lot of new friends there, it is very easy to distract my thoughts from my problems to another thing. In this case, talking and chatting helps a lot. They can either ease the burden of deadlines that are coming, accompany me to finish the assignments, or even help me to find solutions.

The second adaptation process is asking for help. Participant under the initial, M.A. stated,

When I feel I got lost here, I am having difficulties with the situation, I usually tried to ask the buddies to help me out. Because, when I asked them about anything I am confused about, it will help me a lot, because there is a time when I got sick of the food here and I asked them to help me out to find another food.”

Thus, it can be concluded that Indonesian students cope with the situation is with socializing with others and asking for help from others.

The third culture shock in Education fields is the teaching plan. In Universiti Sains Malaysia the teaching plan is quite different from Indonesia. One of the participants, R.K., said, “In sum, at the first meeting of the class, all the lecturers will give out a teaching plan that has the same format.”

The last culture shock experienced by the student was in non-academic fields, which is food. Most of the students mention that the food is making them shocked because they think that the food will be not that different. After all, Indonesian and Malaysian are quite the same, but it turns out that it was very different, in Malaysia they can easily find Chinese, Indian, Arabic, and Thailand food. Even, there is one Malaysian food that cannot fit with their taste. Student under initial R.I. mentioned,

To be honest, Ni, I am very impressed by the food here because I am quite shocked when I found out that in Malaysia there is a lot of Indian food, and then Malaysian food. Even inside the campus there is a big and very well-known Indian restaurant called Subaidah, right, and that makes me a shock because again it is very easy to find Indian food, Thai food as well.

But some students do not feel any culture shock in non-academic terms, R.A., mentioned, “There is no culture shock beside the academic terms. Everything is okay here. I love the food, the nuance, and ya I think I love Malaysia so much, Ni.”

From the statement above, it can be concluded that two over seven students are being interviewed by the researcher did not face culture shock in non-academic fields. They just experienced culture shock in academic fields. It can be concluded that 7/7 students being interviewed faced academic culture shock, and there are only 5 over 7 students who faced culture shock in non-academic terms.

3. Implication

Several culture shock findings of this research can be implemented on pedagogic. Pedagogics is the art or the science of how to become a teacher, in this case, it is very closely related (Purba et al.,

2021). Pedagogics is education that emphasizes education practice (Suwarno cited in Purba et al., 2021). This is in line with the biggest culture shock in the education system where there are huge differences between Malaysia in Indonesia: Tutorial Classes and Teaching Plans. Based on the findings, a tutorial class is a small group of students who are most likely doing a group project and learning more about the related material. In addition, the teaching plan is so well prepared. There are exact schedules for exams, group projects, and so on. The suggested cultural adjustments for the Indonesian education system include implementing a well-planned teaching plan to help students adjust to assignments and learn before class. Additionally, introducing tutorial classes could make students more engaged in group projects and provide a platform for a deeper understanding of materials. This approach could not only enhance comprehension but also aid students in preventing culture shock while studying abroad.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, students face culture shock in both academic and non-academic aspects when studying in Malaysia. The education system, exam regulations, tutorial classes, and diverse food options contribute to the differences between Malaysia and Indonesia. Adaptation strategies include socializing with peers, both local and Indonesian, and seeking help from friends or local students to overcome challenges and prevent cluelessness. These findings underscore the importance of social interaction and seeking assistance while studying abroad.

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