

Indonesian Students Adaptation to Culture Shock: A Case Study of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree Students - European Union

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Abstract

Currently, the number of Indonesian students who receive scholarships to continue their studies in Europe is increasing day by day. They managed to get scholarships not only from the Indonesian government but also from the governments of European countries that are members of the European Union. One of the scholarship programs that are in great demand by Indonesian students is the Erasmus Mundus Program with its uniqueness, namely that each student must attend education in 3 countries in Europe. This study aims to answer questions about why culture shock is experienced by Indonesian students who are recipients of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship and how Indonesian students who receive the Erasmus Mundus scholarship overcome culture shock in order to be able to adapt to a new environment. This research is a qualitative research with a case study approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and in a fluid atmosphere. In this study, as many as 5 Indonesian students received the European Union Erasmus Mundus scholarship to take a Postgraduate program in Europe. The results of this study prove that adaptation can be done through 5 factors, namely personal communication, host social communication, ethnic social communication, environment, and predisposition.

Keywords

adaptation, culture shock,
erasmus mundus



I. Introduction

Currently, quite a lot of Indonesian students have the opportunity to study abroad. Based on a study by the Indonesian International Education Consultant Association, the number of Indonesian students studying abroad is increasing every year, up to now reaching 35,000. Especially for the European region, there has been a significant increase in the number of Indonesian students from 6,300 students at the end of 2016, to 11,000 students. In 2021, there will be 139 Indonesian students and lecturers who received scholarships from the European Union, and 81 of them received scholarships for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree program.

Apart from the increasing number of Indonesian students abroad, various problems have also begun to emerge, especially those related to communication. Most of the Indonesian students who received scholarships from the Erasmus Mundus program were from areas outside Jakarta, and had never been abroad. Therefore, it is not surprising that these Indonesian students experienced various problems and obstacles. Indonesian students generally experience a culture shock when they first set foot in another country. They see and feel a different culture when they first enter a new environment, with new people, new habits,

with all the differences. This is unlikely to trigger chaos that can be vented in the form of negative prejudice, doubts in interacting, giving rise to vulnerabilities such as stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and prejudice.

One of the scholarship programs from the European Union that provides opportunities for Indonesian youth to study in Europe is the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship program. This is a high-level integrated study program at master level. The Erasmus Plus (Erasmus +) scholarship from the European Union is somewhat different from other scholarships. Erasmus Plus has several postgraduate programs.

Students from all over the world can choose from one of the 130 programmes. The EU Scholarship includes tuition, travel and living expenses. The programs offered by Erasmus Mundus are very diverse, including education, training, youth and sports, with funds reaching €16 billion.¹ Quite a number of Indonesian students have received the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program. According to data, since 2004, no less than 264 Indonesian youths have had the opportunity to study and live in Europe, funded by the European Union. The Erasmus Mundus Scholarship is also not only given to students who will pursue post-graduate education, but also lecturers to continue their education to a higher level (Doctoral). In 2020, the number of Erasmus Mundus scholarship recipients from Indonesia will reach 94 people.

One of the requirements set by the Erasmus Mundus Consortium for candidates who will apply for a scholarship to study in Europe is that the candidate has never received a scholarship from the government or international institution and has never studied abroad before. Therefore, it is not surprising that almost all Indonesian students who study abroad experience culture shock in the early days of living abroad. This is due to differences in culture, food, weather, habits, or feelings of being a different minority. The topic of Indonesian students or students abroad is becoming increasingly interesting because they study at a university with a very heterogeneous population and will lead to identity. This is where a sense of mutual respect and respect for diversity or differences will be built.

This study aims to answer the questions (a) Why culture shock is experienced by Indonesian students who are recipients of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship and (b) How Indonesian students who receive the Erasmus Mundus scholarship overcome culture shock in order to be able to adapt to a new environment. The results of this study will provide a great contribution not only to international students, but also to universities and youth organizations that organize youth exchange programs between countries.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Culture Shock Theory

Stella in Hayqal (2011) states that culture shock is an emotional phenomenon caused by a person's cognitive disorientation, causing a disturbance in identity. Culture shock is a generic process that arises whenever the components of a living system are insufficient for the demands of a new cultural environment (Kim as cited by Abbasian & Sharifi, 2013). Another researcher who also explains the meaning of culture shock is Odera (in Niam, 2009) who explains that this culture shock will be experienced by people who travel and meet new cultures.

The culture shock enhanced by Furnham and Bochner (1986) itself can occur as a result of the following factors:

1. Loss of cues or familiar signs, such as body movements (gestures), facial expressions.

2. Circumstances where interpersonal communication is considered broken, which will eventually lead to a condition of frustration and excessive anxiety. The language barrier is the obvious cause of this disorder.
3. An identity crisis that is usually done by going out of the area for a moment, and will come back while evaluating what has been done. (Dayakisni, 2012: 265).

Quite a lot of international students when arriving in a new place and environment will experience acculturation stressors which are usually caused by language factors, loneliness, discriminatory treatment, changes in socio-culture, or feeling like a minority in another country (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Lin and Yi (1997) in Alavi and Mansor (2011) suggest that what is meant by socio-cultural situations include difficulties in adapting to suitable accommodation conditions, for example different types of toilets, food, financial difficulties, different ways of eating, or even different types of food, high academic demands. These things will make foreign students feel more pressure and the greater the challenges they face to adjust to a new culture.

Larry A Samovar (2010:477) introduced the U curve and explained that there are 4 stages of culture shock, namely optimistic/honeymoon, cultural problems, adjustment phase, mastery phase, as can be seen in the image below.

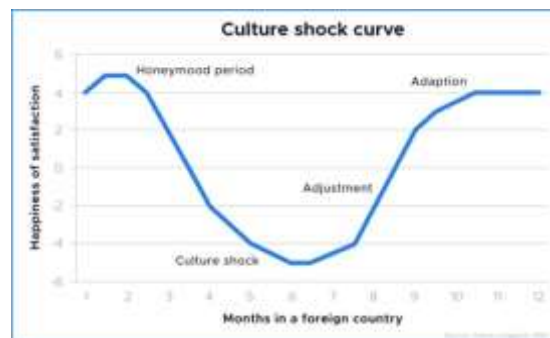


Figure 1. U Curve of Culture Shock
Source: Larry A. Samovar (2010)

The optimistic or honeymoon phase is the first phase depicted at the top left of the U curve. This phase contains excitement, hope, and honeymoon as an individual anticipates before entering a new culture. The second one is cultural problems or the second phase in which problems with the new environment begin to develop, for example due to language difficulties, new traffic systems, new schools, and others. This phase is usually marked by feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction. This is a period of crisis in culture shock. People become confused and dumbfounded by their surroundings, and can become frustrated and irritable, become hostile, irritable, impatient, and even incompetent. The third is adjustment phase where people begin to understand about their new culture. At this stage, people gradually make adjustments and changes in the way they cope with the new culture. Adaptation efforts are already starting to show results. Routine activities are no longer a problem for them. After that, enter the adaptation phase, and the fourth is mastery phase which is the last phase, at the top right of U, people have understood the key elements of their new culture such as values, special manners, communication patterns, beliefs, and others.

2.2 Adaptation Strategy

Someone who is outside the environment in which he lives, will try to adapt in order to adapt to the culture and customs in a new place. This is known as the adaptation strategy. In this context, Indonesian students are studying in Europe. Adaptation goes on and processes

until someone feels comfortable doing the things they want (Mareza & Nugroho, 2016). The occurrence of intercultural adaptation through 2 factors, namely cultural adaptation and cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001). In cultural adaptation, the occurrence of encoding and decoding or what is called enculturation will proceed. Meanwhile, cross-cultural adaptation has three aspects in it, namely acculturation, deculturation, and assimilation. The factors driving a person's success in adapting according to Young Yu Kim are: personal communication, host social communication, ethnic social communication, environment and predisposition (Kim, 2001). Many of the foreign students managed to adapt quickly in the country where they studied, but many also had to take a long time and some even failed to adapt so they had to be sent back to their home countries.

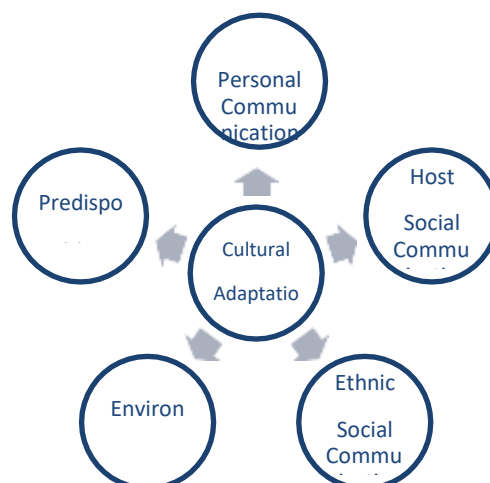


Figure 2. Cultural Adaptation
Source: Kim (2001)

- (a) *Personal Communication*. This happens when a person feels there are different things in the environment where he is. With this difference, he reacts spontaneously to other objects or people. In this stage there will be an adjustment process using personal communication competencies which are reduced to three parts, namely cognitive, affective, and operational aspects.
- (b) *Host social communication*. It consists of interpersonal communication and mass communication. Interpersonal communication in question is communication that is realized in the form of interaction between individuals at the interpersonal level. Host social communication occurs between individual immigrants and individuals from the local culture so that there are cultural differences between the two.
- (c) *Ethnic social communication*. Derived from interpersonal communication and mass communication. It's just that ethnic social communication occurs between individuals with the same cultural background, for example, immigrant individuals interact with individuals who have the same origin and culture as them.
- (d) *Environment*. This can be considered access to entry especially for immigrants. It can also be said to initiate initial contact. The tolerance given by the hosts in respecting cultural practices that differ from theirs will pave the way for the adjustment of the settlers.
- (e) *Predisposition*. It refers more to the personal experiences of immigrants before they arrive at their destination. This includes what background they have, what kind of experience they had before joining the local culture. The combination of these factors provides the overall adaptability potential of individual immigrants.

III. Research Methods

This research is a research that uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. In general, case studies will answer the "how" and "why" questions. The case study is suitable to be used in this research because it will focus on answering the questions why culture shock is experienced by Indonesian students who are recipients of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship and how Indonesian students who are recipients of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship overcome culture shock to adapt to a new environment. Ethnicity as one that sustains a sense of primordialism is often interpreted as a social group in a social or cultural system that has a certain meaning or position because of heredity, customs, religion, language, and so on (Angkat, 2019). This culture can be found in various aspects and scope, such as economics, education, law, and politics (Wayan, 2020). Organizational culture is a subsystem in organizations other than subsystems such as business concepts, strategy and technology (Alvesson in Marbu, 2020).

Research questions will focus on a number of events that are being studied and look for relationships. A case study is a qualitative design that uses a small sample, so that with a good sample selection, the results to be achieved in the research will be optimal. In this case, the selection of a small group of population, is expected to represent the sample population as a whole.

The interview technique used in this study is semi-structured interview, because this type of interview can provide flexibility for researchers to develop questions in the field based on answers from informants. Interviews were conducted with 5 (five) people, consisting of Indonesian students who received the Erasmus Mundus scholarship, who were studying in Europe. The next data collection technique was document study. For document studies, researchers will use information and data related to the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program, European Union. Yin (2014, p. 140) mentions that document studies can provide other specific details that corroborate information from other sources. According to Sukmadinata (2010, p.221) documentary study is a study of data collection techniques by collecting and analyzing written documents, pictures and electronics.

Data analysis according to Patton in Moleong (2000: 103) is a process of arranging data sequences, organizing them into a pattern, categorization, and basic description units. According to Bogdan and Biklen in Moleong (2007: 248) data analysis is an effort made by working with data, organizing data, sorting it into manageable units, synthesizing it, looking for and finding patterns, finding what is important and what is learned. , and decide what to tell others. The data analysis technique used in this study refers to the concept of Mudjia Rahardjo (2017) which classifies data analysis in six steps, namely: (a) Data Collection. Researchers used semi- structured interview techniques and documentation. (b) Data Refinement. The researcher will re- read all the data obtained by referring to the research question. (c) Data Processing. Researchers check and correct the data, classify and correct answers that are not clear. (d) Data Analysis. Researchers conducted an in-depth analysis of all the collected interviews. (e) Data Analysis Process. Researchers will provide codes and perform classifications based on certain groups according to the formulation of the problem. (f) Conclusions of Research Results. The researcher will make a synthesis of all that has been stated previously.

IV. Discussion

4.1 Results

The results of the researcher's interviews with the informants are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. The Results of the Researcher's Interview with Indonesian Students who received the Erasmus Mundus scholarship

No	Themes	Students' Opinions
1.	The feeling when you get Erasmus Mundus scholarship to Europe	(a) Very happy. Can't be described in words (b) Feeling grateful and proud can make my parents happy and proud of me (c) Feeling very happy to see the European continent with developed countries (d) I was so happy and moved to think that I had arrived in Europe.
2.	Types of Culture Shock experienced by Indonesian students	(a) Extreme Cold Weather (b) Food (No Rice) (c) Public Area - Escalator (Left / Right) - Public Transportation (d) Time (Punctuality) (e) People - Not very friendly - More Individualistic (f) Language (Accent) (g) Religious Life - Difficult to find a place for praying/worship - Ied Mubarak is quiet (h) Anxiety - Feeling like a minority - Feeling humiliated for coming from the third world (a) Learn to motivate yourself and remember what the purpose of coming to Europe was. Not for walking but for seeking knowledge (Personal Communication) (b) Build confidence and establish communication with a batch of friends from various countries and also with people from Europe (Host Communication) (c) Trying to find students from Indonesia and building friendships with staff at Indonesian representative offices such as the Indonesian Embassy, Airlines, Travel Agency, etc. (Ethnic Social Communication) (d) Looking for a place to live (dormitory) with Indonesian students to feel safer and more comfortable (Environment) (e) Utilize experiences in interacting with foreign students in Indonesia, experiences when participating in youth exchange programs abroad, and knowledge about Europe and the destination country before leaving for Europe (Predisposition) 2 months (The Netherlands) 3 months (Czech Republic) 3 months (Germany) 3 months (UK) 4 months (France)

4.2 Discussion

From the results of the analysis above, it can be obtained data that when Indonesian students first received information that they had succeeded in getting the Erasmus Mundus scholarship from the European Union, various feelings raged, ranging from happy, to happy, to moved. There are also those who immediately prepare the goods to be brought, but there are also those who try to find as much information as possible about Europe and its destination countries.

“I can't describe how I felt when I first received the email containing the information that I was one of 60 Indonesian students who received the Erasmus Mundus scholarship to study in three European countries. I try to prepare myself as well as possible, starting from looking for information about the countries where I will study to deepening the language.” (RE – Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Recipient)

“When I first received the news that I was accepted to study in Europe, I immediately told my parents, and my relatives. I also tell my friends. There is joy, emotion but also worry about whether I can live my life and study in a country I have never been to.” (AD- Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Recipient)”

What this informant said is in accordance with Larry A Samovar's (2010) statement that the first phase of culture shock is a honeymoon where in this phase, students' enthusiasm to learn about a new culture also becomes high, such as excitement when they find new friends, talk in foreign languages and learn new things about their new country. This makes the student feel curious. However, when they first set foot in Europe, a number of these Indonesian students experienced a culture shock. This is very diverse, ranging from food, very extreme weather, language, problems in public areas, to the character of the people or local communities encountered.

“In the first month I was in Prague, I went through a pretty heavy culture shock. The weather in Prague is very extreme. According to the information I got from various sources, the weather in Czech is among the coldest in Europe. Apart from the weather, there are also language problems because most people in Prague don't speak English, including officers like the police. When I lost my wallet a few days after arriving in Prague, I reported it to the police station, with the intention of requesting a certificate that I lost my wallet which contained a Student Card, Library Card, ATM Card etc., but due to problems in communication, I could only report without getting the letter I mean.” (IR- Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Recipient)”

In addition, problems are also encountered in public areas. In Europe it's like an unwritten rule, if we use the escalator, we must immediately stand on the left side because the right side is for those who are in a hurry. As many as 4 out of 5 Indonesian students interviewed claimed to have been reprimanded by people for using the escalator not in accordance with existing rules. An Indonesian student who had to live in France experienced a more severe culture shock than his friends who lived in other European countries such as the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Germany, or Belgium due to language barriers. The language problem is a major obstacle, considering that French people do not like to speak English. So even if you live in a big city like Paris, you will have a hard time if you don't really master the language.

“Before leaving for Paris, I had taken a French language course for 6 months in Jakarta. Even if it's just for everyday conversation, I'm sure I understand what it means when someone speaks French. But I was very surprised when I just landed my feet at Charles de Gaulle airport, it turns out that people all speak French very quickly and have thick accents. This makes me 'down' because I really don't understand what it means. Well, this language problem then develops into other

problems. Because I don't understand the language, there is always a fear of starting a conversation. During the first 3 months I was really stressed. (GH – Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Recipient)”

Meanwhile, the five Indonesian students said that to overcome culture shock and be able to adapt to a new environment, efforts were needed. Besides that, building confidence and establishing communication with a batch of friends from various countries and also with people from Europe (Host Communication). To eliminate the longing for family and overcome the homesickness that started to come, the Indonesian students tried to find students who came from fellow Indonesians and formed friendships with staff at Indonesian representative offices such as the Indonesian Embassy, Airlines, Travel Agency, etc (Ethnic Social Communication. This is very helpful, because it can at least provide a sense of security and comfort, including finding a place to live (dormitory)/apartment with Indonesian students to feel more secure and comfortable (Environment). For students who have a background in having participated in a youth exchange program, they do not experience a severe culture shock, because they can quickly get up and motivate themselves to adapt to a new environment (Predisposition). This is in line with Kim's statement (2001:227-230) which states that there are five things that are factors in adaptation, namely personal communication, host social communication, ethnic social communication, environment, and predisposition.

V. Conclusion

This research case study aims to answer the question why culture shock is experienced by Indonesian students who are recipients of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship and how Indonesian students who receive the Erasmus Mundus scholarship overcome culture shock in order to be able to adapt to a new environment. Based on the results of the discussion, it can be concluded that Indonesian students experienced a culture shock when they first set foot in Europe. The factors that cause culture shock are extreme weather problems, food problems (difficulty getting rice / rice), language, more individualistic people around, religious life, customs and regulations in public areas, and very punctual time problems. This study proves that culture shock can be overcome by an adaptation process consisting of 5 factors, namely: personal communication, host social communication, ethnic social communication, environment, and predisposition. For future research, the researchers suggest to conduct a study on culture shock of Indonesian students in another ocean with a different approach.

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