



## Second-Language Acquisition and Culture Shock of Islamic Foreign Students in Indonesia

Ainul Yaqin<sup>1\*</sup>, Afif Kholidin<sup>2</sup>, Ati Samrotul Mawadda<sup>3</sup>, Ali M. Shniba<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup>Pendidikan Agama Islam, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Islamic Centre Demak, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Language, Elmergib University, Libya

\*Penulis Korespondensi: [yaqina21@gmail.com](mailto:yaqina21@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** Understanding the implementation of Second Language Acquisition and Culture Shock for Islamic foreign students who study and stay in Indonesia is very important in their daily lives. This is to encourage the differences and also to socialize and adapt quickly to the local environment. This research is to provide knowledge in improving the quality of language so that there is no confusion in dealing with culture shock and cultural and language differences. The research design of this study is qualitative method since it provides a systematic, factual, and accurate of a situation of area. Technique of collecting data is essay, questionnaire, interview and observation. This research employs a qualitative approach within a phenomenological paradigm. The use of this method is appropriated with the purpose of the study that is explaining the educational, cultural, and linguistic adjustments. The participants are at least five students who study and stay in Indonesia for more than a year. The result of the research showed that there are so many differences based on culture, religion, language and their adaptation in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Cultural Adaptation; Culture Shock; Foreign Students; Language Acquisition; Second Language

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, Indonesia has emerged as one of the primary destinations for higher education among international students, particularly those from member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Indonesia's appeal is rooted not only in its competitive tuition costs but also in its status as the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation. For Muslim students from the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia, Indonesia offers a religious atmosphere that is familiar, yet characterized by a distinct cultural identity that differs significantly from their countries of origin.

In the context of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), John Schumann introduced the Acculturation Model. This theory posits that a learner's success in acquiring a second language is primarily determined by the extent to which they acculturate or integrate into the target language culture. Imagine that if you go or study to a place where is so far from your country which is different people, language, culture, and other things (Schumann, 1986). According to Saville-Troike, SLA refers both to the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children and to the process of learning that language (Saville-Troike, 2005). What will happen when you face some problems in language, even though you can communicate with English but not all people can speak English? Or when you face some problems in culture, you think your attitude is polite but for certain people, it is impolite? Furthermore, the integration process of international students in

Indonesia is heavily contingent upon their proficiency in the Indonesian language. According to the Acculturation Model developed by John Schumann, success in SLA is profoundly influenced by the social and psychological distance between the learner and the local community. Despite sharing a common religious identity, disparities in linguistic structure, local dialects, and the prevalent use of colloquialisms often constitute significant barriers to achieving communicative competence (Schumann, 1986). Language scholars distinguish between the terms acquisition and learning: acquisition refers to the process of learning first and second languages naturally, without formal instruction, whereas learning ‘is reserved for the formal study of second or foreign languages in classroom settings (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). It is like Ortega, SLA researchers use the terms mother tongue, first language or L1 generically to refer to the language (in the case of monolingual acquisition) or languages (in the case of bilingual or multilingual acquisition) that a child learns from parents, siblings and caretakers during the critical years of development, from the womb up to about four years of age (Ortega, 2014).

The phenomenon of culture shock remains a tangible challenge despite overlapping religious identities. International students frequently experience disorientation when encountering Islam Nusantara, which is syncretic in nature, the relaxed attitude toward punctuality (locally known as *jam karet*), and the deeply ingrained norms of politeness and social deference (the *sungkan* culture). An inability to negotiate their original identities with the host culture can trigger acculturative stress, which directly impacts their motivation in language acquisition and engagement in academic activities.

Related to the issue above, the author wants to identify and describe some Libyan students ‘experience who are studying at English majority in University of Semarang State, Indonesia. It is interesting because Libyan native language is Arabic and they study in Indonesia where the native language is Indonesian. They communicate with English because Indonesian people cannot speak Arabic while Libyan cannot speak Indonesian also. They have been staying in Indonesia for one to two years. Mostly, they stayed in Indonesia for studying purpose. During they have been staying in Indonesia, they faced many problems in terms of second language acquisition because they study English as second language in Indonesia, culture shock because Libyan culture is different with Indonesia culture, and language stress because Libyan and Indonesian have quite different native language. From their experience, we can see how the educational, cultural, and linguistic adjustment and their experience to solve all the problems. Moreover, we can see the relation these experiences to the variables of language, culture, and education. Currently, the flow of global education is increasingly rapid,

a process often referred to as globalization (Pacheco, 2020). In line with the development of educational globalization in Indonesia, higher education institutions in the country are opening opportunities for students from various nations to study together. Based on the latest data in February 2024, a total of 2,999 foreign students have obtained study permits in Indonesia. They are spread across 279 state and private universities in various cities (Nguyen, 2025). One of the cities that accepts foreign students is Semarang and around Semarang such as Salatiga and Solo. Individuals who pursue higher education abroad are referred to as foreign students. This aligns with Minister Regulation Number 25 of 2007, which defines foreign students as foreign citizens pursuing education at higher education institutions in Indonesia (Permendiknas RI, 2007).

Most existing research on international students in Indonesia tends to focus on administrative aspects or general academic satisfaction. There is a paucity of studies specifically analysing how Islamic identity functions as both a "buffer" and a "trigger" in the process of cultural negotiation and language acquisition. A paradox exists where religious proximity is expected to accelerate adaptation, yet sharp cultural differences often hinder the progress of Second Language Acquisition. This research is crucial to understand how Muslim international students interpret their experiences in Indonesia. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this study will uncover the subjective reality of how language is employed as a tool for identity negotiation amidst cultural shock. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for universities in designing more culturally sensitive BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) programs and for the government in strengthening soft power strategies through education.

These foreign students come from various countries, including Libya, Gambia, Yemen, Madagascar and some of them are coming from South East Asia like Thailand, Malaysia and Brunei. Therefore, they study in Indonesia because they get scholarship from the University that seek from website and media. Culture does not only encompass language, but also ethics, values, behaviour, concepts of justice, cleanliness, lifestyle, learning style, habits, and traffic order. Therefore, self-adjustment becomes very important for individuals who migrate, as they must face a new environment with different cultures, customs, and norms. Furthermore, good self-adjustment is also necessary for the individual to be accepted by the local community. In a social context, they also need to adjust to the daily habits of the community in their residential areas. And personally, they must overcome anxiety due to being far away from their families.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the study of individuals or groups learning a language after their first language has been established as young children. A primary theoretical pillar in this field is John Schumann's Acculturation Model, which posits that the success of a learner in acquiring a second language is determined by the degree of their acculturation into the target language culture (Schumann, 1986). This model emphasizes the social distance and psychological distance between the learner and the local community. Recent studies, such as those by Nurhasanah, highlight the growing appeal of the Indonesian language (BIPA) for foreign students (Nurhasanah et al., 2024), while Handayani examines the complexities of discourse and code-mixing among BIPA students in campus environments (Handayani, 2025).

Culture shock is a tangible challenge for international students, involving disorientation when encountering unfamiliar norms, such as the "*jam karet*" (flexible time) or "*sungkan*" (social deference) cultures in Indonesia (Ernofalina, 2017). The U-Curve Model of Cultural Adaptation is used to map the emotional phases students undergo, ranging from the initial honeymoon phase, characterized by fascination and enthusiasm to the crisis or shock phase, and eventually to recovery and adjustment (Anandadea & Astuti, 2024). Recent research by Mulyadi confirms that culture shock remains a significant challenge for international students globally (Mulyadi et al., 2024). Furthermore, Bisri specifically investigated culture shock and adaptation among Thai students in Indonesian Islamic universities, showing how cultural proximity does not always eliminate adaptation hurdles (Bisri et al., 2022).

The process of cultural and linguistic adaptation can be understood through Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of the Social Construction of Reality. This theory describes how social reality is shaped through three moments: internalization, objectification, and externalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). For international students, language is the primary tool for producing meaning and developing social knowledge (Wilczewski & Alon, 2023): Externalization occurs when students assign meanings to their new environment during the honeymoon phase. Objectification happens when they confront hard social realities, such as indirect communication styles or regional languages like Javanese, which may conflict with their original values. Internalization is the final stage where they integrate these new meanings into their personal identities to survive and thrive in the host culture. Recent literature also explores Identity Negotiation, with Pratama focusing on how Muslim identities are negotiated within social relations (Pratama et al., 2024), and Sari examining how multilingual Muslim identities are transformed in digital and social media contexts (Pratama et al., 2024).

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative approach within a phenomenological paradigm. This approach was chosen because the researcher aims to explore the subjective experiences of foreign Muslim students regarding culture shock and the language learning process without conducting interventions or statistical generalizations. The focus is on the meaning behind individual experience. According to Burns define that instrument is an apparatus used in performing an actioner. The study integrates two primary models for data analysis (Burns, 2000): Acculturation Model (John Schumann): Used to examine the extent to which social distance and psychological distance influence the students' success in mastering the Indonesian language. Cultural Adaptation Theory (U-Curve Model): Used to map the students' emotional phases, ranging from the honeymoon phase to adjustment. Data are collected through three primary methods to ensure validity (Data Triangulation):

In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are conducted to explore students' feelings when first encountering the local language and how they negotiate their identities as Muslims within the Indonesian cultural context. Participant Observation: The researcher observes student interactions in natural settings (such as the cafeteria, campus mosque, or classrooms) to witness spontaneous and real-life language use. Documentary Study: Analysis of students' personal journals or learning logs maintained throughout their language courses.

### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study explores the transformative journey of international Muslim students pursuing education in Indonesia. The findings indicate that their adaptation process is not merely a geographical transition, but rather an identity restructuring triggered by the interaction between their original cultural backgrounds and the sociocultural realities of Indonesia. Furthermore, the study highlights the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) aspects of international students, specifically examining how their linguistic development is intertwined with their social and psychological integration into the local community.

#### **Aspects of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in International Students**

One of the primary challenges for international students at UIN Salatiga and Universitas Airlangga is language. Despite having studied BIPA (Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers) for three months, they still face communication difficulties. For instance, Ali M. Snhiba continues to encounter challenges in speaking Indonesian to this day. He finds casual communication particularly difficult, especially when interacting with teachers or classmates.

This struggle stems from the stark differences between formal and informal language styles used in daily communication.

During interviews, Ali M. Snhiba noted his frequent confusion regarding the pragmatics of conversation, specifically when people use words with implied meanings. A notable example is the use of the term "*insyā Allāh*"; in certain Indonesian contexts, it can imply "no" or "uncertainty," which differs from its literal and original meaning in Arabic. This highlights the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) aspects where linguistic development is deeply intertwined with social and psychological integration into the local community. The hardest part is when it comes to communication, like casual communications. Sometimes there is some indirect communications, like when discussing with them, they just say *nanti* or *inshallah*. Okay, so that thing makes me a little bit confused because later I realized that they mean no, they just mean they are not going to join or something like that. They will be saying indirectly what they want to say, but not directly.

Similarly, M. Basyet experienced difficulties in speaking with his classmates. Although he did not face external pressure from his peers, he lacked confidence when speaking Indonesian. He expressed his personal anxiety, stating: "*When chatting with friends, I'm also afraid of making mistakes.*"

This apprehension was not rooted in negative past experiences but rather in personal anxiety about making linguistic errors. These findings are supported by the research of Mr. Supian Hahyeejeh, which emphasizes that while Arabic and Indonesian vocabularies share some similarities, many Indonesian loanwords remain misunderstood. This is particularly true for local dialects and slang commonly used by residents, which further complicates the integration process. This highlights the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) aspects where linguistic development is deeply intertwined with social and psychological integration into the local community.

Furthermore, a significant linguistic barrier arises from the use of regional languages (Javanese) in daily interactions, both in person and in digital spaces like class WhatsApp groups. A classmate of Ali M. Snhiba noted:

*"Because in our class we don't just use one language, Indonesian; we also sometimes communicate in the local language, which is Javanese. So they might be confused about what it means when another language appears alongside Indonesian. Especially in chat rooms like WhatsApp, my friends sometimes use the regional language, leaving the international students confused because auto-translation results are often inaccurate or different from the actual meaning."*

Ali M. Snhiba confirmed this difficulty, noting: *“They frequently use indirect Javanese language or Javanese that differs slightly from what we have learned.”*

Similarly, M. Basyet expressed that Indonesian itself remains a major hurdle. When asked about his comprehension, he replied, *“kesulitan banget”* (extremely difficult), indicating a profound struggle to adapt to the local linguistic environment. He specifically finds high-level or academic Indonesian challenging, stating: *“A few of them are in Indonesian, which is a tinggi (high-level) like information and such, so it's hard.”* Although he did not face external pressure from his peers, M. Basyet lacked confidence when speaking Indonesian, stating: *“When chatting with friends, I'm also afraid of making mistakes.”*

According to Berger and Luckmann, language serves as a vital tool for producing meaning, where the processes of internalization, externalization, and objectification shape social reality. Language is not merely a communication tool but the primary method for developing and disseminating social knowledge. International students face significant difficulties adjusting in this context because they have not yet fully internalized the linguistic signs prevalent in the local society whether in formal, informal, or regional languages like Javanese. For example, Ali M. Snhiba's confusion over the implied meaning of *“insyā Allāh”* demonstrates that socially constructed knowledge has not yet been formed within the specific Indonesian cultural context.

Similarly, M. Basyet expressed that Indonesian remains a major hurdle, replying *“kesulitan banget”* (extremely difficult) regarding his comprehension. He specifically finds “high-level” or academic Indonesian challenging: *“A few of them are in Indonesian, which is a tinggi (high-level) like information and such, so it's hard.”* M. Basyet also lacked confidence when speaking Indonesian, stating: *“When chatting with friends, I'm also afraid of making mistakes.”*

This statement indicates that the distinction between formal and informal language is a primary factor in the cultural shock experienced by the subjects. The research by Supian Hahyeejhteh reinforces this finding, demonstrating that while Arabic and Indonesian vocabularies share some similarities, there are also Indonesian loanwords, particularly local dialects frequently used by the community that remain misunderstood (Saqmi & Madjid, 2025).

Furthermore, research by Moulita shows that the gap between local cultural expressions and informal language is a major driver of culture shock among students (Moulita, 2018). A concrete example is found in Libyan students in Indonesia, who struggle to grasp informal language and local dialects. International students face difficulties in adapting within this context because they have not fully internalized the linguistic signs prevalent in the local

society, whether in formal or informal language, as well as in regional languages such as Javanese. For instance, Ali M Snhiba was confused by the implied meaning of the word 'insyaAllah,' which indicates that socially constructed knowledge has not yet been formed within the Indonesian cultural context.

Despite these language barriers, Ali M Snhiba understands Indonesian better than in the previous semester. This is demonstrated in the Observation Form, where the subject did not use Arabic or English more frequently than Indonesian during classroom communication (Indicator 6, Language Aspect). Additionally, in the supplementary notes of the observation form, at 12:34, the lecturer asked Ali M Snhiba a question in Arabic, and the subject responded in Indonesian. This is further supported by the statements made by his interviewees:

*“Indonesian is undoubtedly simple to learn. Yes, as I've previously attempted to learn a few languages. Indeed, it is. It doesn't seem as simple as this since I've picked up a lot of vocabulary in this little amount of time, and I can comprehend what you're saying. I'll simply choose a few words and figure out what you mean even though I can't really comprehend the big ideas.”*

According to the observation notes, this improvement in Indonesian language proficiency was not independent of the coping strategies used by Ali M Snhiba and M Basyet, such as the use of translation applications or the KBBI (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language). This is in line with previous research findings which indicate that the use of digital media, such as YouTube or translation apps, can help improve speaking skills and the understanding of Indonesian language context in real-life situations.

Based on Peter L. Berger's theory of the social construction of reality, the linguistic challenges faced by international students like Ali M Snhiba and M Basyet can be understood as part of the process of internalization, objectification, and externalization of a new reality. When they encounter the differences between formal and informal language, such as implied cultural meanings in the use of the word 'insyaAllah' or regional languages like Javanese they experience a clash between their initial social reality and the new reality constructed by the community around them. During this process, students gradually grasp the local linguistic meanings and habits, and subsequently use them to externalize these meanings in smoother social interactions. The use of coping techniques, such as translation and social support from peers, serves as a tangible example of the objectification process of a new reality, which accelerates their linguistic and cultural adaptation.

## Aspects of Culture Shock Among International Students

The cultural factors in this study indicate that while there are differences in values and customs between the culture of origin and the local culture, these do not pose a significant barrier to the subjects' adaptation process. Cultural differences are no longer perceived as psychological problems; instead, they are viewed as interesting and engaging phenomena to observe. Ali M Snhiba observed several striking cultural differences in the social environment, particularly regarding religious practices and habits. However, these were regarded more as novelties and curiosities rather than significant obstacles.

Furthermore, according to a research, international students in Indonesia generally experience difficulties in adjusting to academic and socio-cultural environments, yet religious and spiritual elements often serve as factors that help students feel more accepted and comfortable at Islamic universities (Handrianto et al., 2024). Additionally, Ali Mohamed's statement that respecting a religious tradition does not mean you are obligated to use it. Respect is shown by not talking, not interrupting, and giving others space to express their beliefs. When asked about his experience living near a mosque and hearing prayers or *zikr* performed in a manner different from what he was accustomed to in Yemen, he stated that it was simply an experience he went through. Although he felt a bit unfamiliar at first, it did not cause any significant discomfort.

Furthermore, he noted the sound of traditional musical instruments being played around his home. While this was not something he typically encountered in his home country, he did not consider it disturbing or difficult to accept. *"I really felt that way at first, but we're now attempting to adjust."* Through this statement, the subject demonstrates that although he was somewhat surprised at first, he did not experience significant difficulty in adjusting to the local culture.

Ali Mohamed's experience illustrates the process of social reality construction through internalization and externalization, according to Berger's theory. He began to move closer to the local culture, attempting to accept and adapt to new customs, such as listening to prayers and *zikr* performed in a different manner. Being more open to cultural differences made this experience perceived as interesting rather than causing psychological pressure.

To learn about Indonesian culture, the subject has travelled to several tourist locations with both international and local students. However, he goes more frequently with foreign students, indicating that his cultural experiences are more often shared with his own community rather than with the local society. Direct interaction with the local culture remains limited and is more observational in nature, despite a desire to understand it more deeply. Overall, the

subject does not believe that cultural differences are the primary obstacle to adaptation in Indonesia. On the other hand, language barriers and differences in the academic system have a much more significant impact on daily life. This is evident in how he prioritizes understanding the educational system and language over trying to assimilate into the local culture.

In contrast to Ali Mohamed, who is more focused on social and linguistic aspects, Adams is more focused on the academic side, particularly in understanding a learning system that differs from his home country. As shown in Indicator 5 (Academic Aspect), the findings suggest that Haelah appears to have difficulty adjusting to the academic rhythm and expectations in Indonesia. This may be due to the differences between the Thai and Indonesian educational systems in terms of pedagogical approaches and academic communication patterns.

However, in general, cultural differences do not disturb Adams. Most people view cultural elements as novelties that need to be understood rather than as barriers. During the interview, Adams did not display negative feelings toward the differing values and customs on campus. In fact, while he occasionally appeared uncomfortable, this was more due to differences in gender interaction norms rather than serious cultural conflict. In his home region of Pattani, interactions between men and women have stricter boundaries, whereas in Indonesia, especially in academic environments these interaction patterns are more flexible. The subject stated that: *“If there are any teman that might harm me, I'm bilang maaf ya.”*

This statement indicates that he maintains his original cultural values when interacting with others. The subject experienced significant cultural differences regarding clothing and food. In Indonesia, clothing is more casual/liberal, but Pattani subjects usually wear the *“baju kurung”*. Additionally, it is difficult to follow different eating habits. The subject stated that he prefers eating eggs, chicken, and catfish over local staples like *“tempe”* and *“tahu”*. This was evidenced by his statements during the interview, where he indicated that culinary adaptation remains a specific challenge. *“Makanan kaya tempe, suka makan sayur. I continue to make sayur and ga suka until the next day. In addition to telur, makan ayam ikan lele”*

Here is the translation of the text into English: *“The subject did not experience overall difficulty in adapting to cultural differences.”* When asked if they ever felt overwhelmed when facing cultural differences, the subject replied that they might have felt that way initially, but they eventually became accustomed to it. This indicates that the adaptation process is progressing well and the subject possesses the ability to adjust to their new environment. Furthermore, he stated in the interview that his housemates actively introduce him to Indonesian culture, including traditional food and arts. Mas Ridwan is one of the most helpful

friends because he frequently introduces the local culture, such as by saying: *“The subject gained a better understanding of the local culture through these interactions.”*

Adams, who hails from Pattani, Thailand, responds to cultural differences more cautiously, particularly regarding social interactions between genders and dietary habits. In this situation, Berger’s theory can be used to explain how Adams creates his social reality by presenting his original cultural values to others. For instance, by maintaining boundaries in interactions between men and women, he demonstrates that he is communicating and externalizing those cultural principles to the people around him.

However, Adams is gradually internalizing the local culture, as evidenced by his interactions with friends who introduce him to Indonesian customs. This reflects an internalization process where he begins to accept and adjust to several aspects of the local culture, despite persistent challenges such as food and clothing.

Overall, the subjects face a number of cultural issues, primarily related to the education system, classroom social interactions, and daily habits like dress and food. Nevertheless, the subjects are capable of gradual change and show progress in their understanding of the local culture. Having supportive friends is immensely helpful in assisting the subject through the culture shock phase and helping him adjust to his new environment in Indonesia.

### **Identity Negotiation and Linguistic Adaptation**

This phase is characterized by enthusiasm for the new culture, where individuals are fascinated by the exotic aspects of their new environment, according to Oberg. Upon his initial arrival in Indonesia, Sofyan experienced a honeymoon phase marked by enthusiasm and a positive perception of the new culture. He appreciated the mutual respect between individuals, the strong Islamic culture, and the hospitality of the community. As he stated previously:

*“The locals are amiable, and let's add that the culture is fascinating since it is in line with Islam and is founded on respect and understanding for one another. It's excellent to go in that regard.”*

Furthermore, he was very interested in visiting tourist destinations such as waterfalls with his classmates. His positive experience was further reinforced by the support of lecturers who spoke in English or spoke slowly. Oberg also noted that during this stage, individuals tend to concentrate on positive aspects and explore their new surroundings, as demonstrated by Sofyan's visits to waterfalls and the support from teachers that helped him enjoy his positive experiences. This phase, however, did not last long as he began to encounter language and academic challenges, leading to a transition into the crisis phase.

The three main moments; externalization, objectification, and internalization can be used to integrate Sofyan's culture shock experience into the social construction theory developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The process of externalization is clearly visible during the honeymoon phase, when individuals begin to speak about their experiences and assign meaning to the new place. Sofyan viewed Indonesian culture in a positive light.

At this point, they are actively shaping a new social reality through their initial perceptions of community hospitality, proximity to Islamic culture, and an environment perceived as friendly. When the crisis arrives, there is a shift from externalization to objectification. In this situation, they must confront social structures that have become 'objectified' and no longer align with their initial expectations. Everything in this world, including language, the education system, indirect communication styles, and social norms feels foreign, confusing, and even causes emotional distress.

Here is the translation of the text into English. Sofyan, for example, felt a lack of confidence due to the challenges he faced during presentations. Meanwhile, Ali M Snhiba felt isolated because he was the only Black student. Here, existing societal elements, such as the habitual use of the word "*nanti*" (later) or the social interactions between different genders conflicted with the values they brought from their original cultures. This is a form of objectification, where the Indonesian social world begins to be perceived as a 'hard' reality that forces change.

Therefore, the subjects' culture shock experience is not merely a psychological transition; it is a complex process of social construction, moving from the externalization of initial meanings to the objectification of those meanings, and finally to the internalization of those meanings into their personal identities. As demonstrated by this integration, cultural adaptation is a continuous social dynamic that is both shaped by and shapes the individual.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The research results indicate that international students at UIN Salatiga and Airlangga University experience culture shock, which is reflected in five theoretical aspects: linguistic, academic, social, emotional, and cultural. However, among all these elements, the linguistic dimension is the most dominant and difficult. This language factor serves as the primary obstacle affecting the students' adaptation process, both in the learning environment and in daily interactions. The two primary subjects of the study, Ali M Snhiba and Adams, demonstrate different dynamics while navigating the phases of culture shock proposed by

Oberg. Ali M Snhiba has reached the recovery stage, where he has begun to accept and adjust more effectively to his new environment. Adams is currently in the adjustment phase. Nevertheless, it is important to note that adaptation is spectral and dynamic. While Adams may not yet be a fully bicultural individual, he has achieved a stage of functional adaptation, where he is capable of adapting to the new culture while remaining true to himself. The subjects utilize various distinct and contextual methods to handle culture shock. They demonstrate that social support and the capacity for self-reflection are vital in the adaptation process. Conversely, Ali M Snhiba relies on the use of technology and self-talk to manage his academic and social challenges. According to Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction, internalization, objectification, and externalization shape social reality. This phenomenon of cultural adaptation aligns with this theory. Through daily experiences, international students actively make sense of a new cultural reality. They also learn to adjust their ways of thinking and acting to remain consistent with the new social context without losing their original cultural identity. Therefore, identity negotiation and linguistic adaptation help them gain a new understanding of the social world in which they live and also serve as a means of survival.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia for the financial support provided through the Litapdimas research grant program. This support was instrumental in the successful completion of this research.

## REFERENCES

- Anandadea, N. P., & Astuti, A. (2024). The cultural adaptation process of Indonesian students studying in Germany. *LATTE: A Journal of Language*, 2(2), 10–15.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor Books.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality*. Penguin Books.
- Bisri, K., Nikmah, F., Nofiyanto, P., & Nurfadila, A. (2022). Culture shock dan adaptasi mahasiswa asing: Studi pada mahasiswa Thailand jurusan PAI UIN Walisongo Semarang. *Prosiding The Annual Conference on Islamic Religious Education*, 2(1), 185–205. <http://acied.pp-paiindonesia.org/index.php/acied>
- Burns, R. B. (2000). *Introduction to research methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Ernofalina, E. (2017). Culture shocks experienced by Indonesian students studying overseas. *International Journal of Educational Best Practices*, 1(2), 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.31258/ijebp.v1n2.p87-105>

- Handayani, D. (2025). Analisis wacana bahasa campuran (code-mixing) dalam komunikasi mahasiswa BIPA di lingkungan kampus: Studi terhadap strategi bahasa dan identitas dalam praktik multibahasa sehari-hari. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional BIPA UMSU*, 2025(1), 554–560.
- Handrianto, C., Solfema, S., & Jusoh, A. J. (2024). Cultural adaptation and academic success: Exploring the experiences of Indonesian students in Malaysian universities. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 12(3), 251–280. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/2496>
- Moeller, A. J., & Catalano, T. (2015). Foreign language teaching and learning. In *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (pp. 327–332). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.92082-8>
- Moulita. (2018). Hambatan komunikasi antarbudaya di kalangan mahasiswa. *Jurnal Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 1, 33–46.
- Mulyadi, E., Permatasari, D., Soares, D., Syarifudin, M., Da Silva Pinto, T., & Sarmento, J. (2024). Culture shock: Challenges of international students. *International Journal of Health Engineering and Technology*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhet.v3i1.208>
- Nguyen, M. T. (2025). Unlocking opportunities: Exploring the future potential of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students. *Ilomata International Journal of Social Science*, 6(2), 487–504. <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijss.v6i2.1616>
- Nurhasanah, D. S., Hidayat, F. F., Beln, M., Haerani, N., & Adhiyana, R. A. A. (2024). Pesona bahasa Indonesia dalam menarik mahasiswa asing untuk mempelajarinya. *Artikulasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 3(1), 24–33. <https://doi.org/10.17509/artikulasi.v3i1.66271>
- Ortega, L. (2014). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203777282>
- Pacheco, E.-M. (2020). Culture learning theory and globalization: Reconceptualizing culture shock for modern cross-cultural sojourners. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 58, 100801. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2020.100801>
- Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia Nomor 25 Tahun 2007.
- Pratama, S., Zulkarnain, I., & Sinabutar, M. J. (2024). Negosiasi identitas Tionghoa Muslim dalam relasi sosial. *Triwikrama: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial*, 4(8), 141–150.
- Saqmi, S., & Madjid, M. N. (2025). Analysis on the interference of Indonesian morphology in the translation of classical Arabic texts. *Lisanudhad: Jurnal Bahasa, Pembelajaran, dan Sastra Arab*, 12(2), 143–160. <https://doi.org/10.21111/lisanudhad.v12i2.15404>
- Saville-Troike, M. (2005). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808838>
- Schumann, J. H. (1986). Research on the acculturation model for second language acquisition. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 7(5), 379–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.1986.9994254>
- Wilczewski, M., & Alon, I. (2023). Language and communication in international students' adaptation: A bibliometric and content analysis review. *Higher Education*, 85(6), 1235–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00888-8>