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Culture Shock and Academic Adaptation: The Experiences of Patani Students in Islamic Higher Education

Muhammad Nurfazri[1], Hapid Ali[2], Ai Rida Himatulaliah[3]*

[1]KEDJATI Foundation, Bandung, Indonesia

[2]Department of English Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia

[3]Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

* Email: airidahimatulaliah@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Cultural differences between countries often lead to culture shock, particularly among students pursuing higher education abroad. It is also encountered by Patani students studying at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, which affects their academic experience. Thus, this study explores the culture shock experienced by Patani students, focusing on their academic adaptation process on campus. A qualitative approach was employed by interviewing Patani students from several departments to gain insights into their adaptation challenges and needs. The findings reveal that Patani students face several obstacles, including language barriers, limited social support, and challenges adjusting to differences between Sundanese and Patani cultures. Many students expressed the need for language classes and specialized support services for international students to ease their academic and social transition. Besides, these findings highlight the importance of universities providing adequate support systems for international students. Institutions should consider implementing language programs and dedicated services to help non-local students integrate more effectively into academic and social settings. Addressing the adaptation challenges of international students, particularly those in non-international class settings, can enhance their academic success and overall campus experience. This study underscores the need for universities to be more attentive to the specific needs of international students to foster a more inclusive academic environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

College is one of individuals' goals for continuing their studies (Brandstätter et al., 2003; Chan, 2016; Harackiewicz et al., 1998). Various higher education institutions have attracted students' attention as they choose where to study (Askehave, 2007; C.-F. Lee, 2014; Pampaloni, 2010; Sojkin et al., 2012; Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). Besides, students living in rural areas prefer universities in urban areas to continue their studies (Putra & Harianto, 2022). Moreover, matriculants believe the city's campus surpasses their living environment, and many students wish

to continue their studies abroad (Krzaklewska, 2008). Usually, students who continue to study abroad do not just hunt for scholarships; however, students are also willing to spend much money to learn in other people's lands (Tamang & Shrestha, 2021).

Nevertheless, problems such as culture shock will always be faced when someone move to another country (Cage & Howes, 2020; Ernofalina, 2017; Furnham, 1997; Lovin et al., 2023; Macapagong et al., 2023; Munira et al., 2024; Pacheco, 2020; Pedersen, 1994). The book "Cross-cultural Understanding: A Handbook to Understand Other's Cultures" by Pujiyanti & Zuliani (2014)mentioned that culture shock is a problem faced by a person when in a foreign environment and does not understand the foreign culture. Besides, culture shock is a problem for individuals who stay or continue their education elsewhere for a long time (Pujiyanti & Zuliani, 2014). In addition, culture shock is common in anxious people because it is difficult to understand language, culture, and daily habits (Pujiyanti & Zuliani, 2014). Also, Oberg (1960)added that culture shock is born due to anxiety over losing symbols of social relationships.

Furthermore, Pujiyanti and Zuliani (2014) classified the causes of culture shock as, (a) language barriers. Language problems are often a common issue that individuals must accept in the context of other cultures. Understanding other cultures' languages will result in misunderstandings (Pitzl, 2015). (b) frustration. Frustration is often a concern for someone struggling to solve problems individually or in groups. (c) worry. Anxiety is an aspect that is often felt by individuals who are in a particular group. Anxiety can be interpreted as worrying about someone's life if they cannot live it in someone else's culture. (d) stress. Stress will become a severe problem when someone cannot control the problem, which leads to frustration. Besides, Briones & Bush (2015)added that the causes of culture shock are (a) language barriers, (b) different social roles or social support, (c) climate change, (d) different values and beliefs, and (d) relationship stress.

Meanwhile, culture shock can also be prevented through the adaptation process (Akarowhe, 2018; Alves López & Peña Portero, 2013; Sabirjanovna, 2023; Winkelman, 1994). Adaptation can be made quickly by thinking, acting, and developing knowledge to learn the host culture, but it depends on the individual (Pujiyanti & Zuliani, 2014). In addition, the influence of indigenous cultural aspects also affects the slowness of adaptation (Cameron, 2012). For example, when people study abroad and find it challenging to adapt to their new environment, they eventually return to their hometown because of their inability to adapt to a new environment. Moreover, when an overseas student is immersed in an entirely new way of life, they may experience culture shock, a feeling of unease, or disorientation (Briones & Bush, 2015). From the example above, the resolution of culture shock is not only done personally; some of the closest people need social support (Wilcox et al., 2005). Usually, individuals who study abroad will have relations with people from the region to form an organization (DeGraaf et al., 2013; Jameson, 2007). One of the organizational functions is to provide a platform for international students to survive in another country.

It continues beyond there; the influence of the campus aspect is also needed. The campus should be able to understand the needs of international students (Paige, 1990). In developing countries,

such as Indonesia, international students not in international classes will find it more challenging to understand the language when attending the class because sometimes the learning process does not use English as the language of communication. Consequently, there is a significant difference between the international and regular classes. Students' inability to take Indonesian classes will make it more difficult for international students who are not fluent in Indonesian to understand the material provided.

Other researchers have conducted several studies related to this context. The first comes from (Safril, 2016). He aimed to uncover the types of culture shock experienced by Patani students and examine the accommodation, communication convergence, and divergence processes in which Patani students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung engaged. The findings revealed that Patani students experienced culture shock in both psychological and social aspects. They undertook communication accommodation strategies that included verbal and non-verbal elements, encompassing pre- and post-process communication convergence and divergence adjustments.

The second comes from (Shasrini, 2018). She explored the barriers among Patani students in their academic environment who have been studying in FAI UIR. The researcher found that the language barrier affected more than other problems, such as different ethics or values. The researcher found that the language barrier was the most affected aspect, compared to other problems such as different ethics or values. It made Patani students refrain from mingling, respond late, and lack coordination with the faculty.

The third comes from (Lai et al., 2020). The researchers explored the effect of culture shock on emotional labor, job satisfaction, and the turnover intentions of service employees. The data was taken from questionnaires distributed among 254 foreign employees working in 36 hotels in Macao. The researchers found that culture shock had positive impacts on emotional labor but negative impacts on job satisfaction. Besides, emotional labor and job satisfaction mediated the relationship between culture shock and foreign employees' turnover intentions.

Fourth comes from Duereh & Irwandi (2023). The researchers investigated the empowerment of Patani students through the Islamic Student Association of South Patani, Thailand. After using multiple study methodologies, the subsequent results can be derived: The education sector played a crucial role in empowering students from Patani (South Thailand) to transform their character, mindset, physical well-being, and spiritual growth. This was achieved by implementing positive initiatives by the Indonesian Thai Patani Islamic Student Association (PMIPTI). For example, Patani students who study in Indonesia are proficient in the Indonesian language and receive instruction in speaking, writing, and reading Indonesian books. Additionally, Patani students were taught the Al-Qur'an and engaged in book reviews. The Malay ethics and culture of Patani southern Thai students in Padang City could be comprehended by examining subjective factors, such as behavior and traditions, and objective aspects, such as clothes, that represent their culture. These various aspects of Malay culture were expressed through three distinct cultural practices. Firstly, there was the daily culture, encompassing Islamic social customs and the practice of wearing the Islamic hijab. Second, there was the weekly culture, which included traditional Malay

dress. Lastly, there was the annual culture, which included the observance of Islamic holidays and celebrations. The occasion marked the Prophet Muhammad PBUH's birthday, Ma'a Alhijrah's commemoration, and significant historical events' remembrance. Thai students studying in West Sumatra encounter numerous communication hurdles in the language sector, which could be categorized into academic and non-academic barriers. Thai students faced significant academic challenges, primarily due to their poor Indonesian proficiency.

Unlike previous studies, this research aims to explore related culture shocks among Patani students as international students of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. This research takes three main points experienced by Patani students: language barriers, social support, and the adjustment of Sundanese culture with Patani. This study intends to describe the circumstances or obstacles each of Patani's students faces. Hence, it provides an overview to the reader, especially the campus academic environment; Patani students require concern from the campus to develop their confidence to take classes like other national students.

2. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with an interview method with Patani students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The researchers used this approach because they intended to dig up more accurate information (J. Creswell, 2012). Research-based on qualitative methods provides more robust data and seeks more in-depth data (Houghton et al., 2015). In addition, five selected students from five different majors participated in this study. Informant sampling was carried out using purposive sampling (Creswell, 2012), where the informants determined in this study were based on the following criteria: a) active Patani students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, and b) from different departments. Also, pseudo-names were used to increase the trustworthiness of participants (J. W. Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researchers found and interpreted several forms of culture shock experienced by Patani students on campus from the interview results. It discussed three aspects: language barrier, social support, and the different cultures of Patani and Sundanese.

3.1 Language Barrier

Language problems/barriers have become common when someone is living in another cultural space (Pujiyanti & Zuliani, 2014). This means that every individual must face a language barrier when choosing to go to an area with language differences (Feely & Harzing, 2003; Pudelko & Tenzer, 2019). However, the language barrier can be controlled if the person already knows the target regional/country language (Kedia & Mukherji, 1999).

On the other hand, language is the primary means of communication, and the inability to understand or use a language effectively can be a major barrier to interacting with people who speak different languages (Andrés Bolado, 2023; Bowen, 2001; S. M. Lee, 2003; Tanveer, 2007).

This barrier often leads to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and isolation in social or professional settings. Limited language skills can hinder individuals living in a foreign country from forming meaningful connections and fully integrating into the community. Overcoming language barriers requires patience, consistent practice, and often the assistance of language-learning programs or supportive peers. Individuals may struggle to express their thoughts, needs, or emotions without adequate language skills, leading to isolation and frustration. Building language proficiency enhances communication and fosters cultural understanding and mutual respect within the community.

From this study, the researchers found that one of the main obstacles Patani students face at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung was the language barrier. Two sources conveyed this when asked about the most dominant obstacles faced on campus. The sources highlighted the difficulty in understanding Indonesian and, more specifically, Sundanese (See Table 1).

Table 1. Language as one of the obstacles for Patani students

No.	Question	Answer
1.	*Apa kendala utama yang kamu hadapi ketika berkuliah di UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung?* [What are the main obstacles you face when studying at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung?]	Student 1: *Perbedaan bahasa. Bahasa Indonesia, apalagi bahasa sunda* [The different of language, Indonesian, specifically Sundanese] (#1) Student 2: *Bahasa dan budaya* [Language and culture] (#2)

Patani students came from Southern Thailand (Siahna, 2020). In their social interactions, the Patani people generally used Malay as their primary means of communication (Limsangkass, 2009). Although Indonesian, as the national language of Indonesia, was somewhat familiar to Patani students, differences in dialect and expression often caused misunderstandings. Furthermore, the challenge became even greater when Patani students had to adapt to Sundanese. Sundanese, the regional language of West Java, where the UIN Sunan Gunung Djati campus was located, had a distinct structure, vocabulary, and intonation compared to Patani Malay, their mother tongue. Facing two different languages (Indonesian and Sundanese) in their daily interactions on campus made the adaptation process more complex for these students.

In addition to language barriers, cultural differences played a significant role in the adaptation process. Student 2 emphasized that culture posed another obstacle (See #2). Each region had a unique culture and transitioning from Patani to Sundanese and Indonesian cultures required extensive adjustment. Culture encompasses various aspects of daily life, including customs, social norms, habits, and values. Patani students often need help understanding and adapting to local customs, which differ significantly from those in Patani (Jazeri & Nurhayati, 2019; Maduerawa, 2021; Ockey, 2021; Salaeh, 2023).

Hence, these language and cultural barriers affected both their daily communication and academic performance. In an academic context, difficulties understanding the language of lecture instruction often hindered their learning process. While attending classes or interacting with people on campus, they needed help to grasp the material presented by lecturers (as shown in Table 2). Consequently, they found it challenging to follow lecture content, participate in class discussions, and communicate effectively with lecturers and peers. This condition could have a significant impact on their academic performance.

Table 2. Patani students have difficulty understanding class material due to language barriers

No.	Question	Answer
1.	*Apa kendala yang kamu hadapi ketika mengikuti pembelajaran di kelas?* [What obstacles do you face when participating in class learning?]	Student 2: *Terkadang ada perkataan yang tidak faham terutama bahasa Sunda* [Sometimes, there are words that I do not understand, especially Sundanese language] (#3) Student 3: *Iya apalagi dosen menggunakan bahasa Sunda ketika semester 1 jadi bengung* [Yes. Moreover, if the lecturer uses a Sundanese language when I was in semester 1 that made me so confused] (#4) Student 4: *Iya emang benar bahasa yang sunda sama bahasa ilmiyah. Dan saya masih sulit untuk mengerti bahasa Indonesia* [Yes, that is right. Sundanese language and scientific language are complex. I am still confused to understand Indonesian] (#5) Student 5: *Tergantung dosennya. Apalagi dosen yang mengajar dengan bahasa Sunda, itu membuat saya pusing sekali* [It depends on the lecturer. Moreover, if the lecturer uses a Sundanese language to teach, it makes me so confused] (#6)

As previously explained, Sundanese was one of the biggest challenges faced by Patani students. All students reported that language differences were a significant barrier to understanding the material presented by lecturers. This obstacle could have a profound impact on their academic performance. They admitted that lecturers' use of Sundanese often confused them (See Table 2). This revealed that not all lecturers used Indonesian as the language of instruction, making it even more difficult for Patani students to grasp lecture material. Even when lecturers used Indonesian, they still found it challenging to comprehend the content (See #5). When the language of instruction was not one they were proficient in, the learning process became more difficult and stressful. In addition to Sundanese and Indonesian, scientific language also posed a challenge (See #5). Scientific language often involved complex and specialized vocabulary, which was particularly challenging for unfamiliar students. This made scientific language an additional layer of difficulty, alongside everyday languages like Sundanese and Indonesian.

The struggle to understand the language of instruction—whether Sundanese, Indonesian, or scientific language—directly impacted their learning process. Their inability to comprehend the

language used in teaching hindered their understanding of the lecture material. This affected their academic performance and undermined their confidence in interacting with lecturers and classmates. When they felt confused and unable to follow lessons, they often became less motivated and alienated from the academic environment.

3.2 Social Support

International students will experience various problems overseas (Akanwa, 2015; Barker et al., 1991; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). However, the problem can be overcome with social support (Cao et al., 2021). Social support is a form of support from various parties, including friends, organizations, communities, and campuses (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). Usually, international students will look for people who can help them wholeheartedly, regardless of their background. The people closest to them will help them go through the various problems they face, for example, in understanding the material given by the lecturer. Most Patani students asked their friends who could re-explain the material (See Table 3).

Table 3. Patani students always ask their friends again when the class is over

No.	Question	Answer
1.	*Bagaimana cara kamu untuk mengerti materi yang disampaikan oleh dosen?* [How do you understand the material presented by the lecturer?]	Student 2: *Lebih focus ketika dalam kelas dan bertanya kepada teman jika ada yang tidak faham* [I focused more during class and asked friends if there was something I did not understand] (#7)
		Student 1: *Saya selalu ngopi serta diskussi pas selesai study bersama teman-teman saya* [I always have coffee and discussions after finishing studying with my friends] (#8)
		Student 5: *Bagi aku translat ke bahasa thailand dulu baru ngerti* [For me. I translated to Thai first, so I could understand] (#9)

In their efforts to understand lecture material, Patani students developed various strategies. Each student adopted a unique approach to grasping the content presented by lecturers. Student 2, for instance, reported that she focused more intently during class and frequently sought help from friends whenever she encountered difficulties (See #7). This demonstrated her effort to absorb information directly during lectures and rely on her peers for clarification when needed. It was a practical and effective strategy in situations where directly understanding the lecturer's teaching proved challenging.

On the other hand, student 1 adopted a different method. He preferred informal discussions with friends after class in coffee shop (See #8). For student 1, a relaxed atmosphere combined with social interaction was essential for untangling the complexities of lecture material. These discussions enhanced his understanding and fostered stronger social bonds, further supporting his adaptation process.

On the other hand, student 5 approached the problem differently by translating the lecture material into Thai before attempting to comprehend it (See #9). This approach reflected his need to process information in his native language to grasp the material fully. Although time-consuming, this strategy ensured she did not miss any critical details in the lecture.

As students from Southern Thailand, they also hoped that the campus would address language-related challenges in the classroom. They wished for the institution to offer support, such as special training programs, to help improve their proficiency in the Indonesian language (See Table 4). These efforts, they believed, would make it easier for Patani students to adapt academically and socially.

Table 4. Patani students require the language class and special affair

No.	Question	Answer
1.	*Apa yang seharusnya yang bisa diberikan kepada pihak kampus kepada mahasiswa luar negeri yang bisa memberikan dorongan kepada mahasiswa tersebut agar bisa lebih beradaptasi dikelas?* [What should the campus provide to foreign students that can encourage these students to adapt more easily in the classroom?]	Student 2: *Kelas bahasa* [Language class] (#10)
		Student 5: *Sehatusnya ada urusan khusus bagi WNA karena tidak semua mahasiswa sudah pinter dan mempermudahkan urusan kemahasiswaan* [The campus should be a special affair for foreigners because not all students are smart and make it easier for student affairs] (#11)
		Student 1: *Tambahkan kursus bahasa indo bagi maba asing* [Add Indonesian language course for new foreign students] (#12)
		Student 4: *Memperbanyakan guna bahasa Indonesia* [Expand Indonesian language courses] (#13)
		Student 3: *Apa saja yang menjadi kesulitan terhadap orang asing mintak saling membantu* [The campus should be able to help all the needs of foreign students] (#14)

The students had clear opinions on the types of support campuses should have provided to help international students better adapt to the academic environment. Their suggestions highlighted the need for a more structured approach focused on language assistance and student-friendly services.

Student 2 suggested that campuses should offer language classes to help international students overcome the language barriers they face (See #10). She believed that additional language classes would have significantly assisted international students in improving their understanding of Bahasa Indonesia, the primary language of instruction in their classes. These classes would have enhanced their language skills and boosted their confidence in communicating and participating in class discussions.

In addition, student 5 proposed that campuses should have established a dedicated department to address the needs of international students (See #11). Her suggestion underscored that

international students had different needs than local students and required specialized services to help them navigate academic and administrative life. Such services could have included academic support, assistance with administrative procedures, and help resolving everyday challenges international students face.

Meanwhile, student 1 and 4 emphasized the importance of additional language courses for new international students (See #12 and #13). Both highlighted that proficiency in the Indonesian language was essential for academic and social success on campus. They believed that offering intensive and ongoing language courses would have helped new students adapt more quickly to the academic environment where Indonesian was the medium of instruction.

Conversely, student 3 stressed the importance of solidarity and mutual support among international students and the campus community (#14). This reflected the fundamental need to create a supportive campus culture where international students felt they were not alone in dealing with challenges. Lecturers, administrative staff, or fellow students could have provided this support.

In summary, the challenges faced by Patani students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung in understanding lecture materials were primarily related to language and cultural barriers. The students employed various strategies to overcome these obstacles, such as focusing more in class, discussing with friends, and translating materials into their native language. However, they also believed that the campus should have provided additional support, such as language classes, special services for international students, and efforts to foster solidarity within the campus community. Such measures would have significantly aided them in adapting to the new academic environment and achieving success in their studies.

3.3 The adjustment of Sundanese culture with Patani

Patani students also experienced adaptation to Sundanese culture. The adaptation process takes a long time. From this process, various obstacles are often encountered. Like interactions in class. If in the class, the Sundanese have dominated as the most students. Patani students often get different treatment from their classmates.

Table 5. The adjustment culture of Sundanese with Patani

No.	Question	Jawaban
1.	*Apakah kamu pernah merasakan dibeda-bedakan ketika di dalam kelas?* [Have you ever felt different in class?]	Student 2: *Pernah ketika dosen menyampaikan materi dan sering menanyakan tentang perbedaan indo dengan thai* [Once when the lecturer delivered material and often asked about the difference between Indonesian and Thai] (#15)
		Student 1*: Sering sekali* [Often] (#16)
		Student 3: *Iya merasa beda dengan bahasa juga beda* [Yes, I felt the different like language] (#17)
		Student 5: *Pakaian* [Clothes] (#18)

Student 4: *Pernah, oleh kerana faktor bahasa. Oleh kerana pas kita presentasi di kelas, kita di sepertikan kayak stand-up comedy gitu* [Yes, I have. Because of a language factors. When we passed the presentation in the class, and we were like stand-up comedy] (#19)

One aspect that often became a concern for Patani students was the feeling of being singled out in the classroom. This feeling arose from various factors, including language, culture, and appearance differences. Student 2 recalled a time when she felt singled out during a lecture. The lecturer frequently asked her about the differences between Indonesia and Thailand (See #15). While the lecturer's intent may have been to explore cross-cultural knowledge, student 2 felt that such questions emphasized her differences from her peers rather than fostering inclusivity. This isolation disrupted her learning experience and made her feel less accepted academically.

Besides, student 1 shared a similar experience, stating that he often felt singled out in daily classroom interactions (See #16). His account reflected how this recurring sense of being "different" had become a regular part of his academic life. This feeling likely diminished his comfort and motivation to engage in classroom activities actively.

In addition, student 3 explained that the sense of being different was not solely due to cultural factors but also language (See #17). The language barrier placed him in a distinct position compared to his peers. When the medium of instruction in class was a language he did not fully master, student 3 often felt alienated and less involved in discussions. Moreover, student 5 added that differences in appearance, such as clothing, further contributed to feelings of separation (See #18).

Meanwhile, student 4 shared a particularly challenging experience during a class presentation (See #19). The language barrier caused some misunderstandings, leading to unintended reactions from classmates. Instead, what was meant to be an opportunity to showcase his academic abilities became uncomfortable, impacting his self-belief.

From several problems above, differences in language, culture, and appearance contributed to these difficulties for Patani students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. These experiences might have disrupted their educational journey and affected their sense of belonging and confidence. Therefore, educational institutions could actively foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment to support these students. Providing platforms for students to share their experiences, offering language assistance, and promoting cultural awareness could significantly enhance their campus experience. Such initiatives would help ensure that all students, including those from Patani, feel valued and equipped to succeed academically and socially.

4. CONCLUSION

Indeed, humans are social creatures who need help from one another. Especially for overseas people, various difficulties will undoubtedly be encountered. One of them is Culture Shock. Culture shock is a sense of deprivation from individuals to new groups—for example, a student

who studies abroad. The culture shock they feel must not be far from language, culture, and society. As a campus that international students have seen, it should provide exceptional care to these students. A cooperative relationship between the campus and the campus community is needed to support international students' confidence levels. Therefore, this study hopes to provide special awareness to various campus parties in Indonesia to pay more attention to the obstacles experienced by international class international students based on the problems described. This study revealed that Patani students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung face significant challenges in adapting, especially regarding language, culture, and appearance differences. Language barriers are the main obstacles in understanding lecture materials and communicating with lecturers and classmates. This experience may affect students' psychological well-being and potentially reduce academic performance. Therefore, adequate support from the campus, such as providing language classes and special services for international students, is needed to help them adjust to the new academic environment.

Therefore, this study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by international students, especially from Patani, in adjusting to the academic environment in Indonesia. Educational institutions can utilize the results of this study to design more effective support programs so that international students can better adapt and achieve academic success. In addition, these findings enrich the literature on the acculturation and adaptation of international students by highlighting the important role of language and culture in the process. For further research, expanding the sample by involving international students from various cultural backgrounds and other countries is recommended to gain a more holistic understanding of adaptation challenges in the Indonesian academic environment.

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