

## **Culture Shock Faced By Umsu Students During The Exchange Program**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was designed to analyze the culture shock experienced by UMSU students' during the exchange program. The aims of this study was to identify what culture shock experienced by the students during the exchange program and what were their efforts in solving the culture shock. This research used qualitative research while the data displayed in the form of descriptive. The data collecting method used open-ended questionnaires. There were six students of University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara who responded to the questionnaires. In analyzing the data earned used interactive model by Miles Huberman and Saldana, firstly reviewed the collected data that had been collected, then identified the culture shocks faced by research subject. The next step was identified the solution made by research subject in solving the culture shocks. And the last step was drawing the conclusion. The result of the analysis found that the culture shock faced by students of University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara who joined the exchange program referred to the matter of language, the differences of academic, local student attitude, social life, and men-women relationship. They were dominantly shock on the language and men-women relationship problems.*

**Keywords:** *Culture, Culture Shock, Student Exchange.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Culture has important part in human life, since it becomes part of the way to be accepted in a society. Culture is also difficult to understand the multi dimension circumstance that happens in a society, because there are a lot of different meanings stated by scientist. As Reisinger (2003) who stated that culture is a complex multi dimension phenomenon that is difficult to define, and the hundreds of different definitions presented in the literature reflect this. Furthermore, culture is something ingrained in people daily activity.

For many years there has been research about study abroad, student and staff mobility and international student exchange, however in the last two decades the volume and scope of this work has increased significantly. International learning experiences have becomes increasingly important in higher education as these institutions seeks to educate global citizens who can cross international and cultural borders and follow the rapid movement of culture, technology, communication, and business. Current discourse suggests that those individuals who can successfully navigate a globalized world gain unmitigated access to advancements in culture and commerce and secure positions as stakeholders in the global economy (Welch, 2013). Study abroad programs are at the forefront of the missions to enhance students' global competencies today.

The Sea Teacher project or the "Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange in Southeast Asia" is a project that aims to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers from universities in Southeast Asia to have teaching experiences or practicum in schools in other countries in Southeast Asia. The exchange is intended for 4th year students whose major are in math, science, English and preschool.

Living and studying abroad are personal experiences found by students of University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara who went across the border, not as a tourist but as someone who having an everyday life in a new place and new culture. Most students experience some challenges when moving abroad or visit another country such as differences food, differences in social life, people talk in an unfamiliar language, and have difference norms and traditions than they are used to. At the same time, the academic and the students' attitude may be different. Sometimes the small differences that are makes it more frustrating, as they think they know how to overcome and do things, but they got a strange response.

The expectations of student exchange itself are achieving these proposed outcomes, which often requires a desire to learn about different cultures, to expand the mentality within, to expand networking, to improve language skills, to get inspiration from another country, to extend professional knowledge at different universities and from this program we can finding our identity. But the facts were different with the expectations. The students felt the culture shocks, especially in language, academic difference, local students' attitudes, social life and women-men relation. In language, the English articulation of the student with the local society is different, so that they always misunderstanding. In Philippines, they use the K to 12 curriculum, the K to 12 program covers Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School). This is totally different with Indonesia academic, so the students felt confused with that. In women and men relation, they were very shock, because there men and women relation are free. Men are free to make a relationship with men or women and women have relationship even they are getting married, their local society called it with open minded, so the students was very surprised about that. It can happen because they were not ready to come to that country. It was their first experience visiting the country, their knowledge of the country was still lacking and the problems with the individual itself also. They are not ready yet to visit the country and they remain in their comfort zone and do not want to find out about that country. In some cases, that students experience called culture shock.

As an English Department student of University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, the researcher had been learning about culture shock in an Intercultural Communication subject. At that subject, it can be known the way to understand customs or behavior of people in daily

life. "Culture shock one of the most recognized difficulties encountered by travelers to foreign cultures" (Reisinger, 2003).

Foreigner must have culture shock, because they have different culture, norms, principle, the ways of thinking and also way to communicate with other 4 people. It is supported by Smalley (Reisinger, 2003) who recognizes that "language shock, with occurs due to problems with unfamiliar language and an inability to communicate properly". Culture shocks also happen to students of University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara who joined students exchange program in Philippines and Thailand. They might have an experience of culture shock when they joined the program.

## 2. METHOD

This research conducted by the use of qualitative descriptive design with case study the culture shock faced by the exchange students. Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life (Saldana, 2011). According to Ary (2010) qualitative descriptive research is a research that asks questions about nature, incidence, or distribution of variables; it involves describing but not manipulating variables. Further, qualitative study is a design to gain the data in the form of words rather than number or statistic, and the data collected are the subject's experience and perspective. In other words, qualitative research is investigating the data from information in existing situation.

By using the descriptive qualitative research design, the writer was easier in presenting the result of the data being collected in descriptive form because it was intended to know the culture shock, the problems of culture shock experienced by English Department and Math Department exchange students of University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara who joined the Exchange Program and how to solve it.

The data were analyzed by using interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) with three phases of data analysis which were consist of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.

## 3. FINDINGS

Culture shock that faced by UMSU students' and their efforts to solve it were the data used for this research. The sources of data in this research were taken from six UMSU students' that joined SEA-Teacher Program. In applying Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) model of data analysis the procedure was processed in three steps namely:

### **Data Condensation**

In the data condensation, the culture shocks were selected from several questionnaires, which enclosed in appendix. In focusing step, the culture shock that contained the kinds of the culture shocks to make sure the suitability as the data. In simplifying the data, the culture shocks were categorized by numbering them into kinds of culture shocks, then abstracting the data and making written summary on kinds of cultures shock and the efforts of the students to solve the problem. The transformation of these data was categorized into columns.

### **Data Display**

The transformed then fully displayed and organized in matrix form to show the culture shocks faced by students and their efforts to solve it. The product of data display enclosed in table. The analysis of data were displaying in explanation. 27 3. Verification and Drawing Conclusion The last step of data analysis was verification and drawing conclusion. This step was done by checking the conformity with the supervisor. The study about culture shock according to its types and what regulation were concluded as the data of cultures shock verified.

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In their opinion, there was no significant academic difference between Indonesia, Thailand, and Philippines. In Thailand and Philippines academic context, the students were supposed to take and active participation and responsible for their own learning. And there were some differences about creativity, responsibility, and behavior in the class. Moreover, the role of the teacher becomes a facilitator who facilitated the students in learning and discussion, same as the education system in Indonesia. But, there was a student that felt shock with the fashion of teacher in that country, because teachers in the Philippines had freedom to wear their clothes when they taught.

Local students' attitudes were also one of the difficulties faced by students that should be adjusted. There was a student teacher felt confused whether her students understand or not with her teaching, but most of students enjoyed their teaching because their students were good and active. And all of them was very enthusiastic.

Social shock experienced by foreign students was also revealed. Most of them enjoyed the social life in that country and they could adapt to social life there, all respondents said that they could dealing with the social life there. But there were some students who thought that life in the country was wild.

The respondents almost had common opinion on women-men relationship in Philippines and Thai. According to them, women-men relationship in that country was more open than in Indonesia. When two friends of the opposite sex went out together usually considered as lovers, in that country is contrast, girls and boys went out together, it did not necessarily involved romantic feeling. Some of the student teachers felt shock with the women-men relationship there.

The main factor caused students experienced culture shock was a lack of knowledge about the country visited. So before going to that country, you had to expand your knowledge about that.

Different languages made respondents felt that there was a little difficulty when having to interacted with the environment around. Almost all respondents said that language was a little problem when they were there. To overcome this problem, they used English to communicate with local society, some of them asked to their buddy or their students and they looked at dictionary and used body language.

There was always different academic in every country, but the students must be able to adapt to it. Some of the respondents said that they were prepared the material before went there, and then they asking to their cooperating teacher and their buddy. They tried hard to understand and they had to do their best, and learned about the academic in that country.

Local students' attitudes were also another problem that foreign had to adjust. Respondents said that their students were very kind, respectful, and friendly. The student teachers had to made them become happy and feel comfort with them and tried to be friendly.

In social life, respondents should be able to adapt with the culture. To overcome the culture shock in social life, respondents tried to follow the culture and tried to blend with the environment, local society that had different norms and religion with us so we have to respect each other.

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### **General Shock**

In general shock, there was language as the problem. Language is an element which is highly significant in one's interaction and closeness with other people we come in contact with. It is tool used to communicate with people in a 56 society. Language barriers are the major problem for the foreigner when they are in the new culture.

Based on the research above, some of the respondents claimed to be difficult to adjust the language. In the Philippines, English was the second language, so all of the society can use English well as their everyday language. It made easy the respondents to communicate with the local society and when they were teaching, the students can understand and enjoy the learning proses. But this was opposite in Thailand, English was still the foreign language there, so not all of the local society could use English. This situation confused respondents when communicating with local society and when they were teaching, because not all of their students can understand English, so they must be able to make their students understand of what they were teaching about.

Their solution to solve this language problem is they used English and sometimes they were asking to their buddy. They also use body language to deliver what their mean and they used dictionary and google translate. Based on the questionnaire result, respondents can solve this problem and they can adapt with the environment so well.

### **Academic Shocks**

In academic atmosphere, foreign students said that the academic different and local students 'attitudes shock. This finding supports the theory that every country has different academic system although not significant. The Philippines and Thailand educational system mostly emphasizes a reproductive and 57 conservative attitudes to knowledge, teacher play central roles in the teaching learning process and are expected to provide all knowledge that students need in their course. The teachers' attendance in the classroom indicates that teaching activity occurs. Furthermore, a good teacher should provide lecture summaries, revision notes, even model answers to typical exams questions.

The academics in Thailand and the Philippines are not very different from Indonesia. The government of Thailand and the Philippines require uniforms to be used until the bachelor degree, but in Indonesia, the students used their uniform only up to senior high school level.

In Philippines, they used the K to 12 curriculum, the K to 12 program covers Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and Two years of Senior High School) to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Thai education system, applying for 9 years of compulsory education, with 12 years of free education until completing secondary school education. the structure of education in Thailand generally consists of 3 years Anuba or kindergarten, 6 years Prathom (elementary

school), 6 years Mattayom (junior and senior high school), vocational education and higher education. Compulsory education in Thailand implements the requirement for children to start school in Prathom 1 or grade 1 elementary school starting at the age of 6 years. Even 58 though there is no obligation for children to join Anuban (kindergarten) before entering elementary school, most parents send their children to enter kindergarten.

To solve the difference of academic shocks, respondents said that they were prepared the material before flew and mentoring with their cooperating teachers. They argue that the material same and they have tried to understand and learn it. Their buddy help them to prepared the material and before go got there, they were learning about the academic learning.

The local students' attitudes in both Thailand and the Philippines were very kind. All of respondents said that the students were very excited when they were teaching. They were enjoyed and take attention to the respondents. They were respect and enthusiastic when teaching learning proses. All of Respondents can adapt with the class so well. The respondents said, to solve the local students' attitudes shock they should be able to make them become happy and feel comfort with them so they can respect and have good attitudes. They have tried to be friendly and polite to the students so they would respect them and they can enjoy the teaching learning process and can pay attention to them when they were teaching.

#### **Social Shocks**

In social life, respondents faced culture shock in two aspects: Social life and men-women relationship. Culture shock is the trauma experience when you move into a culture different from your home or your country culture. Culture shock happens when people become anxious because they do not speak the language, know the custom or understand people in daily life. In social life, respondents can adapt it very well. They said that the local society were very friendly and welcome to them as the foreigners. Some respondent opinion that social life there is wild, but they can take the positive side of it. Their effort to solve this problem was tried to follow the culture and blend with local society. We must respect each other and must be able to adapt with the environment. Follow things that are in accordance with the norms that exist in Indonesia and stay away from things that do not fit both normally and religiously. That was the best way to solve this social life problem.

Respondents in this study felt confused with men-women relationship in that country. They were close each other like there are no restrictions. The local society said it freedom each person. So it is okay for them to have relationship in same genre. This is opposite in Indonesia, that things is very taboo and contrary to Indonesian culture which is predominantly Muslim. Respondents argue that was problem, Thai people do Halal gap and then they feel safety. They just keep in distance with that phenomenon but still accepted them outside. They must be able respect and don't interfere too much, because they believe that they have freedom. That was their way to solve this culture shock.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The result of this study indicates that exchange students of UMSU experience culture shocks. They faced some culture shock problems that affected them in general, academic and social life during their stay there. The exchange students experienced culture shock in language, academic different, local students' attitude, social life, and men-women relationship. It was found that language and men-women relationship was the most problematic aspects of culture shock experienced by exchange students. It was caused by unfamiliar with the target language in terms of dialects, slang, idioms, intonation, vocabularies, and different culture of men-women relationship between Indonesia and host country. Language problems influenced students' in interacting with the local society.

The efforts of students to solve their culture shock were mostly same. For instance, in language problem, they were used English and asked to their buddy to solve it. In men-women relationship problem, the way that they used to solve it was they just respected it. The SEA-Teacher participants Batch 6 could solve all of the problems that they faced there very well.

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