


International Students' Adaptation to Cultural Diversity: A Phenomenological Study

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i2.2233>

Muhammad Izal Mahendra, *Maulina, Rahmat Nasrullah, Tasman S 

¹²³⁴Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: maulina@umkendari.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

In an era of increasing global student mobility, understanding cross-cultural adaptation is essential to ensure international students' academic success, psychological well-being, and social integration. However, limited studies specifically explore Indonesian students lived experiences in short-term credit transfer programs within Southeast Asian contexts. This study investigates Indonesian students in the International Credit Transfer (ICT) program and their cross-cultural adaptation to cultural diversity in the Philippines. This study is informed by Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory, which conceptualizes adaptation as a dynamic process shaped by communication interactions, environmental conditions, and individual predispositions in unfamiliar cultural settings. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that adaptation is a gradual process influenced by personal communication, host and ethnic interactions, environmental factors, and individual predispositions. Although students initially experienced language anxiety and low confidence, continuous English exposure, buddy systems, and inclusive campus environments facilitated academic and social adjustment. Ethnic networks provided emotional support while enabling integration with the host culture. The study highlights the importance of institutional support and individual readiness in promoting successful cross-cultural adaptation.

Keywords: *Cross-Cultural Adaptation, Cultural Diversity, International Credit Transfer, International Student, Phenomenological Study, Student Mobility*

Article History:

Received 03rd March 2026

Accepted 03rd April 2026

Published 04th April 2026



INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, international student mobility has increased significantly across the globe. Students pursue overseas education not only for academic advancement but also to immerse themselves in unfamiliar cultural environments that challenge their adaptability in terms of language, norms, and values (Marginson, 2014). However, adapting to an international academic setting requires more than mastering coursework. International students frequently encounter intercultural challenges, including academic pressure, psychological stress, sociocultural integration difficulties, and financial constraints, which collectively complicate their adjustment experiences (Okai, 2023). Despite extensive research over the past two decades, persistent psychological and economic challenges indicate that international student adaptation remains a pressing issue (Oduwaye et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, international mobility programs play a crucial role in enhancing students' global competence. One such initiative is the Indonesia International Credit Transfer (ICT) program, established under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy. The program allows undergraduate students to participate in short-term academic exchanges abroad while earning credits toward their degrees. Although the program aims to broaden students' perspectives and academic exposure (al., 2024), studying abroad inevitably requires students to navigate both academic and non-academic challenges to maintain their well-being (Syahrani & Sain, 2025). Therefore, the ability to adapt within a cross-cultural environment becomes central to students' success (Chen et al., 2021).

Cross-cultural adaptation is understood not as a single event but as a dynamic and evolving process involving emotional regulation, behavioral adjustment, and cognitive flexibility. Berry's (1997) acculturation framework suggests that individuals adopt strategies such as assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization when managing intercultural encounters. Among these, integration – maintaining one's cultural identity while engaging with the host culture – is most consistently associated with positive outcomes such as reduced stress and enhanced academic performance (Sam & Berry, 2010). Nevertheless, external stressors including institutional neglect, language barriers, and subtle discrimination may hinder this adaptive balance (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Beyond structural factors, students' intercultural attitudes also significantly shape adaptation. Openness, tolerance, and curiosity toward cultural differences facilitate meaningful engagement and intercultural competence (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). When students perceive diversity as a resource rather than a threat, they are more likely to participate actively in both academic and social domains (Pike, 2002). Conversely, ethnocentric perspectives may lead to isolation and limited intercultural growth (Syahrani & Sain, 2025). Institutional efforts such as peer mentorship programs, inclusive campus policies, and culturally responsive support systems therefore play a crucial role in shaping students' adaptive trajectories.

Empirical studies in the Philippine context present mixed findings. Nurhayati et al. (2024) reported that cultural similarities between Indonesia and the Philippines supported Indonesian students' social adjustment. In contrast, (al., 2024) found that differences in academic culture and learning styles required significant adaptive effort. These findings indicate that cultural proximity does not automatically guarantee smooth academic integration. Other studies applying Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory highlight dimensions such as communication competence, host and ethnic social communication, environment, and predisposition as critical factors influencing adaptation (Kang et al., 2019; Octavia et al., 2025).

Kim (2017) conceptualizes cross-cultural adaptation as a dynamic process through which individuals establish functional relationships with unfamiliar cultural environments. The theory identifies five interrelated components influencing adaptation: personal communication, host social communication, ethnic social communication, environment, and predisposition. Personal communication encompasses cognitive understanding, emotional readiness, and operational communication skills (Kim, 2017). Host and ethnic social communication involve interpersonal and mass communication within both local and co-ethnic networks. Environmental factors include host acceptance, conformity pressures, and the strength of ethnic communities. Predisposition refers to individual preparedness, ethnic proximity or distance, and adaptive personality traits such as openness, resilience, and positivity (Kim, 2012; Kim, 2017). These elements collectively contribute to intercultural transformation characterized by functional fitness and psychological well-being.

Although numerous studies have explored international students' academic and social experiences (Kang, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2016; Lam, 2025; Tang et al., 2024), existing studies have largely focused on cross-cultural adaptation in Western educational contexts, highlighting challenges related to language barriers, psychological stress, and sociocultural integration. However, research focusing specifically on Indonesian students participating in short-term ICT programs remains limited, particularly regarding their lived experiences and how they navigate cross-cultural adaptation during relatively brief academic exchanges. This gap is particularly significant within the Southeast Asian context, where countries may share certain cultural similarities yet still differ in academic practices, communication styles, and institutional environments that shape international students' adaptation experiences. Therefore, this study aims to explore how Indonesian students participating in the ICT program experience the process of cross-cultural adaptation in unfamiliar academic and social contexts in the Philippines, using Kim's (2017) cross-cultural adaptation theory as the analytical framework.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design, which was considered appropriate for examining the subjective experiences of international students navigating cultural diversity and the process of adaptation. Descriptive phenomenology, rooted in Husserl's philosophical tradition, aims to describe and understand the essence of individuals lived experiences without imposing prior interpretations (Creswell, 2013). This approach allowed the researcher to explore how participants perceived and interpreted their experiences of cross-cultural adaptation during the International Credit Transfer (ICT) program in the Philippines.

The participants of this study consisted of three Indonesian students who had been enrolled in the International Credit Transfer (ICT) program in the Philippines. The participants were selected using purposive sampling with a criterion-based approach, in which individuals were chosen because they had direct experience participating in the ICT program and were willing to share their experiences. All participants were female students. The first participant was a third-year female law student (PFL-1), the second participant was a third-year female English education student (PFE-2), and the third participant was a third-year female architecture student (PFA-3). The participants' diverse academic backgrounds provided varied insights and unique experiences regarding their processes of adaptation and perceptions of cultural diversity.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument responsible for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data while remaining reflexive and sensitive to social and emotional cues during the research process (Patton, 2002). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility for participants to share their personal experiences while still maintaining a focused discussion related to the research objectives. According to (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), qualitative interviews aim to explore the meanings of lived experiences through reflective conversations between the researcher and participants. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on the participants' preferences and availability. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the data. The recorded audio files and transcripts were securely stored in Google Drive and Microsoft cloud storage to prevent data loss and to comply with ethical research standards (Babbie, 2016).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following (Braun & Clarke, 2006) six-phase framework. The analysis began with familiarization with the interview transcripts through repeated reading of the data. In the second phase, initial codes were generated to identify meaningful patterns related to participants' experiences. The third phase involved organizing these codes into potential themes that represented broader patterns in the dataset. In the fourth phase, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately reflected the participants' narratives. The fifth phase involved defining and naming each theme to capture its central meaning. Finally, the themes were presented in a written report supported by relevant participant quotations and related literature. According to (Nowell et al., 2017), this systematic and transparent process enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative findings while maintaining a strong connection to the participants' lived experiences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on in-depth interviews with three participants, the findings revealed that cross-cultural adaptation occurred as a dynamic, gradual, and interconnected process involving personal, social, and environmental factors, as explained in (Kim, 2017) Cross-Cultural Adaptation theory. In line with (Kim, 2017), adaptation did not occur instantly but emerged through continuous negotiation between individuals and the new cultural environment. The participants' experiences demonstrated that five key components – personal communication,

host social communication, ethnic communication, environment, and predisposition – simultaneously shaped their academic and social adaptation processes.

Personal Communication

The findings indicated that personal communication constituted both an initial challenge and the primary foundation for cross-cultural adaptation among all three participants. During the early phase of their stay, all participants experienced difficulties in using English, which generated feelings of fear, embarrassment, and low self-confidence. This condition aligns with Kim's (2017) assertion that personal communication involves cognitive, affective, and operational processes when individuals encounter a new cultural environment.

The second participant (P2) emphasized the affective dimension of adaptation, particularly anxiety and fear when speaking:

"At first, I was afraid to speak, afraid of making grammatical mistakes, or maybe still feeling shy."

From a cognitive and academic perspective, the first participant (P1) reported that academic demands in English served as a catalyst for improving communicative competence:

"I started to be more involved with international journals because they used English textbooks, so I learned many new English terms."

Complementing these experiences, the third participant (P3) explained that intensive exposure to English communication accelerated the adaptation process:

"My English has improved because I had to communicate in English there."

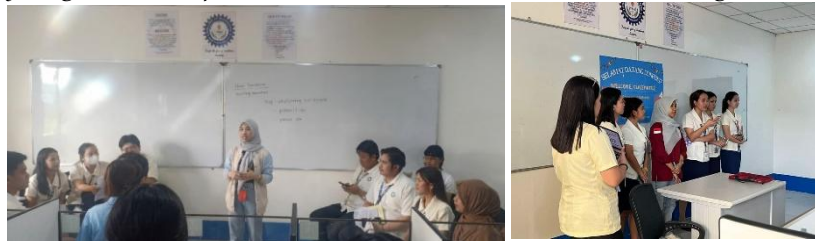


Figure 1. Classroom Presentation for English Communication

According to (Zakiya et al., 2022), international students often experience language anxiety in academic intercultural communication, facing difficulties such as fear of making mistakes and low self-confidence when speaking English. These psychological barriers are closely related to the learning environment, which can either intensify or alleviate students' anxiety when using a second language. Recognizing the central role of the classroom context, (Petriani et al., 2025) emphasize that the three aspects of the learning environment are crucial in creating a conducive atmosphere, increasing active participation, and encouraging the optimal development of students' speaking skills. Within such supportive environments, academic communication abilities can be further strengthened through collaborative partnerships and classroom-based projects involving Indonesian and Filipino students, ranging from group work to public presentations (Febiola et al., 2024). Through these immersive and interactive learning practices, English language proficiency can be significantly enhanced, particularly for international students who seek to develop their skills effectively through continuous exposure and active engagement in international campus settings (Porter & Castillo, 2023).

Collectively, these findings support (Zou & Zhang, 2009) argument that international students engage in sustained emotional and cognitive efforts to adjust to the academic and communicative demands of a new environment. From (Kim, 2017) perspective, this gradual improvement illustrates the adaptive transformation process, in which repeated interaction with the host environment leads to greater functional fitness and psychological comfort. From (Berry, 1997) perspective, the observed improvement in communicative competence reflects a tendency toward an integration strategy, in which students maintain their original identity while actively engaging with the host culture.

Host Social Communication

Social communication with local students and lecturers was identified as a key mechanism in helping participants understand academic and social cultures in the

Philippines. Buddy systems, campus activities, and informal interactions functioned as primary media for cultural learning, consistent with (Kim, 2017) view that host social communication accelerates the internalization of host cultural norms and values.

The findings related to host social communication are summarized in Table 1, which presents forms of interaction with the host community, the role of the buddy system, and their impacts on cross-cultural adaptation.

P1 described the academic support gained through host social communication during academic discussions.

"I have buddies, and they are mostly outstanding students. They help me a lot academically."

Through participation in events such as UMEET, P2 highlighted how buddies actively explained local cultural practices and meanings embedded in campus traditions.

"At the UMEET event, my buddies explained the cultures there, so I gained a lot of insight."

Meanwhile, P3 noted the importance of interactions with both lecturers and local students in shaping emotional and social adaptation. This supportive atmosphere allowed P3 to feel respected despite existing limitations as an international student.

"The students and lecturers are really tolerant, and they respect my limitations."



Figure 2. UMEET Group Activities

These interactions indicate that host social communication served not only as academic assistance but also as a mechanism for cultural learning. Through direct interaction with local students and lecturers, participants were able to internalize social norms, communication styles, and academic expectations within the host institution. This finding supports Kim's (2017) argument that interpersonal communication with host members accelerates cultural learning and reduces uncertainty in unfamiliar environments.

This is in line with Brooks (2024), who stated that international students reported the buddy program had a positive impact on their socio-cultural transition at UK higher education institutions (UKHE), particularly regarding practical daily aspects such as adapting to campus life, understanding the academic system, and engaging in social interactions. Therefore, implementing a buddy system is essential, as it provides international students with guidance, social support, and opportunities for intercultural exchange that facilitate smoother adaptation. In addition, learners who received both teacher support and peer support showed a significant decrease in speaking anxiety and a notable improvement in speaking proficiency, emphasizing the importance of supportive learning environments, especially in online contexts (Tauchid, 2025).

Overall, these findings are consistent with Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), who argue that openness and positive interaction with the host culture strengthen intercultural communication competence. A supportive social environment also contributes to reducing adaptation-related stress, as highlighted by Smith and Khawaja (2011).

Ethnic Communication

Contrary to assumptions that ethnic communication may hinder adaptation, this study found that ethnic communication functioned as an emotional and psychological buffer. All participants utilized the Indonesian student community as a space for reflection, experience sharing, and emotional recovery.

Drawing on shared reflection, P1 described the reflective function of ethnic communication:

"We shared unique and different things about other people's countries, and then discussed them among fellow Indonesians. We were like a family there, sharing stories and experiences."

From a more personal perspective, P2 emphasized the emotional closeness formed within the group:

"I am somewhat of an introverted person, so I asked other Indonesian students many questions regarding the cultures there."

At a collective level, P3 highlighted the communal function of the ethnic community:

"We supported each other and helped one another so that we could all learn a new culture together."



Figure 3. Indonesian Students Interaction

Ethnic networks in this study functioned as a psychological safety space where students could process their experiences, share reflections, and regain emotional stability during their stay abroad. Rather than isolating students from the host culture, these ethnic connections complemented their intercultural interactions by providing emotional reassurance while they continued engaging with the host environment. This finding supports Kim's (2017) view that ethnic communication does not hinder adaptation as long as it is balanced with host social communication. Within Berry's (1997) acculturation framework, such a pattern reflects an integration strategy, in which individuals maintain connections with their original cultural group while actively participating in the host society. Consistent with this perspective, Brown (2009) found that international students often form relationships with conational peers due to the comfort of shared language, cultural familiarity, and instrumental support. These interactions help create a sense of a "home-like environment," which can reduce emotional stress and support students during the initial stages of cross-cultural adjustment.

Environment

The academic and social environment in the Philippines was perceived as friendly, open, and inclusive, which significantly facilitated the cross-cultural adaptation process. This reflects the presence of host acceptance and a pluralist ideology, as proposed by Kim (2017).

Highlighting an inclusive host environment, P1 emphasized the absence of racial or religious discrimination. This inclusive atmosphere contributed to a sense of emotional security and comfort, allowing the participant to engage more openly in both academic and social settings.

"When it comes to racism or religion, there was none at all."

Describing the early stage of arrival and initial adjustment, P2 recalled experiencing immediate acceptance from local students at NEUST.

"Students at NEUST took us around the campus and explained the buildings and the culture there."

Meanwhile, emphasizing inclusion at a symbolic and cultural level, P3 highlighted the host community's recognition of the participants' cultural identity through meaningful welcoming gestures.

"I was even welcomed with Indonesian traditional decorations; we were really welcomed there."



Figure 4. Classroom and School Environment

These findings are consistent with Nurhayati et al. (2024), who found that the social environment in the Philippines strongly supports Indonesian students and allows adaptation to occur with lower psychological pressure. Similarly, Marino et al. (2017) and Sakinah et al. (2025) highlighted that interaction with peers and gaining social support contributes to personal growth, maturity, and responsible behavior. These findings collectively underscore the importance of ensuring representation from diverse groups to promote equality and reduce racism, as prejudice can be mitigated through relationship-building and culturally informed materials, while establishing permanent taskforces or committees within governance structures helps maintain solidarity and harmonious student relations among students.

Predisposition

Individual predispositions prior to departure emerged as a determining factor in the stability of cross-cultural adaptation. All participants demonstrated mental readiness, openness, and prior preparation, aligning with Kim's (2017) concepts of preparedness and adaptive personality.

The (P1) underscored the significance of maintaining an open attitude as a foundation for adaptation. By approaching the host culture with a mindset of openness and humility, P1 demonstrated readiness to embrace cultural differences and avoid premature judgment. This cultural flexibility enabled smoother adjustment to new social and academic environments.

"I position myself as an empty glass, ready to accept their culture."

In addition to attitudinal readiness, practical preparation was also identified as a key factor in facilitating early-stage adaptation. The second participant (P2) pointed out that technical preparation, particularly in terms of language proficiency and practical knowledge, helped ease the transition into the host context.

"The most important preparation is English, the local language, and learning about values."

Alongside openness and technical readiness, psychological preparedness played a critical role in sustaining adaptation over time. P3 highlighted mental readiness as a central mechanism for managing emotional challenges arising from cultural differences.

"I prepare myself mentally, which is the most important thing."



Figure 5. Student Preparation Prior to Cross-Cultural Experience

These findings highlight that cross-cultural adaptation is influenced not only by external support but also by students' internal readiness. Participants who demonstrated openness, curiosity, and mental preparedness appeared more capable of navigating cultural differences and managing emotional challenges during the adaptation process. This

observation aligns with Kim's (2017) concept of adaptive personality, which emphasizes traits such as openness, resilience, and flexibility as critical resources for intercultural adjustment.

According to Gebregergis and Csukonyi (2025), for international students, personal resources—such as emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, psychological capital, self-determination, multicultural personality, personal growth initiatives, and academic self-efficacy—as well as situational resources—including social support, social connectedness, attachment, and social media use—play a crucial role in facilitating their adaptation to new academic and cultural environments. This perspective underscores that successful adaptation is not merely structural but also requires proactive engagement from the students themselves. In line with this view, Nurhayati et al. (2024) notes that Indonesian students must adapt to the Philippine context to facilitate communication with local residents; consequently, when encountering community members who are unable to communicate in English, students learn basic Tagalog as a practical strategy for intercultural adjustment. Such linguistic adaptation reflects students' active efforts to navigate sociocultural realities and enhance their everyday interactions within the host society.

Overall, interviews with three Indonesian international students revealed that cross-cultural adaptation unfolded through interconnected personal, social, and environmental processes. Students' adaptation strategies were strongly influenced by initial communication challenges, social interactions with the host community, and individual readiness prior to departure. In the early phase, students relied on personal communication efforts, such as increased exposure to English in academic contexts and continuous practice, which gradually enhanced confidence and linguistic competence (Kim, 2017; Zhou et al., 2008; Petriani et al., 2025).

As adaptation progressed, host social communication—including buddy systems, campus activities, and supportive interactions with lecturers and local students—played a central role in facilitating understanding of academic norms and reducing anxiety. At the same time, ethnic communication among fellow Indonesian students functioned as an emotional buffer that sustained psychological well-being without hindering cultural integration (Berry, 1997; Kim, 2017; Shinta et al., 2025). Furthermore, a supportive and inclusive campus environment, combined with positive predispositions such as openness, mental readiness, and prior preparation, strengthened students' resilience and accelerated adaptation. These findings suggest that successful cross-cultural adaptation requires synergy among individual effort, social support, and institutional inclusivity, highlighting the critical role of host institutions in fostering culturally responsive and student-centered learning environments for international students.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that cross-cultural adaptation among Indonesian ICT students in the Philippines is not merely a process of adjusting to a new academic environment but a complex and multidimensional experience shaped by the interaction of individual preparedness, social relationships, and institutional support. The findings reveal that adaptation develops gradually through continuous engagement with both the host culture and students' own cultural communities, where communication skills, social interaction, and psychological readiness function as essential resources in navigating unfamiliar academic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the study shows that cultural similarity between Indonesia and the Philippines does not automatically guarantee a smooth academic transition; instead, institutional support mechanisms such as buddy programs, inclusive campus environments, and opportunities for intercultural engagement play a significant role in enhancing students' academic confidence and social integration. At the same time, connections with fellow Indonesian students provide emotional support that helps sustain psychological well-being while still promoting interaction with the host culture. Practically, these findings emphasize the shared responsibility of both home and host universities, where home institutions need to strengthen pre-departure preparation in terms of language proficiency, intercultural

awareness, and psychological readiness, while host institutions should create inclusive academic settings and structured support systems that foster meaningful intercultural communication. However, this study is limited by its small and relatively homogeneous sample, suggesting that future research should involve more diverse participants, a wider range of academic disciplines, and multiple host institutions across Southeast Asia to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural adaptation in culturally similar yet academically diverse contexts.

REFERENCES

- Andriani, W., Maulina, M., Faridawati, F., Tanghal, A., Rahim, T. R., & Said, A. (2023). The nature-related influence of college students' English-speaking anxiety in Indonesia. *Tell: Teaching of English Language and Literature Journal*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.30651/tell.v11i1.17763>
- Babbie, E. (2016). *The practice of social research* (14th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Berrios Callejas, S. A. (2025). *Emotional intelligence and metacognitive awareness in the context of culture shock: A theoretical model of international students' adaptation profiles*. *Journal of Modern Foreign Psychology*, 14(3), 30–43. <https://doi.org/10.17759/jmfp.2025140303>
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied psychology*, 46(1), 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brooks, E. (2024). How a buddy scheme created social and intercultural space for international and home students. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education, Special Issue 32: ALDinHE Conference Proceedings*, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi32.1456>
- Brown, L. (2009). An ethnographic study of the friendship patterns of international students in England: An attempt to recreate home through conational interaction. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 48(3), 184–193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2009.07.003>
- Chen, A. S. Y., Lin, G. H., & Yang, H. W. (2021). Staying connected: Effects of social connectedness, cultural intelligence, and socioeconomic status on overseas students' life satisfaction. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 83, 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.06.002>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Febiola, F., Maulina, M., & Nasrullah, R. (2024). Unveiling the communication skills dynamics of Indonesian students in international credit transfer program: A phenomenological inquiry into academic lived experiences in the Philippines. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 6(1).
- Gebregergis, W. T., & Csukonyi, C. (2025). A systematic review of personal and situational factors associated with intercultural adaptation of international students: Unravelling the resources and demands. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 108, 102252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2025.102252>
- Hua, J., Zhang, G., Coco, C., Zhao, T., & Hou, N. (2020). *Proactive personality and cross-cultural adjustment: The mediating role of adjustment self-efficacy*. *Journal of International Students*, 10(4), 817–835. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i4.1274>
- Kang, S., Yossuck, A. P. D. P., Panyadee, C., & Ek-lem, A. P. D. B. (2019). Influencing factors of cross-cultural adaptation process of Chinese students studying in the upper Northern Thai universities. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Doi: 10.2478/mjss-2019-0007
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. (2020). *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Belajar*.
- Kim, Y. Y., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1988). *Theories in intercultural communication* (Vol. 12). Sage Publications.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2012). Cross-cultural adaptation. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theories in intercultural communication*. SAGE Publications.

- Kim, Y. Y. (2017). Integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation. *The international encyclopedia of intercultural communication*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0041>
- Kim, Y. S., & Kim, Y. Y. (2016). Ethnic Proximity and Cross-Cultural Adaptation: A Study of Asian and European Students in the United States. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 25(3).
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lam, D. (2025). U-curve, S-curve, or chaos: Chinese international students' eclectic experience. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, 101417. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101417>
- Luo, J., & Jamieson-Drake, D. (2015). Predictors of study abroad intent, participation, and college outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 56(1), 29-56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-014-9338-7>.
- Marginson, S. (2014). Student self-formation in international education. *Journal of studies in international education*, 18(1), 6-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315313513036>
- Marino, J. L., Montalbo, M. D., & Bugtong, M. A. (2017). The socio-culture adaptation among international students at selected schools of Batangas Province, Philippines. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counselling*, 2(5), 83-98. <https://gaexcellence.com/ijepc/article/view/2770/2437>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Nurhayati, N., Maulina, M., & Faridawati, F. (2024). Students' lived experience of social adjustment in international credit transfer program: A phenomenological study. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 6(1).
- Octavina, C., Khairunnisa, F., Lestari, T. P., Silvhiyani, S., Mirizon, S., Erenalida, E., & Purnomo, M. E. Bridging cultures: Innovative adaptation strategies of Indonesian students navigating academic and social challenges in the United States. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture*, 10(1), 140-159.
- Oduwaye, O., Kiraz, A., & Sorakin, Y. (2023). *A trend analysis of the challenges of international students over 21 years*. SAGE Open, 13(4), 21582440231210387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231210387>
- Okai, L. (2023). *Adjustment challenges of international students: Implications for social work practice*. International Journal of Social Work, 10(2), 15-36. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijsw.v10i2.212>
- Oksal, A., & Ekin, M. T. Y. (2013). Student teachers' global perspectives and attitudes towards cultural diversity: *The case of Uludağ University*. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 597-601. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.09.245>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Petriani, P., Maulina, M., & Nasrullah, R. (2025). The role of classroom environment in driving students' motivation to learn English. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 7(2), 651-667. <https://doi.org/10.52208/klasikal.v7i2.1280>
- Pike, G. R. (2002). The differential effects of on- and off-campus living arrangements on students' openness to diversity. *NASPA Journal*, 39 (4), 283-290. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.5036>
- Porter, S., & Castillo, M. S. (2023). The effectiveness of immersive language learning: An investigation into English language acquisition in immersion environments versus traditional classroom settings. *Research Studies in English Language Teaching and Learning*, 1(3), 155-165. <https://doi.org/10.62583/rseltl.v1i3.18>
- Sakinah, M., Maulina, & Rusli, T. I. (2025). The influence of storytelling on students' confidence in speaking English: Out of the class context. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 10(5), 653-664.

- Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (2010). Acculturation: When individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds meet. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 5(4), 472-481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610373075>
- Shinta, Maulina, Syarif, A. R., & Sain, Y. (2025). Reflection on professional identity: An autoethnographic study of a teacher's evolving role within the classroom context. In *Proceedings of Forum for University Scholars in Interdisciplinary Opportunities and Networking* (Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 456-464).
- Smith, R. A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2011). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students. *International Journal of intercultural relations*, 35(6), 699-713. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.08.004>
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. In *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 2-52). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872987.n1>
- Stanley, L. S. (1996). The development and validation of an instrument to assess attitudes toward cultural diversity and pluralism among preservice physical educators. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 56(5), 891-897. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164496056005017>
- Syahriani, R., & Sain, Y. (2025). Navigating Non-Academic Challenges of International Students: A Case Study at an Islamic University in Indonesia. *Jurnal Genesis Indonesia*, 4(01), 1-8.
- Tang, L., Zhang, C. A., & Cui, Y. (2024). Beyond borders: The effects of perceived cultural distance, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural adaptation on academic performance among international students of higher education. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 103, 102083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2024.102083>
- Tauchid, A. (2025). Teacher and peer support as key factors in EFL learners' speaking anxiety and proficiency in online learning environments. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*, 15, 125-142. <https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.15.2025.09>
- Zakiya, E. D., Kusumaningputri, R., & Khazanah, D. (2022). "It's not easy to speak English": International students' language anxiety in academic intercultural communication practices. *JEELS*, 9(2), 381-409. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v9i2.534>
- Zhang, K., & Ting, S. H. (2025). Mediating and moderating effects of WeChat use on cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 106, 102160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2025.102160>