

# Intercultural Communication Competence and Intercultural Adjustment Problems of International Students in Indonesia and Japan: A Sequential Explanatory Study

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Intercultural Communication Competence and Intercultural  
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Japan: A Sequential Explanatory Study

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

Indonesia and Japan are attempting to attract international students to study in their institutions of higher education because international students contribute valuably to education and economic sectors. To harvest those benefits, the government and higher education institutions must acknowledge the nature of international students and their adjustment issues in the host country to establish appropriate support services. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the intercultural adjustment problems, intercultural communication competence, and the nature of international students in Indonesia and Japan, as these are two countries with very different demographics whilst simultaneously having the same aim of increasing international students. Moreover, this study aims to propose suitable supportive programs for international students' needs. This study used sequential mixed methods that combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The questionnaire participants in Japan consisted of 68 international students studying at cities on the island of Kyushu, while the participants in Indonesia were 58 international students from three major cities on Java Island. There were ten interviewees in Japan and sixteen in Indonesia. A questionnaire was used to find out the intercultural adjustment problems of the international students, their adjustment problems, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to participate, ethnocentrism, and variables that correlate to them. An open-ended interview was used to explore more deeply the adjustment issues, the coping strategies, and the nature of international students in this study. The quantitative results showed that the adjustment problems of participants in Indonesia and Japan were relatively few. The results also indicated that intercultural communication competence slightly correlates with

intercultural adjustment problems. Additionally, the results identified the external factors which influence the adjustment problems, i.e., course of study, language proficiency, university, and environmental circumstances. The qualitative analysis found three significant problems experienced by participants in Indonesia, i.e., general living issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues, and in Japan, i.e., academic issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues. The diverse causes of each problem and numerous coping strategies were explained. Further discussion, recommendation, limitations, and suggestions were also provided.

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

The number of international students who study abroad has skyrocketed in these past years as the world is becoming more globalized. UNESCO (2018) reported there are over 4.8 million internationally mobile students, twice the total number there were in 2005. The data released by the International Institute of Education's (IIE) Project Atlas showing 16 main host nations suggests English-speaking countries are still a major destination for international students, i.e., the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand (ICEF Monitor, 2015).

As explained by Kuroda et al. (2018), in Asia the growing economic globalization leads to the fast expansion of higher education aiming to produce high-quality human resources suitable for a globally competitive economy and knowledge-based society. Asian countries are becoming an irresistible destination for international students, especially for those from within the region. China received about 330,000 inbound students in 2012 and has set a goal to reach 500,000 students by 2020. Meanwhile, Japan also aims to host 300,000 international students by 2020. International enrollments in



Japan have been rising since 2014 (ICEF Monitor, 2015). In Southeast Asia, Singapore hoped to attract 150,000 international students by 2015, and Malaysia ambitiously aimed at 250,000 international students by 2025 (Maslen, 2012).

Many countries are attempting to attract international students to study at their institutions of higher education because international students contribute valuably to education and economic sectors (Andrade, 2006). As Andrade cited from NAFSA (2003), international students generate a source of revenue, intercultural learning, and understanding of diversity and global issues. Thus, to keep harvesting those benefits, government and higher education institutions must acknowledge the nature of international students and their adjustment issues in the host country to establish appropriate support services. Having sufficient knowledge about international students has worldwide implications for intercultural education.

The high quantity of international students also benefits the host countries. In many cases, international students opt to stay in the host country after graduation to fill positions which many native citizens are not qualified for (Gray, 2003). Australia, the UK, and Japan are currently taking advantage of the skills of international students who prefer remaining in the country working to going back home (Andrade, 2006; Hillman, 2019; Vestre, 2011).

The internationalization of Japanese higher education is led by globalization, falling birthrate, and an aging population which causes a decreasing working-age population (Shimomura, 2013). Japan can overcome the labor shortage and demographic issues by bringing in more international students. For this reason, the Japanese government made efforts for internationalization by establishing policies on

international student mobility, e.g., 300,000 International Students Plan in 2008 aiming to reach the target number by 2020, and Asian Gateway Initiative in 2007 proposing Japan as a gateway which connects Asian countries to share prosperity. The government also developed a higher education policy for internationalization, e.g., the Global 30 Project in 2009 which funds the establishment of a university network to promote the internationalization of Japanese universities and the acceptance of highly-qualified international students to Japan, and The Top Global University Project in 2013 which has an objective to improve the international compatibility and competitiveness of higher education in Japan by developing comprehensive university reform and internationalization.

Likewise, Indonesia tried to open up and revamp its education sector amid the ongoing economic integration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. During Joko Widodo's presidency, the government has made clear commitments to reform education and to increase investment in education. The governmental strategy to keep up with global competition serves two objectives: to provide a better quality of education and to attract more international students to study in Indonesia. As a result, the number of international students in Indonesia is increasing gradually. Although the current number of international students in Indonesia is not as high as other countries, it increased by 32% compared to 2017's data. In connection with this, the government has issued 6,967 study permits for international students (Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017).

Researchers from various backgrounds conducted studies of international students concentrated on their intercultural communication competence and adjustment process. However, present intercultural communication studies have been heavily

focused on English-speaking countries (Andrade, 2006; Gebhard, 2012; Hu & Zhang, 2013; Neuliep, Chaudoir, & McCroskey, 2001; Justen, 2009; Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003; Campbell, 2016) or East Asian countries, i.e., Japan, Korea, and China (Ikeguchi, 2012; Lee, 2017; Ding, 2016; Hennings & Tanabe, 2018; Passaporn, 2011; Wu, 2015; Huang & Chang, 2011; Kim, Choi, and Tatar, 2017; Syafia, 2017). Intercultural communication studies need to broaden the horizon and shift the focus on to other countries, including Indonesia, as the McKinsey Global Institute projected Indonesia to be the world's seventh-largest economy by 2030 and will take the position of being by far the largest economy in ASEAN (2012). Only limited research about international students in Indonesia is available since the internationalization of higher education is a relatively new field.

Indonesia and Japan are two very different countries. Indonesia is a multicultural country with 1,340 ethnic groups (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010), while Japan is home to only three indigenous ethnic groups (Sousa, August 2019). Consequently, Indonesians are used to communicating with culturally different people daily. The Japanese population is more homogeneous than Indonesia, but they have received more international students. Comparing the intercultural communication phenomenon in Japan and Indonesia, which have distinctive characteristics, will make an interesting study and enrich the theories in the intercultural communication field.

Furthermore, mastering intercultural communication competence in the globalized world has never been more crucial. By developing awareness and sensitivity towards other cultures, people will be able to gain essential knowledge, attitudes, and skills to engage in intercultural communication effectively (Matveev, 2004). Cultural sensitivity, therefore, is associated with more significant potential for exercising

intercultural communication competence. According to Chen and Starosta (1996), a culturally sensitive individual can recognize, acknowledge, and respect cultural differences. In other words, a culturally sensitive individual is considered culturally competent. Other prior studies have proven that intercultural sensitivity significantly influences intercultural communication competence (Chen, 2010; Matsumoto, Leroux, & Yoo, 2005; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Triandis, 2006).

Within the field of intercultural communication, intercultural communication competence and intercultural sensitivity are also linked with intercultural willingness to communicate and ethnocentrism (Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003; Lin and Rancer 2003; Lin, Rancer, & Trimbilas, 2005; Campbell, 2016). However, few, if any, studies have tried to examine thoroughly the relationship between intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, ethnocentrism, and intercultural adjustment all together. Therefore, a study focusing on those variables can fill the gap in the intercultural communication field.

### **1.1. Statement of Purpose**

For suitable programs and services to be developed, a thorough understanding of adjustment problems and the nature of international students is needed. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to investigate the intercultural adjustment problems, intercultural communication competence, and the nature of international students in Indonesia and Japan, as these are two countries with very different demographics whilst simultaneously having the same aim of increasing international students. This study aims to look closer at each country and individually investigate the situations of their

international students. Multiple stages of analysis are required to ensure the methodological robustness of this study. First, this study explores the intercultural adjustment problems faced by students in both countries, quantitatively and qualitatively. Second, this study investigates and compares the coping strategies used by international students. Third, this study examines their intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism using a quantitative approach and analyzes the relationship between those variables and intercultural adjustment problems. In order to reveal the nature of international students in both countries, this study correlates the findings of the previous stages of analysis and secondary data from previous studies, then fully considers big picture of it to arrange suitable programs to accommodate students' need.

## **1.2. Research questions**

Based on the issues mentioned beforehand and the stated purpose, this study uses a mixed-method to answer the following questions:

1. What are the intercultural adjustment problems of international students in Indonesia and Japan?
2. What are the strategies used by international students to cope with adjustment problems?
3. What is the level of their intercultural adjustment, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism?
4. What variables correlate with the intercultural adjustment of international students?

### **1.3. Research design**

Due to the nature of this study, mixed methods are utilized that combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixed methods are used to obtain an overall greater strength of a study than either purely quantitative or qualitative research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The study sequentially starts with a broad survey to gain results quantitatively and then focuses on the qualitative results using an open-ended interview to get in-depth findings. Further detail of the research design will be explained in chapter 3.

### **1.4. Significance of the study**

This study holds potential importance for practical, political, and theoretical considerations. First of all, it can provide insights related to intercultural adjustment issues for international students who are living in Indonesia or Japan, or planning to live in either of those countries, and can be extrapolated to countries with similar demographics. Second, the findings could have significance for higher education institutions to establish proper policies and programs for effective internationalization. Examining differences of experiences, adjustment problems, and intercultural communication competence of the international students in both countries means that institutions may be able to design new initiatives or enhance existing ones to ensure international students make the most of their experience and the opportunities of studying abroad. Third, the findings from this study might additionally be advantageous for theory development as it may contribute more data and theories in intercultural communication study, especially in the context of Indonesia and Japan.

## **1.5. Organization of the dissertation**

Chapter 1 consists of the introduction to the study, which includes the background of the problem, the statement of purpose, research hypotheses, research design, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 details the literature review, either the previous works or theories related to the study, in order to provide the readers with some insight into this topic. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the study, which highlights the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection strategy, data analysis procedure, and concluding remarks. Chapter 4 highlights the quantitative findings of each research question in three subchapters. The first subchapter explores the intercultural adjustment issues experienced by international students in both countries. Next, the second subchapter examines the level of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism. The third subchapter explores the variables that correlate with the intercultural adjustment of international students. Chapter 5 examines more deeply intercultural adjustment issues, the most significant challenges of international students, and coping strategies used by international students. Additionally, it also investigates factors that ease their adjustment process and reasons to study abroad. Moreover, it reports the supportive programs for international students by host institutions in both countries. Building upon this, Chapter 6 provides more in-depth discussion about the nature of international students in both countries and aims to propose suitable supportive programs for international students' needs. Lastly, Chapter 7 gives a conclusion, limitations, and recommendations of the study.

## Chapter 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter highlights the literature review related to this study. In investigating the field of intercultural communication, there are two fundamental objectives: 1) to examine what is known about the internationalization of higher education 2) to investigate intercultural communication competence theories, and 3) to review what has been studied about intercultural adjustment of international students.

### **2.1. Internationalization of higher education institutions**

Chapter one has briefly mentioned that almost five million students are studying abroad. This is more than double the 2.1 million students who studied outside their home countries in 2000, and more than triple the number in 1990 (ICEF Monitor, 2017). The growing globalized world creates opportunities for money, trade, knowledge, and skills flowing more freely across borders, within the region or beyond. Higher education was only accessible to the world's elite, but now it is open to the masses. The number of



middle classes who look for chances to study abroad is now increasing exponentially on every continent, especially in countries that lack higher education capacity.

The English-speaking countries are still dominating the market of international higher education to students; however, that situation is changing rapidly nowadays, as stated by higher education consultant, Bob Goddard, in *University World News* (Maslen, February 2012). Asian countries, i.e., Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Middle East, are trying to enhance their capacities as a host region to provide higher education to international students. According to Kuroda et al. (2018), Asia is becoming the center of the global landscape of international student mobility. The total number of outbound students from Asia has increased three-fold from 771,496 in 1999 to 2,328,887 in 2015. Similarly, the total number of inbound students to Asia has increased almost three times from 323,487 in 1999 to 928,977 in 2015.

Academics and policy documents have various ways to define higher education, yet UNESCO in Songkhaeo and Yeong (2016) stated that:

From a pragmatic point of view, we define as higher education all types of education (academic, professional, technical, artistic, pedagogical, long-distance learning, etc.) provided by universities, technological institutes, teacher training colleges, etc., which are normally intended for students having completed a secondary education, and whose educational objective is the acquisition of a title, a grade, certificate, or diploma of higher education (UNESCO, 1998).

The standard definition of the internationalization of higher education is “the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institutions” (Knight & de Wit, 1997). Hawawini (2011) gave another definition as the process of integrating the institution and the main stakeholders, i.e., its students, faculty, and staff – into a globalizing world. He argued that this definition could grasp the essence of a process which has the main agenda “to

integrate the institution into the emerging global knowledge and learning network rather than integrate an international dimension into the existing institutional setting.”

Hawawini (2011) put forward the academic motives of the internationalization of higher education.

1. Fulfilling the institution’s educational mission.

Since the world is becoming more interconnected, the institutions should at least introduce an international component to their curriculum. The students need to acknowledge the phenomenon and its implications. Depending on the resources, institutions should implement an international curriculum, attract international students, and have faculty with international experience if the institution wants to be internationalized.

2. Remaining academically relevant in an interconnected world that is becoming increasingly global.

Higher education institutions should pay attention to: 1) the demand from students and employers for programs, courses, and research topics that focus on global issues; 2) the heated competition from peer institutions, which have included an international dimension to their programs.

3. Attracting the best students and faculty worldwide.

An institution which has a convincing international strategy would easily attract high-quality international students and faculty because: 1) it could locate where the qualified international graduates and academics; 2) it has the knowledge to examine the

quality of potential recruits; and 3) it is appealing to international students and academics for its commitment to be part of the interconnected world.

According to Hawawini (2011), the main benefit of higher education internationalization is to absorb the knowledge from the whole world, and not just to teach the world what the institution already knows in order to satisfy some educational and economic motives.

### **2.1.1. Internationalization of higher education institutions in Japan**

The Japanese government encourages higher education institutions to internationalize for promoting sustainable development in a globalized, knowledge-based society (Yonezawa, Akiba, & Hirouchi, 2009). Moreover, Japan is facing economic challenges due to the decreasing number of young people and the shortage of highly skilled workers (Shimomura, 2013). Thus, Japan is trying to be more accessible and opened up to high-quality international students from around the world.

As stated by Central Council for Education, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in Ninomiya, Knight, and Watanabe (2009), the policy from 2000 till present focuses on the quality of international students. The government revamps the selection process of Japanese government scholarship programs to guarantee the quality of international students. They also urge the universities to establish a stricter policy regarding attendance and achievement of international students. This major shift indicates the new strategy of Japan's global competitiveness.

After the "100,000 International Students Plan" reached its target in 2003, the Japanese government launched the "300,000 International Students Plan" in 2008

(Kuroda et al., 2018). To be an “Opened Japan,” this plan aimed to reach the target number by 2020 and became the Asian Gateway by having 5% to 10% of international student mobility (Ninomiya, Knight, & Watanabe, 2009). The Japanese government policy seemed to be more open and diversified through various programs after launching Asian Gateway program, such as the Global 30 Project, the Inter-University Exchange Project (Re-Inventing Japan Project), the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resources Development, and the Top Global University Project (Kuroda et al., 2018). The number of inbound international students in Japan as of May 1, 2018, is 298,980 people (JASSO, January 2019). It increased by 31,938 persons (12.0%) if compared with the 2017 figure. The number of international students in Japan may have exceeded 300,000 by 2020.

In addition to the programs mentioned earlier, Japan has set up new projects focusing on movement overseas not only for internationalization but also for cooperation with international societies. The government established some government-led bilateral institutes, such as Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST), Malaysia and Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIIT), and Vietnam-Japan University (Kuroda et al., 2018). Moreover, Japanese universities are expanding international partnerships to work towards twinning and joint/double degree programs (Ninomiya, Knight, & Watanabe, 2009). Furthermore, the universities are providing more scholarships and opening up offices in other countries to attract high-quality international students.

In sum, the internationalization of higher education in Japan has transformed the strategy from passive to more proactive. Japanese universities believe that recruiting high-quality international students will lead to global competitive success.

Internationalization is the primary endeavor to increase enrollments and optimize research output and competitiveness.

### **2.1.2. Internationalization of higher education institutions in Indonesia**

Indonesia is struggling to keep up with other Asian countries to be an international education destination. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the total number of students hosted in Indonesia is 7,677, with a low inbound mobility rate of 0.1. Meanwhile, in the 1980s, Japan had hosted around 10,000 international students (Kuroda et al., 2018). These low figures inevitably force the Indonesian government to work harder for an increased internationalization of higher education.

The Indonesian government has changed several policies regarding higher education, research, and technology sectors (Dewi, 2018). The government started to structuralize a formal strategic framework, establishing first The Long-Term Framework of Development of Higher Education (KPPTJP) in 1978. The objective was preparing Indonesian universities to contribute to overcoming future challenges. The third KPPTJP was established for the 1996-2005 period due to the influence of globalization. It addressed three significant issues: the need for a responsive and dynamic model of university management; the need to use quality and relevance as a benchmark for developing higher education programs; and the need to accommodate equal opportunities to access education geographically and socially (Rhiza, 2009). However, before the KTTJP 1996-2005 competed, the Asian financial and monetary crisis in 1998 led to a change of direction for Indonesian higher education. Decentralization demands have impacted the education sector, causing the Directorate General of Higher Education

(DIKTI) to establish the KTTJP 2003-2010 entitled Higher Education Long Term Strategy (HELTS) 2003-2010.

The Indonesian government focused on encouraging and facilitating higher education internationalization, and aimed to revamp the nation's competitiveness in the HELTS 2003-2010 by improving the quality of higher education institutions and broadening international academic cooperation and network programs. Also, HELTS 2003-2010 put forward the importance of universities' role to optimize the good knowledge transfer and to create innovations to build a knowledge-based economy (Dikti, 2003). The strategies used are university missions' diversification (teaching university, research university, or both), cooperation and partnership, increased accessibility, better quality of learning process, research and public service, accreditation and certification, teachers' training, art higher education, and academic programs internationalization. The strategic framework of HELTS 2003-2010 underlies government regulations to revamp global competitiveness by establishing World-Class Universities (WCU). The goal was to allow top Indonesian universities to be listed in the world university ranking made by the international accreditation bodies, such as Quacquarelli Simonds (QS), Times Higher Education (THE), and Shanghai Jiao Tao Ranking (SJT) (Dewi, 2018).

Furthermore, according to Fauzi (January 2018), the government strengthened HELTS 2003-2010 by establishing other policies, i.e., Directorate of Higher Education Strategic Plan (DGHE) 2010-2014 and Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education Strategic Plan (MRTHE) 2015-2019. The focus of these policies still projects the enhancement of global competitiveness by improving the quality of higher education institutions, including achieving world-class university rankings was included in the targets.

Indonesian higher education institutions still perform poorly at a global level, although currently, there are 4,498 universities offering 25,548 majors. Only three higher education institutions were at the world's top 500, i.e., University of Indonesia (UI), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), and Gadjah Mada University (UGM). At the same time, UI is the only university that reaches the top 200 universities in Asia. In 2017, only 65 universities held an A Grade accreditation status at a national level (Global Business Guide Indonesia, 2019).

Since the number of international students and international cooperation is significant aspects of university performance assessment in the World Class University (WCU) concept, many higher education institutions in Indonesia are trying to establish a partnership with international universities. These universities seek partnership by offering faculty and student exchange programs, dual degree programs, grants and scholarships, joint research, training, and publications. To attract international students, more universities are now offering scholarships and programs taught in English.

Additionally, during the Joko Widodo presidency, the Indonesian government has been allocating 20% of government expenditure to education, in addition to the IDR 18 Trillion from Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) (Fauzi, 2018). The expenditure aims to finance new initiatives, such as research grants for higher education institutions to boost numbers of patents and publications and also scholarships for lectures and faculty members to pursue doctoral degrees (Dewi, 2018).

To summarize, Indonesian higher education internationalization is still in its infancy. There are plenty of scopes to catch up with other countries to put Indonesia on

the global map of higher education. The policy, initiatives, and financial supports indicate the government's eagerness to internationalize its higher education.

## **2.2. Intercultural communication**

The concept of intercultural communication should first be defined to grasp the main ideas and theories. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), intercultural communication happens when individuals who are influenced by different cultural communities compromise shared meanings in interaction. Many researchers defined intercultural communication differently, depending on what they considered a culture, and the definition of culture itself is disputed. Gudykunst (2003) limited intercultural communication to communication among individuals from different nationalities. In contrast, Martin and Nakayama (2007) and Samovar and Porter (2004) believed that intercultural communication does not only occur in the national differentiation context, but also inter-ethnic, inter-religious, or even inter-regional context. To them, communication among individuals of different sexual orientations is also considered as intercultural communication. The last definition of intercultural communication is the most suitable for this study.

Intercultural communication occurs more often and is more important in this globalized world. As noted by Samovar et al. (2013), intercultural communication is "a requirement for the interdependence global society." Intercultural communication may seem simple, but it can be tough because of the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and other different elements of cultures. Culture is influential in shaping people's beliefs,



values, worldviews, language use, or non-verbal behavior. People behave, maintain friendships, work, raise children, get married, and live their lives based on their culture.

Since in intercultural communication, the interactants do not share the same fundamental rules of communication and interaction, intercultural communication carries unique characteristics (Matsumoto, Leroux, & Yoo, 2005). They are uncertainty and ambiguity related to the ground rules of interaction and the meaning of signals (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Gudykunst, Nishida, & Chua, 1986). In intercultural communication, people from different cultures are unsure about the similarity they share or that the exchanged signals mean the same. The culture influences all aspects of the communication process prevalently; hence, there is an essential uncertainty in both the verbal and nonverbal communication that occurs.

Intercultural communication also inevitably causes conflicts and misunderstandings (Matsumoto, Leroux, & Yoo, 2005). When the behaviors of the interlocutors do not meet the expectation during intercultural encounters, people frequently interpret those behaviors as transgressions against their value system. The negative emotions produced can lead to conflicts or misunderstandings. To prevent that, people should be interculturally competent.

### **2.3. Intercultural communication competence (ICC)**

Possessing intercultural competence is much needed in this era of globalization. Chen and Starosta defined ICC as the ability to acknowledge and focus on similarities between cultures rather than the differences to reach their goals (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) briefly described it as “the ability to interact

effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself.” Likewise, Arasaratnam and Banerjee (2009) referred to it as the ability to achieve one’s communication goals while behaving in a mutually accepted and expected manner during intercultural interaction. Meanwhile, according to Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (2003, p. 237), intercultural competence refers to “the general ability to transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate appropriate behavior in one or more different cultures.” The researchers seem to agree that ICC is about communication effectiveness (to fulfill goals and objectives) and appropriateness (to behave appropriately depending on the context) in intercultural situations.

There are three ways to develop ICC: to cultivate attitudes that give motivation, seek informative knowledge, and develop useful skills for intercultural communication (Bennet, 2009). First, to cultivate attitudes that give motivation, people must possess a healthy curiosity about culture. It will get them to move towards intercultural encounters to learn more about themselves and others. This healthy curiosity is associated with a high tolerance for uncertainty. In intercultural communication, the ability to make stressful experiences into teachable moments and find coping strategies is crucial. Second, seeking informative knowledge is another step to building ICC. People can start by exploring their cognitive style, which consists of preferred patterns for collecting information, creating meaning, and organizing and applying knowledge. By exploring cognitive styles, people might find out that there are different points of view regarding world, events, rules of logic, or culture in general. Third, developing useful skills is another part of ICC. Several essential skills to acquire to achieve ICC are the capability to

empathize, listen, gather cultural information, resolve conflict, and deal with anxiety efficiently.

Several researchers associated ICC with dimensions of interpersonal skills, effectiveness, cultural empathy, and cultural uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1995; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; van der Zee & Brinkmann, 2004). Likewise, Matveev and Nelson (2004) correlated ICC with four dimensions: interpersonal skills, team effectiveness, intercultural uncertainty, and intercultural empathy in the study in a business setting. Other previous studies showed that ICC strongly correlated with intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism (Chen, 2010; Matsumoto, Leroux, & Yoo, 2005; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Triandis, 2006; Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003; Lin & Rancer 2003; Lin, Rancer, & Trimbitas, 2005; Campbell, 2016). For this study, the ICC measurement tools used was Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) Scale (Neuliep and McCroskey, 1997), Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) (Chen and Starosta, 2000) and Intercultural Willingness to Communicate (IWTC) Scale (Kassing, 1997) due to their validity, reliability, and suitability.

#### **2.4. Intercultural communication competence and intercultural sensitivity**

Intercultural sensitivity is one of the essential capabilities that can assist individuals in successfully surviving in a multicultural society (Chen and Starosta, 1997). Moreover, Chen and Starosta (2000) suggested, “a successful intercultural communication demands interactants’ ability of intercultural awareness by learning cultural similarities and differences, while the process of achieving awareness of cultural

similarities and differences is enhanced and buffered by the ability of intercultural sensitivity." In other words, individuals can acquire a dual identity and enjoy cultural differences by deliberately overcoming the problems of being unaware of cultural differences. Individuals can develop their empathic ability to accept and adapt to the cultural differences by possessing intercultural sensitivity.

Chen and Starosta (1996) argued that ICC consisting of three separate yet closely related concepts: affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. The affective aspect of ICC is intercultural sensitivity which gives the motivation to understand, appreciate, and accept intercultural differences. The cognitive aspect is intercultural awareness which refers to acknowledging the cultural conventions that affect how people think and behave. Lastly, the behavioral aspect is represented by the concept of intercultural adroitness, which relates to the ability to succeed in achieving communication goals in intercultural interactions.

Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) proposed the components of intercultural sensitivity structure as being: 1) understanding the behaviors of people who belong to other cultures; 2) being sensitive towards those culture differences; and 3) behavioral flexibility in the host culture. Another conceptualization was suggested by Bennet (1993) and was covered in their Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS model focuses on the individual's ability to transform themselves into the host culture in five stages. In keeping with Chen and Starosta (1996), Bennet further explained that an interculturally sensitive person could transform themselves from 1) the stage of denial or concealing the existence of cultural differences; to 2) attempting to defend their worldviews; to 3) developing an empathetic ability of accepting and 4) adapting cultural differences to 5) integration.

In summary, by cultivating sensitivity and awareness toward other cultures, people can gain essential attitudes, knowledge, and skills to communicate smoothly in intercultural interactions over time. Therefore, intercultural sensitivity closely relates to the enormous potential for exercising ICC. As stated by Hammer, Bennet, and Wiseman (2003), intercultural sensitivity is a prerequisite for achieving intercultural competence.

#### **2.4.1. Intercultural Sensitivity and Measurement Scale (ISS)**

Chen and Starosta's model of ICC has gained much attention among studies in this area. Besides explaining the nature and components of intercultural sensitivity, Chen and Starosta (2000) also developed an instrument to measure the concept, namely the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS). Various studies focus on measuring intercultural sensitivity using ISS. Several studies have been carried out to test the validity and reliability of ISS with positive results. However, the samples used in the previous studies are mainly college students in western countries, such as the United States (Chen & Starosta, 2000; McMurray, 2007), Germany (Fritz, Möllenberg, & Chen, 2002), comparisons between the United States and Germany (Fritz et al., 2005), Canada (Balakrishnan, 2015), and France (Cuciureanu & Saini, 2012). There are also several studies in Asian countries such as Malaysia (Tamam, 2010), South Korea (Roh, 2014), and China (Wang, n.d.). However, a study using ISS taking place in Indonesia and Japan has not yet been conducted.

Chen and Starosta (2000) developed the ISS after conceptualizing intercultural sensitivity as individuals' ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding cultural differences. ISS consists of six elements:

- Self-esteem: a sense of self-value and self-worth, that enhances individuals' ability to deal with the feeling of alienation, frustration, and stress caused by the ambiguous situation in the process of intercultural communication.
- Self-monitoring: an ability of interculturally sensitive people to notice situational constraints in the intercultural encounter, to modify their social behaviors and self-presentation to be more appropriate.
- Open-mindedness: a willingness to recognize, accept, and appreciate the counterparts' explanation, needs, and differences in intercultural communication.
- Empathy: an ability to think from others' culturally different perspectives in interaction and concern with others' feelings.
- Interaction involvement: it comprises of three elements, i.e., responsiveness, attentiveness, and perceptiveness. The higher the level of responsiveness, attentiveness, and perceptiveness, the more culturally sensitive would the individual be.
- Non-judgment: an ability to understand other's culturally different perspectives, instead of jumping to conclusions without complete information.

Furthermore, the ISS also comprises of five factors that are used for analyzing the data in this study:

- Interaction engagement: to measure individuals' feeling when engaging in intercultural interaction;

- Respect for cultural differences: to measure individuals' orientation towards culturally-different counterparts' culture and opinion;
- Interaction confidence: to measure individuals' confidence in intercultural interaction;
- Interaction enjoyment: to measure individuals' reaction towards intercultural communication, negatively or positively;
- Interaction attentiveness: to measure individuals' effort to comprehend the ongoing process of intercultural interaction.

This study uses the intercultural sensitivity definitions proposed by Chen and Starosta and the ISS as the measurement tool due to the clarity of their conceptualizations.

## **2.5. Ethnocentrism and intercultural communication**

Sumner (1906) is the first one who coined the term ethnocentrism, defining it as “the technical name for this view of things in which one’s group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated concerning it.” More recent definitions conceptualize ethnocentrism as “our defensive attitudinal tendency to view the values and norms of our culture as superior to other cultures” (Ting-Toomey, 1999). According to Berry and Kalin (1995), it is a general antipathy directed to individuals’ outgroups. In sum, ethnocentrism is a discriminatory attitude towards one’s outgroup based on the feelings of superiority of the ingroup.

Ethnocentrism has both negative and positive sides. It leads to misunderstandings in communication, as argued by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997). It can also reduce the

levels of willingness to communicate intercultural (Lin & Rancer, 2003). However, the positive side of ethnocentrism helps in constructing and maintaining one's cultural identity (Chen & Starosta, 2004), and it strengthens patriotism and willingness to sacrifice for one's central group (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997; Wrench et al., 2006).

In sum, a certain degree of ethnocentrism can help with ingroup's bonding and cohesion. However, too much ethnocentrism will obstruct intercultural communication. Such obstruction will make mutual understandings in intercultural communication contexts more difficult.

### **2.5.1. Ethnocentrism and measurement scale**

Understanding the concept of the real effects of ethnocentrism is as important today as it has ever been due to the growth of international exchange in capital markets as well as neighborhoods. Studies in this area often put forward ways to measure ethnocentrism and to develop standards that could minimize or eliminate ethnocentric behaviors thoughts. Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) developed two scales for measuring the elements of ethnocentrism which influence communication behaviors of individuals. The first scale was designed to measure ethnocentrism levels of American participants. Despite its validity and reliability, this United States Ethnocentrism Scale (USE) was used to measure for American patriotism, not the concept of ethnocentrism in intercultural or transnational contact (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) believed that ethnocentrism exists everywhere in the world, thus, Neuliep and McCroskey developed the Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) scale as the second scale to measure attitudes and behaviors towards in-groups and outgroups (1997). It is a more 'international' version of the measurement scale to assess the degree to which people



evaluate other cultures based on the values and viewpoints of their culture (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). The GENE scale seems to have represented only ethnocentrism, and was found to be valid and reliable in its retesting stage (Neuliep, 2002).

Various studies have used Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997) GENE scale. For example, studies have compared the levels of ethnocentrism of domestic US students to international students in Japan (Neuliep, Chaudoir, & McCroskey, 2001), Korea (Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003), and Romania (Lin, Rancer, & Trimbilas, 2005) respectively.

## **2.6. Ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity**

Ethnocentrism, intercultural communication, and intercultural sensitivity are significantly correlated. Previous studies claimed that high levels of ethnocentrism could become a barrier to intercultural communication (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2007; Justen, 2009; Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). Individuals' ethnocentric behaviors built on group boundaries defined by visible characteristics, i.e., language, accent, physical features, or religion, which indicate a mutual descent (Sumner, 1906). As noted by Graen and Wakabayashi (1994) in Chen (2010), ethnocentric people to use their ingroup as their central focus, which can cause prejudice by judging other groups as inferior.

Chen (2010) conducted a study that tried to investigate the relationship between intercultural communication, ethnocentrism, and intercultural communication apprehension. The results found that individuals with a higher degree of intercultural sensitivity were less ethnocentric than those with a lower degree. Intercultural sensitivity is required for an individual to be interculturally competent. Meanwhile, ethnocentrism, which tends to use one's cultural standards as a base for interpretations

and judgments, is not encouraged. Another study by Dong, Day, and Collaço (2008) suggested that promoting intercultural sensitivity and multiculturalism is a way to overcome ethnocentrism and minimize conflicts during intercultural interactions.

## **2.7. Intercultural willingness to communicate (IWTC) and ethnocentrism**

Intercultural willingness to communicate (IWTC) is the third variable in this study. It is defined as “one’s predisposition to initiate intercultural communication encounters” (Kassing, 1997, p. 400). It is the tendency to incline the initiation of intercultural encounters. Since the central process of intercultural competence is interaction, it seems impossible to cultivate intercultural competence without the willingness or motivation to engage with people from different cultures.

There are various reasons for being apprehensive over communicating with interculturally different people. Kassing (1997) stated that intercultural communication triggered a high level of stress because more effort is needed to communicate with people who do not share the same cultural values or speak the same language. Ethnocentrism could be another reason. Ethnocentric people may opt for not engaging in intercultural communication because they think other cultures are inferior to their own (Neuliep & McCroskey 1997). Moreover, as Chen (2010) noted, if people have a high level of ethnocentrism, they tend to be prejudice, which may affect their willingness to communicate. The higher the level of ethnocentrism, the more people become anxious when interacting with strangers (Gudykunst, 2004). As a result, ethnocentric people may choose not to interact at all to avoid anxiety.

The familiarity with intercultural communication can affect ethnocentrism level positively. Korean students were found to be significantly more ethnocentric and less willing to communicate interculturally than American students because American students have more exposure to intercultural communication (Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, ethnocentrism is associated with anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural communication settings (Gudykunst, 2004; Stephan & Stephan, 1992; Awang-Rozaimie, Sahari, & Ali, 2012). Since there is a significant correlation between ethnocentrism and IWTC, it is important to have a further study focusing on the relationship of those variables.

### **2.7.1. Intercultural willingness to communicate and measurement scale**

The concept of IWTC is adapted from the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) by McCroskey and Richmond (1990). WTC is defined as the predisposition of an individual to initiate intracultural encounters in various environments (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). WTC focuses on the initiation of interaction with friends, acquaintances, or strangers with the same cultural background, whereas IWTC focuses on interactions with people from different cultures and ethnicities (Kassing, 1997). Furthermore, Kassing (1997) stated that an individual with high levels of WTC may not be necessarily be high in IWTC since someone who willingly initiates intracultural communication encounters may be hesitant to do it in intercultural settings.

Kassing later developed a scale IWTC scale based on the argument by McCroskey and Richmond (1990) who stated that culture states may change the willingness to communicate trait indicators. He designed his scale to mirror McCroskey's Willingness to Communicate scale with additions and changes for intercultural communication: "(1)

Talk with someone I perceive to be different than me; (2) Talk with someone from another country; (3) Talk with someone from a culture I know very little about; and (4) Talk with someone from another culture” (Kassing, 1997, p. 401). Moreover, he included a question about race factor in intercultural communication (“talk with someone of a different race than mine”).

Kassing (1997) claimed that IWTC might be an antecedent to ICC. The IWTC scale has been used to various groups in previous studies, such as studies comparing students in the USA and other countries, such as Korea (Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003) and Romania (Lin, Rancer, & Trimbitas, 2005), students in the USA (Lin & Rancer, 2003), and New Zealand (Campbell, 2016).

## **2.8. Intercultural adjustment**

The intercultural adjustment of international students has been studied by researchers more intensely as the world becomes more interconnected. Different researchers proposed different meanings of adjustment. To Kim (2001), adjustment is “psychological responses to cross-cultural challenges,” while Ward (2001) identified it as “the process of altering one’s behavior to fit in with a changed environment or circumstances, or as a response to social pressure.” Intercultural adjustment is one of the most critical consequences of intercultural communication. Its processes frequently associate with intercultural communication.

One influential work by Lysgaard’s (1955) proposed a U-curve hypothesis to understanding adjustment to a local culture over time. Lysgaard categorized adjustment into four stages: the first is ‘honeymoon stage’ when the sojourner is excited to live in

new environment; the second is the 'culture shock stage' when the sojourner stumble upon problems and must overcome those problems; the third is the 'adjustment stage' as the sojourner grow familiarity with the host culture and has learned appropriate behavior; the fourth is the 'mastery stage' when the sojourner integrates into the new culture.

Adjusting to a new culture can result in positive and negative outcomes. Positive results include improved language competence, self-confidence, awareness, positive mood, interpersonal relationships, and stress reduction (Babiker, Cox, & Miller, 1980; Abel, 2008; Kamal & Maruyama, 1990; Matsumoto et al., 2001). If intercultural experiences run well, people will be improved for the better in many positive ways, including the development of multicultural identities and perspectives to engage in intercultural communication (Matsumoto, Leroux, & Yoo, 2005).

The negative results of intercultural adjustment include psychological concerns, such as depression, anxiety, homesickness, and emotional tension (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Gebhard, 2012; Shin & Abell, 1999; Lee, 2017; Matsumoto et al., 2001; Hu & Zhang, 2013; Passaporn, 2011; Syafia, 2017), dysfunctional communication (Roy, 2013; Constantine et al., 2005; Okazaki-Luff, 1991; Lin & Scherz, 2014), culture shock (Passaporn, 2011; Syafia, 2017, Lee, 2017), and difficulties in interpersonal relationships and reduced school and work performance (Andrade, 2006; Ramsay et al. 1999, Storti, 2001; Constantine et al., 2005; Lee, 2017; Matsumoto et al., 2001). Fortunately, all sojourners do not experience all of the negative consequences at the same time, but most have experienced possibly some of these issues at some point in their sojourn.

Adjustment to other cultures depends on people's characteristics and skills. Matsumoto et al. (2007) suggested specific psychological skills that can become the primary predictors of adjustment, i.e., emotion regulation, openness, flexibility, and critical thinking. Brislin (1993) proposed three factors of intercultural adjustment: 1) engaging in relationships with people with different cultural backgrounds successfully; (2) feeling warm, cordial, respectful, and cooperative intercultural interactions; and (3) accomplishing tasks effectively and efficiently. Gudykunst, Hammer, and Wiseman (1977) added the capability to control psychological stress in effective manners. Intercultural adjustment comprises of the core elements, i.e., people's satisfaction and perceived acceptance of hosts because adjustment enables people to function well without severe stress in daily activities.

## **2.9. Summary of the chapter**

Many countries aim to internationalize their higher education in this growing globalized. Japan is trying to be more accessible and opened up to high-quality international students to promote sustainable development and overcome the shortage of highly skilled workers. Meanwhile, Indonesia tries to internationalize its higher education to enhance the quality of the institutions and encourage socio-economic growth. As for the scope of strategies and programs, both Japan and Indonesia share similar patterns in seeking international cooperation and funding or grants. However, since Japan has started the internationalization endeavors much earlier than Indonesia, it has more organized and well-structured programs to achieve its goals. On the contrary, Indonesia is still in the early development of internationalization. The initiatives implemented so far are not yet showing any promising results.

A number of previous studies have addressed challenges and coping strategies of adjustment problems. However, more studies are needed to examine these challenges in different contexts, such as Japan and Indonesia, as they have contrasting natures regarding the internationalization of higher education. The studies of adjustment problems are essential because higher education institutions should provide enough suitable information, services, and programs to assist international students in reaching their educational objectives and have positive experiences.

Moreover, there is no study exploring the four variables explained in this chapter (intercultural communication competence, intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, and intercultural willingness to communicate) in connection with the international adjustment of the international students. This variable may be beneficial for theory development in this area of study. Therefore, this study tries to fill the research gap in the intercultural communication field.

## Chapter 3

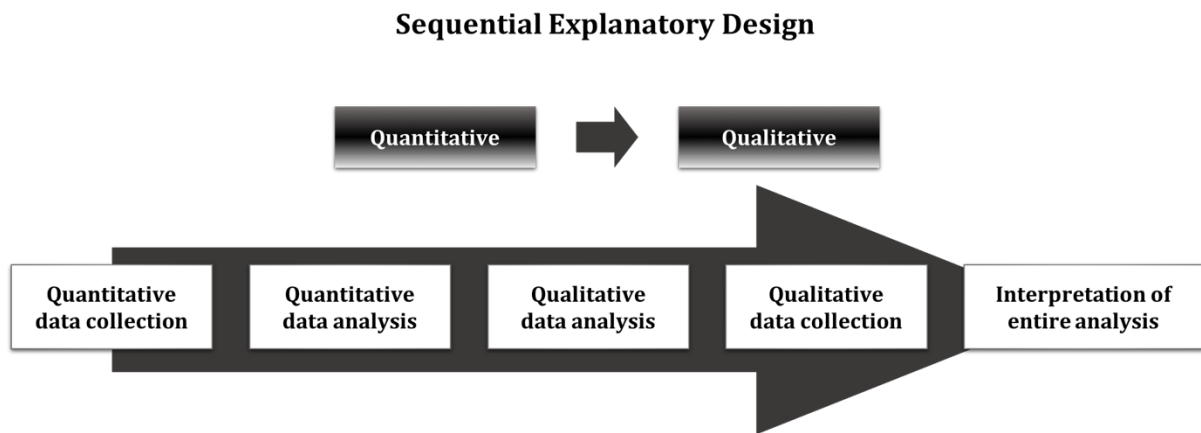
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology of this study. It explains the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

### **3.1. Research design**

This study used sequential explanatory mixed methods to get rich, in-depth data. Mixed methods integrate the strength of the quantitative and qualitative approaches, which can present an expanded understanding of the topic (Creswell et al., 2009). The initial phases in this study were the collection and the analysis of the quantitative data. The following phases were collecting and analyzing the qualitative data to support the result of the initial quantitative data. Since there were two groups participants, international students in Indonesia and Japan, this study was repeated twice in terms of quantitative data collection, quantitative data analysis, qualitative data collection, and qualitative data analysis.





*Figure 3.1* Sequential explanatory design adapted from Creswell (2003).

## 3.2. Participants

This subchapter explains the demographic profile of questionnaire and interview participants in Indonesia and Japan.

### 3.2.1. International students in Indonesia

#### 3.2.1.1. Questionnaire participants

The participants in Indonesia were 58 international students from three major study destinations in Java Island, Indonesia: Semarang, Surakarta, and Yogyakarta. The academic majors were categorized based on the Revised Field of Science and Technology (FOS) classification in the Frascati Manual (OECD, 2007). Regarding the status of students in Indonesia, Darmasiswa refers to a scholarship program offered to all foreign students from countries which have diplomatic relationship with Indonesia to study Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia), art and culture (Suharti, 2015), and BIPA is an Indonesian

language program for foreign speakers. Table 3.1 shows the demographic profile of questionnaire participants. Meanwhile, Figure 3.2 shows the country of origin of the participants.

Table 3.1 *Demographic profile of questionnaire participants in Indonesia (N = 58)*

<b>Variables</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Male	28	44.8%
	Female	31	54.3%
	Prefer not to disclose	1	1.7%
Course of study	Undergraduate	36	62.1%
	Master's	20	34.5%
	Doctoral	2	3.4%
Academic major	Natural science	4	6.9%
	Engineering and technology	8	13.8%
	Social science	18	31%
	Humanities	12	20.7%
	Social – humanities	7	12.1%
	Medical and health science	2	3.4%
	Unidentified	7	12.1%
Student status	Full-time	36	62.1%
	Exchange	13	22.4%
	Darmasiswa	6	10.3%
	BIPA	2	3.4%
	Internship	1	1.7%

University	Semarang State University	9	15.5%
	Islamic University of Indonesia	10	17.2%
	Respati University of Yogyakarta	10	17.2%
	Gadjah Mada University	13	22.4%
	National Institute of Technology Yogyakarta	2	3.4%
	Surakarta State University	12	20.7%
	Indonesian Institute of the Arts Surakarta	2	3.4%
Length of stay	Under one year	18	31%
	1 - 2 years	15	25.9%
	3 - 4 years	14	24.1%
	5 - 6 years	5	8.6%
	7 - 8 years	1	1.7%
	Unidentified	5	8.6%
Language proficiency	Beginner	22	37.9%
	Elementary	5	8.6%
	Intermediate	15	25.9%
	Upper-intermediate	10	17.2%
	Advanced	6	10.3%

The following chart (Figure 3.2) shows the origin of the participants in Indonesia. The participants are from 22 countries.

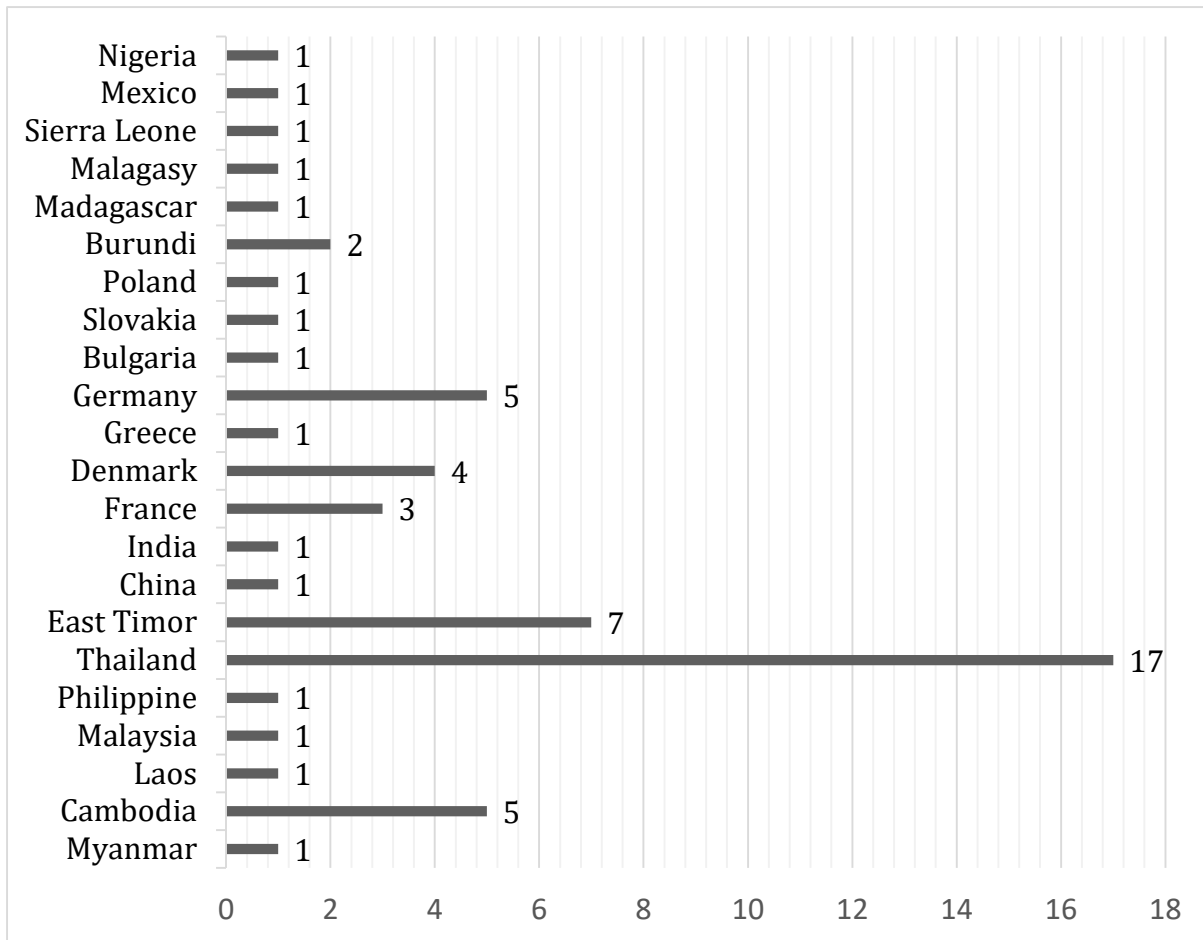


Figure 3.2 Country of origin of the participants in Indonesia.

### 3.2.1.2. Interview participants

The following table (Table 3.2) describes the profile of the 16 interviewees of the study.

Table 3.2 Interviewees of the study

Participant	Country of origin	University	Major	Student Status
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Angel	Philippines	Semarang State University	education	Darmasiswa student
James	USA	Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta	philosophy	internship student
Hans	Germany	Gadjah Mada University	cultural studies	BIPA student
Somchai	Thailand	Respati University of Yogyakarta	international relations	full-time student
Visna	Cambodia	Gadjah Mada University	geology	full-time student
Kham	Laos	Gadjah Mada University	geological engineering	full-time student
Lea	France	Gadjah Mada University	geology	exchange student
Piseth	Cambodia	Gadjah Mada University	mechanical engineering	full-time student
Mia	Germany	Gadjah Mada University	management	BIPA student
Kezia	East Timor	Surakarta State University	English literature	full-time student
Fatmata	Sierra Leone	Surakarta State University	economics	full-time student
Nilar	Myanmar	Surakarta State University	medical studies	full-time student
Kohsoom	Thailand	Islamic University of Indonesia	international relations	full-time student
Kulap	Thailand	Islamic University of Indonesia	Islamic law	full-time student

Ratree	Thailand	Islamic University of Indonesia	English education	full-time student
Malai	Thailand	Islamic University of Indonesia	communication studies	full-time student

### 3.2.2. International students in Japan

Similar to the previous subchapter, this subchapter explains the demographic profile of the questionnaire and interview participants in Japan.

#### 3.2.2.1. Questionnaire participants

The participants in Japan were 68 international students (see Table 3.3) studying at cities in Kyushu Island, Japan: Fukuoka, Oita, Beppu, Kumamoto, Kitakyushu, and Saga. The academic majors were also categorized based on the Revised Field of Science and Technology (FOS) classification in the Frascati Manual (OECD, 2007). Figure 3.3 shows the country of origin of each participant. They are from 20 countries.

Table 3.3 *Demographic profile of questionnaire participants in Japan (N = 68)*

Variables		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	30	44.1%
	Female	35	51.5%
	Prefer not to disclose	3	4.4%
Course of study	Undergraduate	26	38.2%
	Master's	13	19.1%
	Doctoral	24	35.3%
	Research study	4	5.9%

	Language school	1	1.5%	
Academic major	Natural science	8	11.8%	
	Engineering and technology	24	35.3%	
	Social science	14	20.6%	
	Humanities	9	13.2%	
	Social – humanities	5	7.4%	
	Medical and health science	2	2.9%	
	Social – health science	1	1.5%	
	Unidentified	1	1.5%	
Student status	Full-time	59	86.8%	
	Exchange	9	13.2%	
University	Kyushu University	42	61.8%	
	Fukuoka University	1	1.5%	
	Saga University	5	7.4%	
	Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University	4	5.9%	
	Kyushu Institute of Technology Tobata Campus	7	10.3%	
	Oita University	1	1.5%	
	Kumamoto University	5	7.4%	
	Kitakyushu University	2	2.9%	
	Fukuoka University of Education	1	1.5%	
	Length of stay	Under one year	10	14.7%
		1 - 2 years	21	30.9%

	3 – 4 years	29	42.6%
	5 – 6 years	7	10.3%
	9 – 10 years	1	1.5%
Language proficiency	Beginner	6	8.8%
	Elementary	9	13.2%
	Intermediate	24	35.3%
	Upper-intermediate	17	25%
	Advanced	12	17.6%

### 3.2.2.2. Interview participants

The following table (Table 3.4) shows the profile of the 10 interviewees in this study. Meanwhile, the figure 3.3 displays the country of origin of the participants.

Table 3.4 Interviewees of the study

Participant	Country of origin	University	Major	Student status
Lucas	Brazil	Kyushu University	Japanese modern contemporary literature	full-time student
Fatin	Malaysia	Kyushu University	civil engineering	full-time student
Putri	Indonesia	Kyushu University	dentistry	full-time student
Tan	China	Kyushu University	planetary science	full-time student
Carla	France	Kyushu University	commerce	exchange student
Desi	Indonesia	Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University	Asia Pacific studies	full-time student
Phuong	Vietnam	Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University	Asia Pacific studies	full-time student



Shwe	Myanmar	Kyushu Institute of Technology	civil and architecture engineering	full-time student
Carlos	Dominican Republic	Kumamoto University	computer science	full-time student
Sophia	Brazil	Kumamoto University	production engineering	exchange student

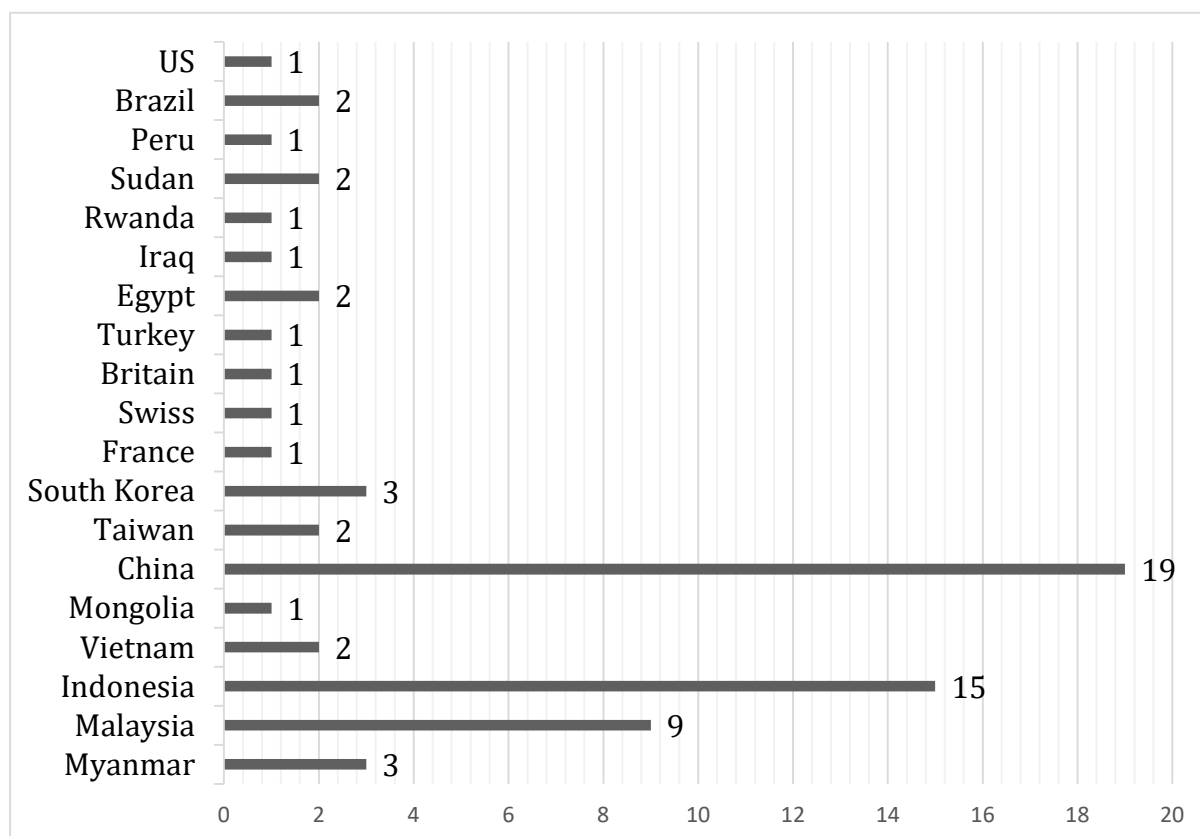


Figure 3.3 Country of origin of the participants in Japan.

### 3.3. Instrumentation

#### 3.3.1. Quantitative approach

The quantitative approach focuses on collecting numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 2010). It is the

most often employed data collection device due to its ease of construction, versatility, and unique capability of gathering an enormous amount of information into a processable form rapidly (Dörnyei, 2003). The questionnaire was used to find out the intercultural adjustment problems of the international students, their intercultural adjustment, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to participate, and ethnocentrism, as well as variables which correlate to those variables. Three well-developed scales were used due to their validity, reliability, and suitability for this study. They were the: Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) Scale (Neuliep and McCroskey, 1997), Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) by Chen and Starosta (2000), Intercultural Willingness to Communicate (IWTC) Scale (Kassing, 1997). Moreover, a self-developed adjustment issues scale based on Hu and Zhang's work (2013), and socio-demographic questions were also included (see Appendixes).

#### *3.3.1.1. Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) Scale*

The GENE Scale assesses the level of ethnocentrism individuals possess. It explores how individuals feel regarding their own culture. It is a valid measurement of ethnocentrism that may be experienced by anyone, regardless of culture. It is a self-administered scale consisting of 22 five-point Likert scale statements. This self-administered questionnaire comprises of 22 items, of which 7 are filler items and will be dropped during analysis, 3 are reverse-scored, and the remaining 15 items balanced in the number of questions that are worded positively (e.g., "I'm very interested in the values and customs of other cultures") and negatively (e.g., "I do not cooperate with people who are different"). The 5-point Likert scale (1 = disagree; 5 = strongly agree) is used, with higher scores indicating higher ethnocentrism. The higher the score, the more

ethnocentric a person is. In this study, the internal consistency of the scale is .783, which is considered reliable.

### *3.3.1.2. Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)*

This scale was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000). It is used to investigate individuals' feelings about communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds. It has five subscales: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. It contains 24 five-point Likert items. This scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of .914.

The ISS does not only have 'positively-keyed' items (i.e., "I respect the values of people from different cultures") but also 'negatively-keyed' items (i.e., "I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded"). The following items of ISS are also reverse-coded for data analysis: 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22. Interaction Engagement items are 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24, Respect for Cultural Differences items are 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20, Interaction Confidence items are 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, Interaction Enjoyment items are 9, 12, and 15, and Interaction Attentiveness items are 14, 17, and 19.

### *3.3.1.3. Intercultural Willingness to Communicate (IWTC) Scale*

Developed by Kassing (1997), this scale is used to examine the participants' willingness to communicate in an intercultural context. The IWTC scale comprises of 12 items, 6 of which are fillers. The items illustrate different communication situations where an individual might engage. The respondents must indicate the percentage of time they would choose to initiate communication in each situation, 0 being "never" and 100

being “always.” The possible scores range from 0 to 600. The examples of the items are “Talk with someone from a culture I know very little about” or “Talk with someone I perceive to be different from me.” The example of filler is “Talk with a spouse or significant other (girlfriend, boyfriend).”

The items represent different communication situations where a person might experience, and the participants were asked to indicate the percentage of time they would choose to engage in communication in each situation, starting from 0% to 100%. This scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .937.

#### *3.3.1.4. Self-developed adjustment issues scale*

The author utilized a self-developed adjustment issues scale based on Hu and Zhang’s summary of international students’ adjustment problems (2013) because they extensively covered area of adjustment issues by international students. This study tries to explore the issues by using an extensive area of issues. Hu and Zhang (2013) classified adjustment problems into five categories: personal-psychological issues, academic issues, sociocultural issues, general living issues, and language issues. The participants scored the problems they faced, ranging from 0 to 10. The self-developed adjustment issues scale had an alpha coefficient of .952.

Table 3.5 *Summary of adjustment issues faced by international students (adapted and modified from Hu & Zhang, 2013)*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Adjustment issues</b>
Personal psychological issues	Homesickness, loneliness, stress, depression, frustration, loss of status or identity, anxiety, confusion, etc.

Academic issues	Academic progress, academic demands, lack of understanding of the educational system, lack of effective learning skills for gaining academic success, difficulties in using educational supportive services (e.g. library, academic counseling services), etc.
Sociocultural issues	Cultural shock, cultural fatigue, stereotyping, prejudice, racial discrimination, difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs, norms and regulations, and participating in intercultural/social activities, relationship problems, etc.
General living issues	Accommodation difficulties, difficulties in using student support services, financial stress, dietary restrictions, safety threats, etc.
Language issues	Difficulties in communicating with native speakers, understanding lectures, writing up essays, etc.

### ***Socio-demographic questions***

- Demographic questions: age, gender, course of study, academic major, student status, university, country of origin, length of stay in the host country, proficiency in host country's language.
- Six Likert-type questions to elicit information about the participants' views on the importance of intercultural communication and experiences interacting with students from other cultures.

### **3.3.2. Qualitative approach**

A qualitative case study approach was adopted to understand more deeply the issues of adjustment faced by international students and their coping strategies. It was also used to reveal the nature of international students in both countries. The interview comprised self-developed questions based on the summary of adjustment problems of international students in English speaking countries by Hu & Zhang (2013) and modified interview questions about international students' adaptation by Puumala (2015). The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis for typically 30 to 60 minutes either in English or Indonesian language, depending on the students' preference.

### **3.4. Data collection**

The sampling method used was chain-referral sampling, or multiple snowball sampling, since the sample of the study was relatively limited and hard to reach. Chain referral sampling is a non-probabilistic form of sampling in which those initially selected for the sample are used as informants to refer other people who possess specific necessary characteristics to be a part of the sample of the study. Chain referral sampling relies on a series of participant referrals in multiple networks to broaden the scope of the investigation (Penrod et al., 2003). The universities' staff assigned the first participants of the study. These participants were asked to refer their friends or classmates who were eligible for the study. The participants could choose to answer an online or paper questionnaire. The paper questionnaire was directly handed out to the participants, and the link for the online questionnaire was shared via email, WhatsApp, or Line. The author used Google Forms to collect responses.

### 3.5. Data analysis procedure

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS for Mac version 24. Firstly, the responses were systematically coded and imported to SPSS. Next, each variable was entered, described, and also reverse-coded if needed. To explore the adjustment problems faced by international students in both countries quantitatively, the first step is comparing the means. Either the Kruskal-Wallis H test or Mann-U Whitney test was employed to determine if there were statistically significant differences between groups of the variables. A series of non-parametric Kendall tau-b correlation test was conducted to determine the strength and direction of a linear relationship between variables. Meanwhile, to investigate the statistical differences further, Kruskal-Wallis H tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were run. The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a rank-based nonparametric test to investigate if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable. It is also known as a one-way ANOVA on ranks. While the Mann-Whitney U test is a rank-based nonparametric test that can be used to determine if there are significant differences between two groups on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable.

The qualitative approach was used to investigate further adjustment problems of participants, coping strategies, and their nature in each country. The data was recorded using the researcher's phone's Voice Memos application. After obtaining the data, each participant's interview was transcribed verbatim and coded manually on Nvivo 12 for Mac, a program that supports qualitative data coding and thematic analysis. It also provides categories and themes identification, which results in an in-depth analysis of data (Richardson & Mallo, 2005). After establishing the major themes, the data were

categorized into subthemes. These subthemes provided detailed descriptions of the participants, demographic information, adjustment problems, coping strategies, and other information from the participants to illustrate their perspectives. Lastly, the findings were analyzed and integrated with the author's interpretation and the theories of intercultural communication.



## Chapter 4

# QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

There are five research questions formulated in the study. This chapter highlights the quantitative results of each research question. It explains about intercultural adjustment problems of international students in Indonesia and Japan. It examines the level of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism. In addition, it also investigates the correlations between intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, ethnocentrism, intercultural adjustment problems, and other variables.

### **4.1. Intercultural adjustment problems of international students**

Both quantitative and qualitative data are used to answer this research question. The previous chapter has explained that quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaire, whereas the qualitative data was gathered from the interviews. First, the responses to the questionnaire will be analyzed, and it is followed by the analysis of the interviews in the next chapter.

#### 4.1.1. Intercultural adjustment problems of international students in Indonesia

In this subchapter, the intercultural adjustment problems of international students are explored quantitatively.

Table 4.1 *Participants' adjustment issues in Indonesia (N = 58)*

<b>Adjustment issues</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
<b>Personal psychological issues</b>				
Homesickness	3.45	2.722	0	10
Loneliness	3.23	2.920	0	10
Stress	3.21	2.966	0	10
Depression	2.29	2.932	0	9
Frustration	2.67	2.632	0	9
Loss of status or identity	1.57	2.348	0	9
Anxiety	2.26	2.679	0	10
Confusion	2.60	2.688	0	9
<b>Academic issues</b>				
Academic demands	4.10	3.048	0	10
Academic progress	4.09	3.235	0	10

Lack of understanding of the Indonesian educational system	3.64	2.984	0	10
Lack of effective learning skills for gaining academic success	3.31	2.927	0	9
Difficulties in using educational supportive services (e.g., library, academic counseling services)	3.16	2.925	0	9
<b>Sociocultural issues</b>				
Cultural shock	3.36	2.795	0	10
Cultural fatigue	2.93	2.714	0	10
Stereotyping	3.05	2.812	0	10
Prejudice	2.83	2.741	0	10
Racial discrimination	2.53	2.879	0	10
Difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs	2.67	2.671	0	10
Norms and regulations and participating in intercultural/social activities	2.90	2.783	0	9

Relationship problems	2.86	3.159	0	10
<b>General living issues</b>				
Accommodation difficulties	2.64	2.6	0	10
Difficulties in using student support services	2.90	2.851	0	10
Financial stress	2.60	2.733	0	10
Diet-related issues	2.79	2.888	0	10
Safety threats	1.95	2.212	0	8
<b>Indonesian language proficiency</b>				
Difficulties in communicating with native speakers	2.78	2.944	0	10
Understanding lectures	3.93	3.217	0	10
Writing up essays	3.95	3.274	0	10

In the personal psychological issues category, homesickness has the highest mean amongst all the adjustment problems ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 2.722$ ), followed by loneliness ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 2.920$ ) and stress ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 2.966$ ) as the second and third highest mean scores. These issues were also found in other prior studies (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Rajapaksa and Dundes, 2002; Gebhard, 2012; Lee, 2017). Moreover, a participant in Indonesia found uncertainty to be an adjustment problem. As Kim (2008) explained,

uncertainty in dealing with new situations is the main cause of psychological issues, such as anxiety.

In the academic issues category, students found academic demands ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 3.048$ ) and academic progress ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 3.235$ ) to be the most challenging. The difficulties in meeting academic demands and keeping up with academic progress are common problems faced by international students (Gebhard, 2012; Hu & Zhang, 2013; Wu & Hammond, 2011). Additionally, a participant thought that his classmates did not want to cooperate with the international students.

Meanwhile, in the category of sociocultural issues, cultural shock ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 2.795$ ) has the highest mean score. According to Zhang and Goodson (2011), international students go through culture shock upon their arrival in a foreign country. Cultural shock is caused by a lack of cues on how to behave and unawareness of different local values which results in anxiety, depression, and anger (Pedersen, 1995). The second biggest problem is stereotyping ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 2.812$ ). Beeghly (2015) referred to stereotypes as a universal generalization about a social group. Stereotypes are varied and can be a combination of positive and negative attributes (Operio & Fiske, 2003).

The students found the most difficulty in using student support services ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 2.851$ ) and diet-related issues ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 2.888$ ) in the general living issues category. The problems in using student support services were also found in prior studies (Hu & Zhang, 2013; Simpson & Tan, 2009). Similarly, diet-related issues were also experienced by international students in other studies (Yildirim, 2014; Syafia, 2017). In addition, a participant reported that vegan food is not widely available in Indonesia; hence, it is difficult to be a vegan. Another participant complained about water hygiene.

Lastly, in the language issues category, writing essays ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 3.274$ ) and understanding lectures ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 3.217$ ) were the most challenging issues they faced. The students enrolled in the regular program are required to write in the Indonesian language, which was quite challenging. A participant reported that there was no encouragement to speak Indonesian from local people. Language problems were often found in intercultural communication studies (Ku, et al., 2008; Jou & Fukada, 1996; Gebhard, 2012; Mustafa & Illias, 2013; Lee, 2017).

This study puts the scores into three categories: low, medium, and high. Since the score of this scale ranges 0 - 10, with 0 score means there is no adjustment problem, 5 is considered to be the middle score, which cuts the distribution into two halves. Therefore, 4, 5, and 6 are considered medium scores. In that case, 1, 2, and 3 are low scores, and 7, 8, 9, and 10 are high scores. Table 4.1 shows the mean score of each problem is low to medium, which means international students' adjustment problems in Indonesian were relatively minor. The maximum score of each adjustment problem was 10, but the mean scores were less than 5. Furthermore, Table 4.2 explores the level, number, and percentage of each issue category.

Table 4.2 *Level of adjustment issues of participants in Indonesia*

<b>Adjustment issues</b>		<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Personal psychological issues	Number	41	14	3
	Percentage	71%	24%	5%
Academic issues	Number	30	26	2

	Percentage	52%	45%	3%
Sociocultural issues	Number	38	16	4
	Percentage	66%	28%	7%
General living issues	Number	43	15	0
	Percentage	74%	26%	0%
Language issues	Number	34	22	2
	Percentage	59%	38%	3%

#### 4.1.2. Intercultural adjustment problems of international students in Japan

In this section, the intercultural adjustment problems of international students in Japan are also treated the same as their counterparts in Indonesia. The problems will be explored quantitatively.

Table 4.3 *Participants' adjustment issues in Japan (N = 68)*

Adjustment issues	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Personal psychological issues</b>				
Homesickness	4.34	3.272	0	10
Loneliness	4.41	3.058	0	10
Stress	5.13	2.962	0	10

Depression	3.35	2.790	0	10
Frustration	3.28	2.870	0	10
Loss of status or identity	2.07	2.599	0	10
Anxiety	4.06	3.046	0	10
Confusion	4.46	2.949	0	10
<b>Academic issues</b>				
Academic demands	5.53	1.940	0	10
Academic progress	5.62	3.200	0	10
Lack of understanding of the Japanese educational system	4.18	3.255	0	10
Lack of effective learning skills for gaining academic success	4.79	3.113	0	10
Difficulties in using educational supportive services (e.g., library, academic counseling services)	3.19	3.029	0	10
<b>Sociocultural issues</b>				
Cultural shock	2.94	2.562	0	10



Cultural fatigue	3.43	2.877	0	10
Stereotyping	3.81	3.106	0	10
Prejudice	3.26	3.084	0	10
Racial discrimination	2.59	2.782	0	10
Difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs	2.72	2.648	0	10
Norms and regulations and participating in intercultural/social activities	3.72	2.906	0	10
Relationship problems	2.90	2.829	0	10
<b>General living issues</b>				
Accommodation difficulties	2.62	2.682	0	10
Difficulties in using student support services	2.13	2.259	0	10
Financial stress	4.16	3.340	0	10
Dietary restrictions	2.87	3.138	0	10
Safety threats	1.65	2.550	0	10
<b>Japanese language proficiency</b>				

Difficulties in communicating with native speakers	3.87	3.046	0	10
Understanding lectures	4.00	3.186	0	10
Writing up essays	4.84	3.290	0	10
Reading and writing Japanese	4.84	3.290	0	10

In the personal psychological issues category, stress had the highest mean among all the adjustment problems ( $M = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 2.962$ ). The second and third highest mean scores were loneliness ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 3.058$ ) and confusion ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 2.949$ ). As mentioned in the previous subchapter, international students frequently feel stressed and lonely in prior studies (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Rajapaksa and Dundes, 2002; Gebhard, 2012, Lee, 2017). International students also frequently felt confusion in the host culture because many things are new and different (Storti, 2001; Gebhard, 2012). Furthermore, a participant in Japan reported that she felt inferior to other students. Another participant experienced a feeling of isolation during his stay in Japan.

Similar to the students in Indonesia and students in prior studies (Gebhard, 2012; Hu & Zhang, 2013; Wu & Hammond, 2011), students in Japan found academic progress ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 3.2$ ) and academic demands ( $M = 5.53$ ,  $SD = 2.94$ ) to be the most challenging of the academic issues category. Additionally, they also found difficulties in using effective learning skills for gaining academic success ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 3.113$ ). Furthermore, a student admitted that she could not manage her time easily. Another participant reported that he did not have enough resources for his research.

Meanwhile, in the sociocultural issues category, stereotyping ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 3.186$ ), participating in intercultural/social activities ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 2.906$ ), and cultural fatigue ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 2.877$ ) have the highest mean score. In consonance with their counterparts in Indonesia, the students in Japan had to deal with stereotyping. There are also studies finding stereotyping to be a major problem faced by international students (Yu, Bodycott, & Mak, 2019; Ruble & Zhang, 2013). Difficulties in intercultural/social activities and cultural fatigue might be caused by cultural distance.

Regarding general living issues, the students reported financial stress ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 3.34$ ) and dietary-related issues ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 3.138$ ). In line with this finding, financial stress was frequently experienced by international students (Storti, 2001; Gebhard, 2012; Lee, 2017; Li & Kaye, 1998). Similar to students in previous studies (Yildirim, 2014; Syafia, 2017), international students in Japan also experienced diet-related issues. A participant also reported an unfavorable situation with their neighborhood.

Lastly, in the language issues category, understanding lectures ( $M = 4$ ,  $SD = 3.186$ ) and difficulties in communicating with native speakers in Japanese ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 3.046$ ) were the most challenging issues they faced. A participant mentioned that learning Japanese is not easy. The writing system alone is very complicated.

The scores of international students' adjustment problems in Japan were also put into three categories: low, medium, and high. Therefore, 1 - 3 are considered low scores, 4 - 6 are considered medium scores, and 7 - 10 are high scores. The mean score of each problem is no greater than 6, meaning that the adjustment problems in Japan are low to

medium level. Furthermore, Table 4.4 explores the level, number, and percentage of each issue category.

Table 4.4 *Level of adjustment issues of participants in Japan*

<b>Adjustment issues</b>		<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Personal psychological issues	Number	42	24	2
	Percentage	62%	35%	3%
Academic issues	Number	46	22	0
	Percentage	68%	32%	0%
Sociocultural issues	Number	45	18	5
	Percentage	66%	26%	8%
General living issues	Number	50	17	1
	Percentage	74%	25%	1%
Language issues	Number	55	13	0
	Percentage	81%	19%	0%

It can be seen that a considerable number of the participants in both countries experience a low to a medium level of adjustment issues from the Table 4.1, Table 4.2, Table 4.3, and Table 4.4. However, since the demographic profile of the participants in

both countries is diverse, this finding could not be generalized. The findings may be different if the study had a different demographic profile.

#### **4.2. Level of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism**

In this subchapter, the level of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism of the participants in both countries are explored to investigate international students' intercultural communication competence.

Table 4.5 *Level of intercultural sensitivity (N = 126)*

		<b>Low (24-55)</b>	<b>Medium (56-87)</b>	<b>High (88-120)</b>
Indonesia	Number	0	23	35
	Percentage	0%	40%	60%
Japan	Number	0	23	45
	Percentage	0%	34%	66%

This finding shows that none of the participants have a low level of intercultural sensitivity. They agree with prior research, which has proven that international exposure facilitates the development of intercultural sensitivity. International students have been documented as having significantly higher levels of intercultural sensitivity than domestic students (McMurray, 2007; Bosuwon, 2017). Sojourn and study abroad

experiences also linked with greater intercultural competence (Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Morrel et al., 2013).

Table 4.6 *Level of ethnocentrism (N = 126)*

		<b>Low (22-51)</b>	<b>Medium (52-81)</b>	<b>High (82-110)</b>
Indonesia	Number	26	31	1
	Percentage	45%	52%	2%
Japan	Number	31	37	0
	Percentage	46%	54%	0%

The above table exhibits the fact that international students in both countries are not highly ethnocentric. This finding aligns with prior studies (Dong, 2018; Chen, 2010; Dong, Day, & Collaço, 2008) which suggested intercultural sensitivity negatively correlates to ethnocentrism. In other words, the higher the intercultural sensitivity level of individuals, the less ethnocentric they are.

Table 4.7 *Level of intercultural willingness to communicate (N = 126)*

		<b>Low (0-200)</b>	<b>Medium (201-400)</b>	<b>High (401-600)</b>
Indonesia	Number	4	27	27
	Percentage	7%	47%	47%
Japan	Number	12	22	34

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Percentage	18%	32%	50%
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From the table, it can be seen that a considerable number of international students in Indonesia and Japan have a medium to a high level of intercultural willingness to communicate. However, the percentage of those who have a low level of intercultural willingness to communicate was more pronounced in Japan than in Indonesia. The social boundaries set by the Japanese might be influenced by their *uchi-soto* concept, wherein, according to Hall (1983), the Japanese have an in-group which outsiders cannot enter into easily.

By looking at the level of intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to communicate, and ethnocentrism of participants in both countries, it can be concluded that a significant number of international students in Japan and Indonesia have a medium to a high level of intercultural communication competence. Bennet, Bennet, and Allen (2003) suggested that intercultural communication competence means “the general ability to transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate appropriate behavior in one or more different cultures.” Therefore, it can be interpreted that international students could transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate appropriate behavior in host cultures to some extent.

### 4.3. Variables which correlate with the intercultural adjustment of international students

The data of international students in Indonesia and Japan are combined to discover which variables correlate with intercultural adjustment. Since the data of this study are not normally distributed, a series of Kendall's tau-b correlation test was used to find out the correlation between variables. It is a nonparametric test to measure the strength and direction of the correlation that exists between two variables. Meanwhile, to investigate the differences further, the Kruskal-Wallis H test and Mann-Whitney U test were run. The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a rank-based nonparametric test to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable. It is also known as one-way ANOVA on ranks. As mention in the previous subchapter, the Mann-Whitney U test is a rank-based nonparametric test that can be used to determine if there are significant differences between two groups on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable.

Table 4.8 *Correlation between intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, intercultural willingness to communicate, and intercultural adjustment*

		<b>Ethnocentrism</b>	<b>Intercultural sensitivity</b>	<b>Intercultural willingness to communicate</b>
Adjustment	Kendall's tau-b	-.055	.009	.061
Problems in general	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.373	.884	.317



N	126	126	126
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Kendall's tau-b correlation test shows that there is no significant correlation between intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, intercultural willingness to communicate, and intercultural adjustment problem in general. However, some correlations are found at other variables.

Table 4.9 *Correlation between variables*

Variables	Correlation
ethnocentrism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>language issues (<math>\tau_b = -.145, p = .020</math>)</li> <li>academic demands (<math>\tau_b = -.168, p = .002</math>)</li> <li>academic progress (<math>\tau_b = -.198, p = .001</math>)</li> </ul>
intercultural sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>loss of identity (<math>\tau_b = -.137, p = .041</math>)</li> <li>anxiety (<math>\tau_b = -.147, p = .023</math>)</li> </ul>
<u>intercultural sensitivity factor:</u>	
respect of cultural differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>academic issues (<math>\tau_b = .158, p = .013</math>)</li> <li>academic demands (<math>\tau_b = .138, p = .036</math>)</li> <li>academic progress (<math>\tau_b = .172, p = .009</math>)</li> <li>difficulties in using effective learning style (<math>\tau_b = .170, p = .010</math>)</li> </ul>
interaction enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>academic demands (<math>\tau_b = .164, p = .014</math>)</li> </ul>
interaction confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>anxiety (<math>\tau_b = -.137, p = .038</math>)</li> </ul>

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intercultural willingness to	• culture shock ( $\tau_b = .127, p = .048$ )
communicate	• difficulties in communicating with native speakers ( $\tau_b = .140, p = .029$ )

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In sum, intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, and intercultural willingness to communicate have a slight correlation with several intercultural adjustment problems. Thus, those variables are can be considered to be weak factors that contribute to the intercultural adjustment process. Moreover, the problems are caused by some external factors or other variables of international students, as follows:

- Course of study

Course of study has a small correlation with intercultural adjustment problem in general ( $\tau_b = .168, p = .015$ ). Course of study also specifically correlates with academic issues ( $\tau_b = .170, p = .015$ ), personal psychological issues ( $\tau_b = .165, p = .017$ ), and language issues ( $\tau_b = .178, p = .011$ ). A Kruskal-Wallis test is conducted to determine if there are significant differences in adjustment problem scores between participants based on their course of study. The test shows insignificant differences in scores regarding personal psychological issues and language issues. However, regarding academic issues, doctoral students experience more problems (mean rank = 76.04) than master's students (mean rank = 67.23), or undergraduate students (mean rank = 55.54). It is understandable since the academic demands of doctoral students must be higher than of that master's students and undergraduate students.

- Language proficiency

Language proficiency has a small, negative correlation with overall intercultural adjustment issues ( $\tau_b = -.153, p = .021$ ). A Kruskal-Wallis test was run to investigate if there are differences in adjustment problem scores between groups with different language proficiency: beginner, elementary, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced. Distributions of adjustment problem scores are dissimilar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Median adjustment problem scores are statistically significantly different between the groups with different language proficiency,  $\chi^2(4) = 10.900, p = .028$ . Next, pairwise comparisons are utilized using Dunn's (1964) procedure with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. This posthoc analysis finds statistically significant differences in adjustment problems scores between the beginner (mean rank = 72.11) and advanced (mean rank = 38) ( $p = .02$ ).

More specifically, language proficiency correlates with academic issues ( $\tau_b = -.153, p = .022$ ), sociocultural issues ( $\tau_b = -.194, p = .004$ ), and language issues ( $\tau_b = -.181, p = .007$ ). To identify the differences between groups with different language proficiency, a Kruskal-Wallis test is performed. Since the median scores of academic ( $\chi^2(4) = 12.135, p = .016$ ), sociocultural ( $\chi^2(4) = 12.135, p = .016$ ), and language issues ( $\chi^2(4) = 11.212, p = .024$ ) are statistically significantly different, it can be seen that participants with higher level of language proficiency faced fewer problems in academic life, sociocultural aspect, or communication in general.

- University

The host university of the international students has a correlation with language issues ( $\tau_b = .149, p = .021$ ) and personal psychological issues ( $\tau_b = .155, p = .016$ ). A Kruskal Wallis test was used, showing the significant differences in language level issues

of participants from different universities  $\chi^2(15) = 31.474, p = .008$ . Kyushu Institute of Technology (mean rank = 19.5) and the National Institute of Technology Yogyakarta (mean rank = 27) has the lowest scores of language issues. According to Shwe from Kyushu Institute of Technology in her interview, the English requirements for university enrollment is relatively low. Many international students at the university speak Japanese better than English. The participants studying in this university are from China and Myanmar, who have an intermediate and upper-intermediate level of Japanese proficiency. Thus, the participants from the university have a lower level of language issues. Meanwhile, the participants studying at the National Institute of Technology Yogyakarta are from East Timor, meaning that they can communicate in the Indonesian language. The statistics show that they are at the upper-intermediate level and advanced level. A Kruskal Wallis test was also used, showing the significant differences of language and psychological issues level of participants from different universities  $\chi^2(15) = 26.975, p = .029$ . The participants from the National Institute of Technology Yogyakarta also had the fewest of personal psychological issues (mean rank = 14). Since language is one of the main causes of adjustment problems, the less the participants experience language issues, the fewer their adjustment problems.

- Environmental circumstances

The environmental circumstances of the international students influence the participants' adjustment problems. The number of culturally different friends ( $\tau_b = .142, p = .041$ ), frequency of communicating intercultural ( $\tau_b = .136, p = .050$ ), and impression of intercultural communication ( $\tau_b = .139, p = .042$ ) interestingly have a positive

correlation with language issues. According to the results, even though participants live in such a supportive environment, they would still likely experience adjustment problems.

#### **4.4. Summary of this chapter**

The statistical results reveal that international students' adjustment problems in Indonesia and Japan are relatively few. Moreover, the statistical results indicate that a significant number of international students in Japan and Indonesia have a medium to a high level of intercultural communication competence. It can be interpreted that international students could transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate appropriate behavior in host cultures to some extent (Bennet, Bennet, & Allen 2003). However, a series of statistical tests prove that the level of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, intercultural willingness to communicate slightly correlate with the intercultural adjustment problems. Thus, an interculturally competent individual can experience serious intercultural adjustment problems in the host culture. Some external factors influence the adjustment problems, i.e., course of study, language proficiency, university, and environmental condition, such as numbers of culturally-different friends, frequency of communicating interculturally, and impression of intercultural communication.

## Chapter 5

# QUALITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter explains the qualitative results of this study. It answers the questions about the intercultural adjustment problems of international students in Indonesia and Japan qualitatively. It also explores the coping strategies used by international students intensively. Moreover, it tries to look closer into each country and individually investigate the programs provided by the host institutions. It also highlights factors that ease their adjustment process and reasons to study abroad.

### **5.1. Intercultural adjustment problems of international students**

#### **5.1.1. Adjustment problems faced by international students in Indonesia**

This study found five overlapping issues in their adjustment, including personal psychological issues, academic issues, sociocultural issues, general living issues, and language issues. These issues were intertwined, creating complex stumbling blocks to the participants at various levels.

### *5.1.1.1. Personal psychological issues*

#### *5.1.1.1.1 Homesickness and loneliness*

Some participants in Indonesia experienced homesickness as they were apart from their family and friends, such as Visna, Mia, and Lucas. For Visna, it was his first time being far from home. For Mia, even though she did not get homesick often, she became homesick around Christmas. "It is a pretty hard cause, of course. It is so different from home, you with your whole family," she said.

However, other participants admitted they did not experience it since they were used to living overseas or far away from their parents even before coming to Indonesia. Somchai and Malai studied in Malaysia for many years previously; subsequently, they could minimize their feelings of homesickness. This finding agreed with previous studies that found travel experience associates with better adjustment and greater intercultural competence (Mustaffa & Ilias, 2013; Goldstein & Kim, 2006).

Lea, the exchange students from France who studied at Gadjah Mada University, reported she did not feel homesick since she was still exploring her host culture and new environment. It might be that she was still in the honeymoon phase, where everything seems very exciting (Lysgaard, 1955; Trifonovitch, 1977). She perceived everything in her new culture positively as she had not yet had time to experience negative aspects of the host culture.

A study by Constantine et al. (2005) found that family and peer networks are an essential support system of international students. The participants reported they felt

less lonely when they have friends in host countries. Malai faced difficulties in making friends with domestic students in her first months in Indonesia. She tried to relieve the uncertainty and anxiety by interacting with only her co-national acquaintances. As stated by Kim (2001) and Gebhard (2012), international students tend to seek out the company from their co-nationals due to cultural background similarities.

#### *5.1.1.1.2 Stress*

Various causes can trigger stress. In this study, full-time students and non-full-time students faced considerably different levels of stress in both countries. Full-time students felt stressed due to academic demands and language barriers in the classroom. Master's students, such as Visna, sometimes found difficulties with their academic demands. Visna, Kham, and Piseth stated that their teachers code-mixed Indonesian and English when explaining the material, even though they were enrolled in international programs at Gadjah Mada University. They sometimes found it difficult to absorb the knowledge. To Nilar, a medical student, understanding medical terms and talking to the patients who operated in non-standard Indonesian had always been very challenging to her. Full-time students at the Islamic University of Indonesia, all from Thailand, were enrolled in the regular program where the classes were taught entirely in the Indonesian language. Even though they could speak the Indonesian language well, their language proficiency was insufficient for an academic setting.

Meanwhile, to exchange students and BIPA students from Germany and France, living in Indonesia was less stressful than in their home country. They unanimously agreed that Indonesian culture was more relaxing than their culture.



#### *5.1.1.1.3 Frustration*

As suggested by Hall (1959), the way people perceive and manage time is a part of the culture, and it is different according to the culture. Hall put forward the term polychronic and monochronic cultures. Monochronic time cultures view time as a discrete commodity, they therefore emphasize a precise interpretation of time and promptness. Monochronic countries include those in North Europe, the USA, and Canada. Comparatively, polychronic cultures value human interaction over time and material things. Being punctual is less critical in polychronic cultures than in monochronic cultures. Latin America, the Arab part of the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia are examples of polychronic countries. Japan is a unique polychronic country that has tight monochronic time.

As one of the polychronic countries, Indonesian's way of perceiving time could be frustrating to monochronic participants. Hans, a German, reported there were times when he had to wait for his friends for a long time. Even in a more formal situation, the meetings could start much later than the original time. "So, I adjusted myself for this kind of situation. I also come late now."

#### *5.1.1.1.4 Anxiety and confusion*

Prior research suggests that adjusting to contact with a new culture and learning about it will be followed by stress and intense emotion, which are manifested as uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety (Kim, 2008). Uncertainty in dealing with new situations is also a primary cause of anxiety. Mia, a German participant, would feel anxious if she went to places where she had never been there. She reported that she could get anxious from the most straightforward situations, such as ordering food at local restaurants or food stalls.

Storti (2001) stated, “You expect to have to learn how to do new things overseas and even new ways of doing familiar things, but you may be surprised to discover that you have to learn to do things you normally do without thinking.” Consequently, participants regularly found themselves confused in their host country. To participants in Indonesia, public transportation could be overwhelming. Public transportation is not very well-connected, and cities in Indonesian are not very pleasant to walk around. Fortunately, there are cheap and easy alternative transportations, such as Go-Jek. It works relatively similar to Uber, which provides transport, instant courier, cashless payment, and even cleaning and a massage service. People can use it with a mobile phone application. Many participants also thought that Indonesian currency is confusing, as the banknotes have many zeroes. For example, 28,000 rupiah is about \$2 or ¥216.

#### *5.1.1.2. Academic issues*

Regarding academic life, international students have various academic issues. The issues were varied, depending on the course of study, student status, academic major.

##### *5.1.1.2.1 Academic demands and progress*

Undergraduate or master’s students strived to meet academic demands in Indonesia. Kulap, who was studying Islamic law, struggled with the complexity of her study, which demanded a vast knowledge in positive Indonesian law. She assumed she would focus mainly on sharia law (Islamic law) before starting her study. Furthermore, her Indonesian language proficiency was insufficient to understand the lectures entirely. She deliberately stated that studying positive Indonesian law would be wasteful since she intended to have a career in Thailand. Another Thai student majoring in communication studies, Malai, faced difficulty in the compulsory subjects in the university. Malai was

completely new to Indonesian civic education and Pancasila education. Pancasila is an official, foundational philosophical theory of Indonesia. Kezia, studying English literature at Surakarta State University, acknowledged the need to study very hard to keep up with other students.

Somchai attended high school in Malaysia for several years after graduating from elementary school. Even though he could speak Malaysian fluently, he still found it hard to understand the lectures taught in Indonesian. He reported, "My university does not have any preparatory classes, unlike other universities. Other universities have preparatory classes for one semester." He struggled in his first and second semesters to follow the lectures.

Hans, a BIPA student, was spending one semester at INCULs (Indonesian Language and Culture Learning Service) in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Gadjah Mada University. Instead of getting overwhelmed, Hans thought the academic progress at INCULs was slow-moving. The lecturers taught international students at a slower pace to make sure the students fully understand the materials. He wanted the lecturers to teach faster and more efficiently. "I think international students should be allowed to sit in or join regular classes with domestic students so that the international students will learn more," he suggested.

Undergraduate students enrolled in regular programs were struggling to come up with an effective learning style. Ratre, a Thai student majoring in English Education, reported that she had to translate a concept into Thai, then re-translated it into Indonesian when she reviewed her notes.

#### *5.1.1.2.2 Difficulties in using educational support services*

Some students revealed their difficulties in using educational support services. Kham and Visna, master's students from Laos and Cambodia, pointed out that their departments' website was not user-friendly since the information was only available in the Indonesian language. Moreover, the staff in the department office barely spoke English, which made them more frustrated in an academic context. Piseth also got confused with the exam information from the secretary, which was mostly in the Indonesian language.

#### *5.1.1.3. Sociocultural issues*

##### *5.1.1.3.1 Cultural shock*

Many international students go through culture shock upon their arrival in a foreign country (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Lack of cues on how to behave and unawareness of different local values cause cultural shock, resulting in anxiety, depression, and anger (Pedersen, 1995). Despite the close geographical and cultural distance, Southeast Asian participants still encountered shocking experiences during their stay in Indonesia. For example, Visna, Piseth, and Kham did not know Indonesian people generally disuse their left hand as the left hand is considered the wrong hand. To Indonesians, it is impolite to use the left hand to shake, touch, eat, and everything good. The left hand is reserved for the dirty work, like cleaning yourself or picking your nose.

Nilar found that Indonesian culture is not vastly different from Myanmar culture. However, she noticed Indonesian people, especially Javanese, show their respect for their teacher not only verbally but also through their gestures. Javanese people are well-known for their politeness. To pay respect to socially superior people, Javanese will talk in

Indonesian or a high speech level of Javanese language, depending on the context, while standing with hands clasped together posited between the navel and private parts. This gesture is called *ngapurancang*, which displays respect towards the interlocutor.

As a Muslim majority country, spirituality and religion feature throughout daily life and public discourse. James and Hans were shocked by hearing adhan (Islamic call to pray) from mosques near their house around 4.30 a.m. Initially they could not normally go back to sleep, but it ceased to be an issue as they became accustomed to it. James was cautious when it came to communicating with the opposite gender since Yogyakarta is much more conservative than his hometown. Likewise, Hans got confused when he could shake hands with new people, since some stricter Muslim women do not touch the opposite gender. He could not merely guess how strict a person was regarding handshaking. Similarly, Fatmata, a Sierra Leonean, could see the social distance between males and females. Even though the majority of Sierra Leonean people are Muslim, opposite genders can still be close and do things together.

Meanwhile, the Thai students would never have thought Muslims in Yogyakarta and their hometown were different. Unlike western students, they considered that Indonesian Muslims are more moderate than Thai Muslims. In general, Muslims do not touch the opposite gender on any occasion. However, here, Muslim students could get very close physically and even share a motorcycle ride. Furthermore, before coming to Indonesia, Malai had the impression that students at her prospective university would dress modestly, given the fact that she would study at the Islamic University of Indonesia. She found out later that local students dress much more fashionably.

However, experiencing a different culture did not necessarily affect international students negatively. Lea enjoyed learning new things, i.e., eating with hands. She felt that Indonesian food was more delicious here if eaten with hands rather than utensils. Additionally, she realized how respectful and calm Indonesians were soon after her arrival. She stated, "In France, people in our country are more like if there is a problem, they are going to get angry. Here people are cool about everything."

#### *5.1.1.3.2 Stereotype and prejudice*

Beeghly (2015) suggested stereotypes as a universal generalization about a social group. Stereotypes about cultural or social groups are varied and can be a combination of positive and negative attributes. Meanwhile, prejudice is a negative evaluation of a social group or an individual that is firmly based on the individual's group membership (Crandall & Eshleman, 2004).

The research suggested that stereotyping and prejudice are an automatic and inevitable consequence of categorization regarded as a functional and adaptive process (Lepore & Brown, 1997). The social psychological theorists had a basic assumption that categorization is a normal human process, allowing people to make sense of the world around them faster (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). Even though stereotypes and prejudice may be repugnant socially, they are cognitively beneficial by making perceivers to process information and judging efficiently (Sherman, Lee, Bessenoff, & Frost, 1998).

Although the stereotyping went in two directions, international students did not experience stereotyping explicitly in this study. Instead, they perceived both positive and negative stereotypes about Indonesians. The international students had the same impression that Indonesians were happy, friendly, and helpful. However, it is an

overgeneralization that does not represent the truth. Mia learned this the hard way when a local man wronged and tricked her in a tourist spot. "Being happy, friendly, and helpful is sometimes just a façade of Indonesian people," she stated.

Hans had a different stereotype towards Indonesian people. Indonesians did not like work regulations, he opined. Later he took back his stereotype, stated that every country had its unique way to work. As he mentioned earlier about the unpunctuality of Indonesian people, he restated it as an example of Indonesian people's unique way of working. Deadlines and meetings frequently got postponed for no substantial reasons. As mentioned earlier, Indonesia is one of the polychronic countries which see time as fluid (Hall, 1959).

According to Berry (1980), the students' acculturation process depends on the positive or negative stereotypes towards their home culture and host culture. If they have a positive stereotype towards the host culture, they are eager to accept the host culture's values. On the contrary, if they have a negative stereotype, they tend to reject the values of the host culture.

#### *5.1.1.3.3 Racial discrimination*

International students who look foreign could not go unnoticed in public places. Foreign-looking here refers to white Euro-American students or darker-skinned African and East Timorese students. In contrast, things would be a bit different for international students who physically look similar to local people, i.e., Southeast Asian students in Indonesia. As pointed out by Fechter (2005), the white Euro-American students experienced 'Asian public space.' Fechter used the notion of 'Asian public space' to refer to a verbal and visual public space which is composed partially of common Indonesian

habits to gaze at expatriates in Indonesia, and calling them *bule*, an Indonesian language term for 'white person.'

James, Mia, Hans, and Lea experienced the gaze of 'the Other'; hence they felt racially othered and marked. Local people blatantly scrutinize them or merely trying to communicate with them in broken English. James, an American, admitted that he enjoyed how local people treated him. He said, "Honestly, in terms of my race or usually where I am from is usually positive, like they are happier to see me. Or more interested in who I am. Because I'm white person from the US."

The local people also unashamedly asked the students to take pictures with them. The other students stated that it was enjoyable to be like a 'local celebrity' at first, but it quickly became annoying. Hans reported, "I went to a pine forest in Imogiri where there were a lot of local people. They started to ask for selfies with them. I was okay at first, but then I felt like being exploited. Nevertheless, it is Indonesia; it is just the usual thing. I have to be more relaxed."

Similarly, Fatmata and Kezia also could not escape from 'the gaze of the Other.' Their facial features and darker skin color made local people stare or even point at them. However, Fatmata and Kezia answered they never experienced any racial discrimination. Kezia stated that local people were very welcoming. The students at her class curiously asked about her country, East Timor.

The negative thing about Indonesians is that they think *bule* or white people or foreigners always have a lot of money, Mia added. In reality, she and her friends were just students on scholarship. Local people did not seem to believe that there are also poor foreigners. Mia and other international students complained about *harga bule*, or price



for foreigners. Commonly, foreigners will be charged more in touristic places or street vendors.

Lea mentioned a bad experience she had after her arrival. She could not speak Indonesian at that time. When going to the gym for the first time, the staff gave her a contract written in Indonesian and urged her to sign right away. She was hesitant and called her an Indonesian friend. When her friend translated it, she saw there were many conditions that the staff did not wholly explain to Lea. Some people were just dishonest, taking advantage of foreigners who could not speak Indonesian.

#### *5.1.1.3.4 Difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs*

Even though Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Ratre and Malai, Thai Muslim students still found difficulties to fit in to Indonesian society. They usually wore a loose-fitting, full-length black abaya (cloak) with a large scarf draped over the entire top half of their body, down to the waist at the campus. They felt alienated and self-conscious as the local people deliberately stared at them. Once a local student blatantly told Ratre to change the way she dressed. "The shorter the hijab, the more beautiful," Ratre recalled. It was hurtful, but she could manage her feelings. As time went by, she got accustomed to people judging her look. Malai, meanwhile, had a different story.

"I was shocked when I first came here. I thought the students would have dressed very modestly. In reality, they wear jeans, and their headscarf does not cover their chest. I was afraid they would be afraid of me if I wear too modest clothes. My

senior who was studying in another university wears a *niqab*<sup>1</sup> also found difficulties in making friends. The local people seemed to be afraid of her. It is because of the media depiction of Islam.”

In contrast with Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011) findings, which stressed perceived discrimination is based on racial and cultural stereotypes, this study found that cultural and religious similarities may not be sufficient to eliminate prejudice and discrimination. This finding, however, agrees with the previous study by Yu, Bodycott, and Mak (2019), which found that a considerable number of Asian-born international students experienced discrimination from the Hong Kong peers and local people in the broader community.

#### *5.1.1.4. General living issues*

##### *5.1.1.4.1 Accommodation difficulties*

Surviving in a new foreign environment is the first problem international students have to deal with, and they need to have a support system when they newly arrive. Some universities in Indonesia provide dormitories, boarding houses, or guest houses for international students, such as the Islamic University of Indonesia, Surakarta State University, Semarang State University, and Gadjah Mada University. Some other participants had to find accommodation by themselves without help from their university.

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<sup>1</sup> a face veil which may or may not leave the eyes uncovered

However, they only faced a few difficulties in finding a place because their co-national friends helped them.

Kezia and Nilar, who studied at Surakarta State University, preferred to stay in shared houses near their campus to the boarding house provided by their university. They thought that the boarding house was located too far from the campus. Kezia and Nilar would have to use Go-Jek to go to campus every day, which costs too much for students like them. Similarly, Hans preferred staying with domestic students in a shared house rather than staying in a guest house with his co-national friends. He wanted to live the authentic Indonesian way and experience the life of local students. His shared house was lovely, but he did not like the experience of sudden and frequent blackouts.

Living in a dormitory had its own challenge for Thai students, Kohsoom and Malai. Both of them shared a room with a local student. They were a bit unfortunate to have a sloppy, unhygienic roommate. Kohsoom often told her roommate to keep the room clean; however, the roommate kept ignoring her.

Two Thai participants, Kulap and Malai, opened up about the insufficiency of the scholarship they received. Malai said she only received money for tuition fees and the boarding house. She had to use her own money for living costs and her visa application. Similarly, Kulap had to manage her finances very carefully since she has many siblings. Her parents did not send enough money for her to study in Indonesia. In Mia's case, she imagined that life in Indonesia would be very affordable. She always had the image that everything is cheap before coming to Indonesia. It was untrue because, in reality, things added up and easily become expensive. She started to save her scholarship money to avoid financial stress in Indonesia.

#### *5.1.1.4.2 Diet-related issues*

Indonesia may be home to the most delicious dish in the world, according to CNN (2017). However, Angel, Fatmata, James, and Lea could not tolerate the spiciness of Indonesian food. There was a time when Angel and James got a stomachache after dining out. They became cautious about choosing what and where they eat due to the sensitiveness of their digestive system. Thai students thought Indonesian food is very sweet, and they were not accustomed to the sweetness. Kezia always had to request more rice whenever she bought food since she was not used to how small the serving size of Indonesian food is. A Laotian and a Cambodian admitted that they missed eating pork, as since many Indonesian do not eat pork they could not find it easily. Additionally, an American and German stated that buying alcoholic beverages in Indonesia was not as easy as buying them in their home countries.

#### *5.1.1.4.3 Relationship issues*

International students love how friendly and helpful Indonesian people, even to random strangers on the street. International students felt welcomed by friendly Indonesian gestures. Angel said, "You can tell they are nice people because even though they do not know you personally, they will smile at you. If they do that in the Philippines, they will look like some creep."

Despite the friendly characteristic of Indonesians, international students still found it difficult making friends with Indonesians since not many of them speak English. In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language that is not widely used in everyday settings. If international students could not speak Indonesia, and Indonesians could not speak English, there would be likely no intercultural communication occurring.

Fatmata felt that many Indonesians were reluctant to speak to international students. She proactively approached some Indonesians who lived in front of her boarding house. She would like to have some chats with them to improve her Indonesian language. Furthermore, she expressed that Indonesians could be discouraging based on her observation. "I do not know if it is because of a lack of understanding. If I go to try someplace to speak Bahasa (Indonesian), and maybe I speak wrongly, they laughed," she uttered. That is one of Indonesian's negative side. She hoped that other Indonesians were willing to talk to her and more encouraging.

Thai students were hesitant to communicate or interact with the opposite gender around them because of their values. Kohsoom, Kulap, and Ratreer tried to avoid being too close to male students at their university. Meanwhile, Malai could be more open up and made friends with both female and male students in her department. She was more comfortable interacting and asked for help from her male friends. She even joined a group of 9 all-female domestic students, who frequently did many activities together.

#### *5.1.1.4.4 Transportation*

One issue that students in Indonesia faced was transportation. As was briefly mentioned in the previous subchapter, public transportation in Indonesia is not yet well-connected. International students found it overwhelming to move from one place to another. Inter-city bus, metro minibus, or trans bus were universally cheap, but sometimes the routes and stops information were not widely accessible. There were trains, usually used for long trips between cities or provinces. Taxis were also available, but they were more expensive than other public transportation. The more affordable choice is *ojeks* (or *ojeks*), or motorcycle riders who take passengers for a negotiable price. The conventional *ojeks* usually wait for passengers at bus terminals, markets, or around

at crossroads. There is also an online ojek, i.e., Go-Jek and Grab, which were more convenient.

Some students complained about not getting informed by the university regarding transportation. They said they did not have any school orientation or information about daily life after their arrival. They had to ask their co-nationals or seniors about getting around safely.

Local people like to use private cars or motorcycles. The students favorited online *ojek* since they can order it using a smartphone application at a fair price. All participants agreed that the online *ojek* system is very convenient. Aside from that, students chose motorcycles to increase their mobility. Nilar could not ride a motorcycle when she first came to Indonesia. She was struggling to find public transportation for her daily commute. Hence, she decided to get herself a new motorcycle and learned to ride it every afternoon after her classes for several weeks. Her friend taught her how to ride it.

Thai, Cambodian, and Laotian students thought that traffic regulations in Indonesia are stricter than their home country's regulations. They were surprised they had to wear an Indonesian National Standard helmet everywhere. They had to always turn on the headlight even in the daytime. The regulations were very different; therefore, they had to pay full attention not to break the law.

Students could get a new or pre-owned motorcycle without complicated ownership regulations. If buying a pre-owned motorcycle, however, students had to be cautious. Somchai had a bad experience when he tried to buy a motorcycle from a shop in Yogyakarta. He almost got scammed because the motorcycle he was about to buy did

not have any legal ownership document. Luckily, he consulted with his seniors. Later, the seniors helped him buying a motorcycle from a legit motorcycle dealer in his city.

#### *5.1.1.4.5 Bureaucracy*

Two international students, Mia and Lea, had to deal with Indonesian bureaucracy. Before coming to Indonesia, Lea spent two months on her visa application and other paperwork. She was nervous that she would not get the student visa on time. The Indonesian embassy in France worked very slow. She obtained her visa 20 hours before her departure. It was a nightmare situation for her. Meanwhile, Mia faced a problem with bureaucracy at Gadjah Mada University. She needed some important documents for her scholarship. Due to bureaucratic delay, her scholarship got suspended. However, she received her scholarship once the document were fully processed. It was scary to get suspended from receiving a scholarship. It is frustrating to deal with ineffective and slow-going Indonesian bureaucracy.

#### *5.1.1.5. Language issues*

The previous subchapters showed that language is one of the major causes of other adjustment problems. The findings were consistent with the prior studies (Ku et al., 2008; Jou & Fukada, 1996; Gebhard, 2012; Mustafa & Illias, 2013; Lee, 2017; Syafia, 2017).

##### *5.1.1.5.1 Difficulties in communicating with native speakers*

Kezia, a student from East Timor, could speak Indonesian fluently. East Timor used to be a part of Indonesia; thus, many people still communicate in Indonesian. Indonesian education and culture attachés in Dili reported that Indonesian is still used in the East Timorese educational setting (Melatunan, 2018). Lecturers and students at private universities also use Indonesian as a means of communication. Kezia stated that

she started to formally study the Indonesian language in the first year of senior high. Thus, she did not find any difficulties in communicating with native Indonesian speakers.

Kulap and Somchai were from southern Thailand, which shares a land border with Malaysia. A Malay dialect, Yawi, is commonly used in South Thailand (Pariona, 2018 August). Indonesian is also taught in junior high school and senior high school for AEC preparation. Moreover, they went to a Malaysian high school and studied there for five years. They could communicate with native speakers, but they only understood the formal language for the first few months in Indonesia.

Visna and Piseth from Cambodia, Kham from Laos, Angel from the Philippines, and Lea from France could not speak Indonesian at all. Visna, Piseth, and Kham were lucky to have many co-national seniors who could help them to survive in Indonesia. Lea was told by her friends who recently came back from Indonesia that everyone speaks English in Indonesia. She was surprised when, in reality, not many people speak English. She started to learn Indonesian with the help of her friends. Gadjah Mada University provides language classes, but it costs \$800. Lea was unwilling to pay for the classes.

Meanwhile, Angel was studying Indonesian formally at Semarang State University as a Darmasiswa student. Darmasiswa is a scholarship program offered to international students from countries which have diplomatic relationship with Indonesia to study Indonesian language, arts, and cultures. Since her Indonesian was still very basic, it was hard for her just to find food or ask for directions. If local people could not understand her Indonesian, she would use other ways to make them understand. Trying to explain it in English would not be helpful since many local people do not speak English.



BIPA students agreed that the Indonesian language is relatively easy to learn. It is not a tonal language that seems straightforward and direct. Non-native speakers can easily imitate and pronounce the language without the difficulty of being understood. Moreover, there is no grammatical complexity, such as no verb tenses, plurals, conjugation, and genders in the Indonesian language. Lastly, learning the Indonesian language does not require a new alphabet because it uses a phonetic Latin-script alphabet.

However, the students who can speak Indonesian also stumbled upon different problems. Local people use not only Indonesian but also local languages, e.g., Javanese. Since this study took samples at three cities in Central Java province and the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the locals use Javanese and Indonesian simultaneously daily. Nilar was doing her internship at a public hospital in Surakarta. She had to deal with patients who used the Javanese language every day. It was frustrating and exhausting for her.

#### *5.1.1.5.2 Understanding the lectures*

Students of BIPA did not face any difficulties in keeping up with class progress. As mentioned by Hans earlier, the class pace was relatively slow. While master's students, Visna, Kham, and Piseth frequently got lost in translation at the class when their teachers code-mixed Indonesian and English to explain the material. Even though they were enrolled in the international program, the classes were not entirely taught in English.

Visna said:

“I have to join some classes with Indonesian students so that the teacher would talk in Indonesian most of the time. However, when the teacher speaks in English, most of my friends said they could not understand. I do not want to make problems for them. So, I take it and try to learn it. I have only two subjects which I did not fail, but I got low scores.”

Undergraduate students in Indonesia were enrolled in regular programs, meaning that they use the Indonesian language in their classes. Ratre, Malai, and Somchai could not understand the lectures right away. In their first months, their Indonesian was still insufficient to decode the material given at the class.

#### *5.1.1.5.3 Writing up essays*

Undergraduate students in the regular program were required to write essays in the Indonesian language. Kohsoom explained that she went through a rough patch in her first semesters in Yogyakarta. She was anxious she would not be fully accepted by the domestic students due to being foreign. Kohsoom did not speak Indonesian fluently, and she was required to write essays in Indonesia. Moreover, she had to form a group study with her classmates, who were not very welcoming at the time. She joined a group with a heavy heart because she knew she was a burden to her group. However, everything got better after she improved her Indonesian proficiency.

#### **5.1.2. The most significant challenges in Indonesia**

To Piseth and Angel, language was their biggest challenge when living in Indonesia. Everything would be less challenging if they could speak Indonesian. Since international students were still learning Indonesian, they found that their biggest challenge is related to their academic life. Visna and Kham were stressed because of not understanding their lectures if the teachers used the Indonesian language. Meanwhile, Ratre and Malai were struggling with academic writing. They had to write their thesis in the Indonesian language for their graduation. Malai's supervisor suggested that she should ask her friends for language assistant and proofreading. Malai certainly needed help, but she could not ask for help from her friends. She knew her friends must be busy too. While

Kulap was striving to meet her academic demands since she had to study not only Islamic law but also positive Indonesian law.

For Kohsoom and James, unfamiliarity with Indonesian food hindered their adjustment process. They opted to cook their food so that they would be reminded of home. However, Kohsoom admitted that when she grew familiar with Indonesian food, her life became more enjoyable.

Hans and Fatmata had to work hard to adjust themselves to unfavorable Indonesian characteristics. Fatmata was eager to learn the Indonesian language for survival. She wanted to practice Indonesian with local people, but they seemed to be reluctant to talk to her, not to mention the way they laughed at her when she made language mistakes. These behaviors discouraged her from speaking Indonesian. Meanwhile, as a monochronic person, Hans was really punctual and well-structured. He got frustrated when things did not go as planned or when people were unpunctual. He needed time to adjust himself to Indonesian's 'rubber time.' His friends kept reminding him to stay relaxed.

### **5.1.3. Adjustment problems faced by international students in Japan**

#### *5.1.3.1. Personal psychological issues*

##### *5.1.3.1.1 Homesickness and loneliness*

Participants in Japan also felt homesick and lonely at some point during their stay in Japan. Moreover, some participants could not visit their families frequently. Lucas rarely went back to his country since his family was on the other side of the world, and his budget did not allow him to buy plane tickets frequently.

However, similar to an exchange student in Indonesia, Carla, who was an exchange student at Kyushu University, did not experience homesickness. Besides being thrilled by her host culture, she made friends with other international students in Japan. She said, “I do not feel homesick. I would miss my family, but I would not miss the country. On holiday, I do not feel lonely either because I always have friends surrounding me. I live in a dorm.”

#### *5.1.3.1.2 Stress*

Doctoral students in Japan, Lucas and Putri, became stressed due to their research progress. Another doctoral student, Shwe, reported how her life became very stressful because of her health condition. She had severe migraines at times. “I got a headache, then I got stressed. I got stressed, then I got a headache. Hahaha. It is a cycle!” When the migraine came, she would sever ties with everyone and stay inside her room until she got better.

Similar to exchange students in Indonesia, Carla found that staying in Japan for an exchange program was like a vacation to her. She had only 16-hour classes a week so that she could enjoy her life in Japan more than her life in her home country, France. Her academic demands were not high, so that she did not get stressed.

#### *5.1.3.1.3 Frustration*

While participants in Indonesia struggled with Indonesian polychronic culture, participants in Japan often got frustrated with Japan’s strict monochronic time culture. Participants from Myanmar, Shwe, and the Dominican Republic, Carlos, grew up with the mindset of polychronic people who tolerate unpunctuality. Five or ten minutes late was not a big deal to them, but not for Japanese. It is still very frustrating to them even after

more than five years of living in Japan. Desi often missed buses or even arrived late to Japanese class, which affected her attendance score, because of unpunctuality.

Lucas reported that his frustration was caused by Japanese conservatism regarding LGBTQ issues. He had to refrain from being himself to fit into Japanese society.

He said:

“In Japan, it is not easy to be out. Before coming to Japan, I had just come out to my family, friends, and everyone. And then I came to Japan, and I felt like put back to the closet. It was a little bit frustrating. It is frustrating with myself because I feel like I should stand for myself better. But I could not do it, and the longer you hold it back, it gets more difficult to bring it out again.”

Furthermore, participants in Japan experience frustration with communicating with Japanese people. Phuong, Carla, and Fatin felt that the Japanese seem to set boundaries towards foreigners. “It needed time to get closer to them,” Carla said. This issue will be discussed further in the sociocultural issues part.

#### *5.1.3.1.4 Anxiety and confusion*

The uncertainty of their future triggered the anxiety of participants in Japan. For example, Putri, a doctoral student who was in her last semester, was anxious about not graduating on time and finding a job. Shwe, another doctoral student, felt the same: “I am 28 years old. And I am worried if I do not get a job. In Myanmar, the maximum age is 30 or 35. I only got a 10-month experience, and others are student life. The job usually requires 2-year experiences.” They kept trying to find jobs in their home country.

To do small things in a foreign country is no longer easy because of the different rules of how to do such things (Storti, 2001). Desi, an Indonesian, felt anxious when she had to go to the ward office in Japan to register something. Even though she could speak

Japanese, she was still anxious about making any mistakes for important procedures regarding her residence due to the potential consequences.

Similar to cases of anxiety, the most common cause of confusion in Japan was unfamiliar situations. Besides, research and language differences also confused the students. It will be discussed in more detailed in the academic issues and language issues parts.

### *5.1.3.2. Academic issues*

#### *5.1.3.2.1 Academic demands and progress*

Doctoral students usually stumbled upon issues related to their research. Shwe, majoring in civil and architecture engineering, was struggling to deal with her data. She explained that her lab members usually work together for every project. Her research was about children's play environment in Myanmar. She explained:

“I have many interviews and questionnaires all in Myanmar language. And I have more than 7000 questionnaire data and 180 interviews. So that I can make many papers. But only I can transcribe it. Nobody knows the language. Moreover, I also have to translate them into English for some parts. I do not have difficulties with the questionnaire, but with the interview. I also have to analyze it. It is tough. In my university, there are no other Myanmar people.”

Another doctoral student, Lucas, pointed out the difficulties in finding resources for his research. Since he studied Japanese literature, especially contemporary literature from the 2000s, there are not many resources have already written. People who study literature usually prefer to study older material. Only a few materials were available in the university libraries, while others were available in other libraries. If he wanted to get them, he needed to pay for the copy.

Two undergraduate students at Ritsumeikan APU University, Phuong and Desi, reported that they had an intensive course. Since Japanese universities use the quarter system, the classes were condensed. "The assignments quickly piled up since we have to finish everything in two months," Desi complained. While Phuong admitted even though she could pass the minimum scores, her GPA was terrible. Fortunately, all of their classes were taught in English.

Desi also talked about her conflict with her classmates. She had to deal with free-riders at a study group. It was very frustrating since her peers did not contribute anything. They would just keep quiet during the discussion. Most of them were Japanese who had to take English-based classes for credits. She thought that maybe they were afraid to speak up in English. She tried to encourage them to join the discussion. They would eventually speak up, but the discussion would be very slow-going.

Regarding academic progress, Carla, who studied Japanese, claimed that she achieved considerable progress since she could apply for Japanese classes and actually speak with Japanese people. She stated, "Huge progress! I can apply (what I got from) my classes by speaking with Japanese people." Meanwhile, Fatin, a Malaysian studying civil engineering, was struggling with an effective learning style to improve her academic progress. She stated:

"I am the type of person who thinks in English. When I change my head into Japanese, to write things in Japanese, suddenly, all of the ideas disappear. So, I have to write everything down in English and then rewrite it in Japanese. It takes much time. Yeah, I think it is really hard for me."

#### *5.1.3.2.2 Difficulties in using educational support services*

Similar to Kham and Visna, master's students in Indonesia, Lucas noted that his university did not give complete academic information that he should know. Although the website was available in English and Japanese versions, he sometimes still missed important information. He thought if he was supposed to know something, the student office should have informed him in advance.

#### *5.1.3.2.3 Different educational system*

As a master's student in Japan, Carlos did not find many difficulties regarding the Japanese educational system. He opined that the Japanese educational system is very different from the system in his home country. He explained:

“It is very easy to enter the university. But once you get inside the university, the requirement is quite high to graduate. They ask you for a lot- It is very demanding. The process of getting out and getting a good score was very hectic. Here, we say the opposite. It is very hard to get into a Japanese university. The entrance examination is really hectic. The interview and everything, and they only choose I do not remember the specific percent, but many people fail. But after entering a Japanese university, they give you all you need to pass easily. Compared to my country, I feel like it is very chill here. They give me all the tools and all the support that I need successfully to get out the college.”

On the other hand, Lucas pointed out that most of his classes in graduate school were not lectures. There were times where students took turns giving a presentation. For him, it was already difficult to understand the presentation in Japanese. Even though he speaks Japanese, his Japanese was insufficient to understand the presentation entirely. The students in his classes did not use visual aid in their presentation. Instead, they were just reading the paper. “I wish we could have a little bit more of lectures and less paper-reading.”



#### *5.1.3.2.4 Time management*

For Tan, time management was the most challenging issue. Balancing study and extracurricular activities were not easy. She got terrible scores in her first year because she did not know how to allocate her time between studying and practicing instruments. In the second year, she managed to find time to study. For example, she would go to the room where she practiced her instruments after class, then studied and did her homework before the actual practice started. Her scores got better after she started managing her time carefully.

#### *5.1.3.3. Sociocultural issues*

##### *5.1.3.3.1 Cultural shock*

Students in Japan also noticed a similar thing to those in Indonesia. Carlos was surprised that Japan has a very respectful culture. However, at the same time, he realized that the Japanese could be cold too. He argued that that is a consequence of people being very respectful. They are so very respectful that they do not want to interfere with other people's lives at any level. "Respectful can be negative and positive and the same time," he concluded. Similarly, Phuong described:

"Japanese people do not want to bother others that much so they never ask you for help. They also do not want you to ask them for help. Everyone has their own matters. You see, in public places, they do not want to be noisy. Even when they see something bad happens, they just leave it like that."

##### *5.1.3.3.2 Cultural fatigue*

Ward (2001) suggested that the greater the distance between the home culture and host culture, the more difficult the adjustment will be. It will cause more problems, such as cultural fatigue. Putri got overwhelmed with cultural differences in her lab. She

experienced how the Japanese could be stringent and inflexible, and she was tired of adjusting to Japanese culture sometimes. Correspondingly, Carla felt that she could not be herself while she was in Japan. The way she dressed, talked, and thought was a complete reversal of Japanese. She just wanted to be herself.

#### *5.1.3.3.3 Stereotype and prejudice*

Fatin and Desi always thought that Japanese people are shy. They simply do not want to be different from the rest of the group; hence, they keep agreeing with other people's opinions. The proverb 'nail that sticks out gets hammered down' is relevant to this issue. It can be accurate to some extent. Japan is a group-oriented society, which means that group consensus is more important than an individual's needs. In Japan, however, a unique sense of individuality opposes Japan's vision of a collectivist society.

Phuong thought that Japanese people have a stereotype for Vietnamese people. According to her, the Vietnamese have a bad reputation in Japan. For example, there were a lot of Vietnamese thieves. It was actually because there were many Vietnamese laborers exported to Japan, who got exploited by their employer. "They had to work a lot, but they could not pay for the agency company. Instead of dealing with that, they steal much stuff," she explained. However, she never had any personal experience with this bad stereotype in Japan.

Carla's friends in the badminton club told her that some of the Japanese thought that foreigners do the crazy thing all the time, for example, underage drinking and have gatherings underground. She thought that was very creepy. She also had some prejudice towards Japanese boys. They would start talking to her in bars, clubs, or even restaurants

just because she is a western-looking foreigner, and they might want more than just talking.

“I tend to set boundaries. They talk to me for one reason. And sometimes they want to entertain themselves by speaking to a French person. I know that it could be a compliment. They are interested in you because you are a foreigner. But it is like you are an animal in the zoo. I do not like this. So sometimes when Japanese people, even girls, start talking to me, I would only say hello and go.”

#### 5.1.3.3.4 *Racial discrimination*

Lucas, a white Brazilian, admitted he never suffered from any racial discrimination in Japan. He studies Japanese literature, meaning that he could speak Japanese. It was funny yet frustrating whenever he said some simple Japanese phrase, and the Japanese would praise him with something like ‘*Nihongo ga jouzu desu ne.*’ He acknowledged Japanese favoritism towards white people, but he did not want to take advantage of it.

“I just acknowledge the privilege of being a white male. It is like most of the places people like me will not suffer racial discrimination. In Japan, everywhere, white people got racial glorification. I mean, I am not proud of it, but I recognize the privilege that I have and try not to take advantage of it.”

Putri faced racial discrimination by Japanese people in her lab. For instance, if the laboratory room were messy, the Japanese would automatically assume that it was the international students’ fault. Japanese discriminated against them passive-aggressively by writing rules for international students. There was also a misunderstanding at the laboratory, which heated the tensions between international students and Japanese students.

Meanwhile, Sophia, a Japanese Brazilian, claimed that she has never been discriminated against in Japan. She has a dual identity: she is racially Japanese, but she is

also Brazilian. However, the first time when she came, Japanese people judged her because she has a Japanese face, but she could not speak Japanese properly. Nevertheless, they treated her nicely both in and outside of university.

Desi had been discriminated by the manager in her part-time job in a hotel restaurant. She thought that the manager probably did not know that she could speak Japanese. The way the manager treated Japanese part-timers was much better than how she treated her and other foreigners, where she suddenly got angry for no apparent reason. However, she did not face racial discrimination from her friends in her part-time job.

Moreover, Desi and Tan mentioned issues about wearing a hijab at a part-time job. It might not be discrimination, but the company rules were that they could not wear a hijab if the jobs require direct interaction with customers, such as cashier or waitress. Luckily for them, there were jobs available for hijabis as well. They only have to find jobs suitable for them. Aside from that, Tan never experienced racial discrimination during her stay in Japan. Everyone in her extracurricular activities and her current lab mates were kind to her. She even managed to get closer to Japanese members of in her current lab. Researchers suggested that participation in extracurricular activities could positively affect the lives of the students (Holland & Andre, 1987).

#### *5.1.3.3.5 Difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs*

Fatin, a Malaysian undergraduate student at Kyushu University, found difficulties in fitting in. She even wanted to get rid of her hijab to get into the Japanese circle and become their friends. Similar to Malai, Fatin was also looking for a sense of belonging. She thought that her hijab was a hindrance to her adjustment. She explained:

“I feel like if I wear hijab, it is obvious if they see me, they will think I am a *ryugakusei*<sup>2</sup>. They will think I am not part of them. Even if I speak in Japanese, I cannot still be part of them. I will always be a *ryugakusei* girl. I guess it is really difficult to do in Roman as Romans do<sup>3</sup>.”

Fatin kept trying to find a place in Japanese society. She joined the band circle because she plays guitar and piano. She also joined a 3-day summer camp where she and other Japanese participants sleep and do activities together. She knew it was going to be weird, but she still joined. “It is tough for me because I want to experience what other people experience, but I cannot. Japanese are awkward. I am awkward. I will never ever have a sense of belonging here. How I cope with it is just keep myself busy with studying. I have no life.”

Tan, a Muslim Chinese, was struggling with participating in social customs in her extracurricular club, specifically the issue of the drinking party or *nomikai*. Tan thought that they have too many *nomikai*. She could not drink, but she spent 3,000-4,000 yen to pay for others’ drinks. Although she always joined during her first year, she skipped it in her second year. The club members understood that she could not drink, nor could she eat most of the food in the restaurants. Similarly, Shwe did not like going to *nomikai*. With only one drink, some people changed utterly. At a *nomikai*, people will be friendly and approachable. She thought she could be closer to those people. However, the next day,

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<sup>2</sup> international student

<sup>3</sup> when in Rome do as the Romans do

when they met in the same class, they were still distant. The *nomikai* only gave an illusion of a sense of belonging.

As a French person, Carla tended to speak her mind. She also felt that her humor was too dark for Japanese. Thus, she kept filtering her words when speaking to Japanese people. She missed talking about everything with her friends. Since she was still in Japan, she needed to follow Japanese rules and culture. "Because I am working, so I am really putting on their levels. I really follow the work norms. I am French, and I do not like people ordering me to do something. In Japan, there are always rules written. Some of them are pretty obvious. They do not need it to be written," she explained.

All participants in Japan agreed that Japanese *honne-tatemae* is very challenging. Japan is at the top of the list of the high-context culture (Hall & Hall, 1990), and has all the characteristics of high-context cultures, e.g., indirect communication, reliance on contextual cues, and respect for long silences. Hall (1983) described *honne* as sensitivity towards one's own private self, and *tatemae* as sensitivity towards others and as a public self. In other words, *honne* means real feelings, while *tatemae* is the facade or the face that people show in public. Japanese tend to behave using the *honne* when interacting among the *uchi* or in-group, and use *tatemae* when dealing with *soto* or outsiders. Consequently, it is not easy to interpret what Japanese people actually mean.

#### 5.1.3.4. General living issues

##### 5.1.3.4.1 Accommodation difficulties

Universities in Japan also provide dormitories for international students. The students can live in dormitories for six months to one year, then they have to move out and find a place to live by themselves. The process of finding a suitable house could be

very stressful, according to Carlos, Lucas, and Fatin. Real estate agencies in Japan rarely have English-speaking staff. They would explain everything in Japanese, and all the information, including house contracts, was also written in Japanese. Moreover, Lucas added, it was not unusual for the agencies to put pressure on the students to decide faster. “They keep telling you like, ‘if you do not make the contract now, then we are going to run out of houses. So, you better hurry up’.”

Carlos highlighted the strict rules of real estate agencies and the house itself. In his living situation, people cannot be loud, and they should be very quiet in the evening. Even a small noise would be considered to be a loud noise. Japanese cannot be flexible at all for these kinds of rules.

Fatin pointed out some weaknesses of the housing system in her university. According to her, the Kyushu University dormitories have a quota for Japanese and international students. Starting from her year, the university would allow only half a year for international students. However, the Japanese have one whole year. This university’s quota system makes things harder for international students. The university should be more accommodating.

Sophia was happy with her scholarship since it provided her a fully-furnished dormitory room for a whole year. They lent her almost everything, such as cooking utensils, clothes, and a bicycle. She said, “if I have some difficulties, I always talk to them and ask for advice. I also need to go to the office sometimes to report and things like that.”

#### *5.1.3.4.2 Financial stress*

Tan came to Japan five years ago as an undergraduate student, and she was receiving a scholarship for four years. When continuing her study as a master’s student

at Kyushu University, her parents supported her financially. However, she decided to become more independent by being self-sufficient. Consequently, she tried to work as hard as possible, around 26-28 hours per week during summer break. However, when the school started, she would reduce her work to only on weekends for less than 20 hours. She insisted that financial stress did not affect her study in Japan and that she would try to apply for a scholarship to be more focused on her study.

Putri had financial problems due to family issues. Although she received a scholarship from MEXT monthly, the stipend barely covered her needs. She worked as a night-shift sorting staff. She worked from 11 p.m. till 4 a.m., and she had to go to her lab from 9 a.m. till 7 p.m. She could save up some money, but she became too exhausted to study and do her experiment. As a result, she quit her job once she had enough savings.

#### *5.1.3.4.3 Diet-related issues*

Carla did not have any restrictions on her diet, so she experienced no problems related to her diet. However, she was concerned about vegetarian and vegan food in Japan. She had vegetarian and vegan friends who could not find food easily. Japanese do not have various salads. She was happy that Kyushu University was trying to accommodate the needs of vegetarian, vegan, and Muslim students by providing halal corners at the coops.

Muslim students agreed that they could easily buy halal food at their university. Tan and Putri were grateful that Kyushu University cared about Muslim students. The university has halal cafeterias in Central and West Zone of Ito Campus and recently opened a place to pray at East Zone. One thing that could be improved regarding these cafeterias was the menu variety, Fatin opined. Cafeterias only have Egyptian and Indian



food. It would be better if they also have Japanese food or fast food, like burgers. She missed having fast food because it is cheap, fast, and delicious.

Correspondingly, Desi reported that Ritsumeikan APU also has a halal cafeteria. Halal food trucks and restaurants were also available in the city. Recently, Beppu mosque's imam cooperated with some Japanese restaurants to provide a halal menu, such as ramen and karaage or Japanese style fried chicken. The owners of the restaurants were very enthusiastic about learning about Islam. Some supermarkets started to provide halal meats as well.

Although buying halal food is getting more accessible at universities, Muslim students still found difficulties, for instance, when they attended class parties or club gatherings. Fatin reported that she could not eat food when she joined her class's party at a restaurant or when she joined a gathering of international students' organization. She doubted that the organization would accommodate halal food for her and other Muslim students because they are in the minority.

#### *5.1.3.4.4 Relationship issues*

Meanwhile, in Japan, Putri, Desi, and Fatin experienced a very different pattern of relationships compared to those in their home country. These Indonesian and Malaysian students could not get close to their Japanese classmates or lab members. Desi spoke of how her classmates could be distant and set some boundaries with her. Putri thought that the Japanese in her laboratory were inflexible, even in informal situations. Fatin described them as shy and awkward. In contrast, they could befriend strangers in their home countries within minutes. However, in Japan, it takes longer to make a relationship with local people.

Similar to the case in Indonesia, the Japanese were probably hesitant to speak to international students because of their English proficiency. Phuong, like Fatmata, felt that Japanese students in her university seemed to avoid speaking English to her. They also do not want to get to know more about other cultures. If they tried to speak English to her, she would gladly put more effort to speak Japanese more. Phuong believed that being open-minded is essential for the Japanese to communicate with non-Japanese people. She also mentioned about interpersonal relationships in Japan was not as strong as those of Vietnamese people. Japanese people were more individualistic and had no interest in other people's business.

Lucas had a negative experience related to a romantic relationship with a Japanese person. He was dating a Japanese person for some months, yet this person just disappeared all of a sudden. Later, he learned that ghosting like this is a common thing that Japanese people do. He said if a Japanese person wants to finish a relationship, they will disappear. Luckily, he has found someone better now.

#### *5.1.3.4.5 Bureaucracy*

Sophia and other international students in Japan thought that administrative procedures in Japan are a little bit difficult. When Sophia entered Kumamoto University, she needed to sign some documents. There was a document that had to be sent to Brazil. Her parents had to sign it and send it back to Japan, or else, she would not receive her stipend. It was troublesome because it took three weeks for the documents to arrive in Brazil. She also had to spend quite a lot of money to send the documents.

### *5.1.3.5. Language issues*

#### *5.1.3.5.1 Difficulties in communicating with native speakers*

Since Lucas was studying Japanese literature, he can speak Japanese fluently. He could communicate with the Japanese people without any obstruction, unless the interlocutors were not used to talking to foreigners. He thought that people like that would not use appropriate language for foreigners. They probably would use their *hougen* or dialects, or slang. Funnily, if he did not understand it, they do not know how to rephrase it more easily. They would just repeat it in different tones, which would not be of any help.

Carla came to Japan to study Japanese as an exchange student. She wanted to improve her Japanese by talking to Japanese students at her university. Due to her broken Japanese, she felt like Japanese students were hesitant to talk to her. “Because I make a mistake, they are scared not to understand me. I have a friend who has perfect Japanese, and when he starts speaking, the Japanese will start smiling and willing to speak with him. When you are not really good, they will be scared that they have to explain things to you because you do not understand everything.” She wished that the Japanese would be more willing to communicate with her. She was eager to learn Japanese. They should be more supportive.

#### *5.1.3.5.2 Understanding the lectures*

Fatin has passed the N2 test, which meant that she could understand Japanese used in daily situations and a variety of circumstances to a certain degree. Unfortunately, it did not automatically make Fatin understand the lectures entirely. She was sad when

she could not understand adequately what her teachers were explaining, as she was trying very sincerely to understand.

“It is *ilmu*<sup>4</sup>, information. It is really *mubadzir*<sup>5</sup> if I do not understand it really well. Back in Malaysia, when it is in Malay and English, I understood perfectly well. Then I would pay attention to the lecture real attentively, especially in the part that I am really interested in. But here, even with things that I have an interest, I cannot really understand it. And then it goes by. It is a waste of time and energy, and I feel really sad. I wish that I could understand perfectly, and I could enjoy listening to lectures in Japanese because every lecture has its own information that I can absorb. And then, if I end up like- without really understand Japanese, then why did I go here? What was the meaning of all of this? The reason why I came to Japan because I want to get their technology or something, to get their *ilmu*. If I cannot understand their saying, then I would never get their knowledge.”

#### 5.1.3.5.3 Writing up essays

Carlos was also an undergraduate student in the regular program. He had to write essays in Japanese. He personally disliked it because writing in Japanese is very difficult with kanji and grammar. Hence, he asked his teacher if it is possible to write essays in English. Most teachers usually do not mind if the students write in English or Japanese, he said. Similarly, Fatin was required to write essays in Japanese. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she needed a more extended time to write in Japanese since her brain worked better when writing English. She would ask permission from her teacher to write her essays in English.

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<sup>4</sup> knowledge

<sup>5</sup> wasteful

Lucas had to write his thesis and scientific paper in Japanese. When he tried to submit a paper in an academic journal, he suffered a meltdown that affected his work. He was also very stressed when he was writing his thesis. Fortunately, he had a great supervisor who was helpful and not too strict. The supervisor helped him a lot during the doctoral entrance exam and thesis advising.

“After I almost got crazy writing my master’s thesis in Japanese, at the beginning of my Ph.D. program, I talk to my professor, and then we agreed to do it in English. I could write it in Japanese, but when I got crazy, I do not think it would be as good if I do it in English. My non-Japanese professor said that I should not write my dissertation in Japanese because it will be much more useful for me if I have a dissertation in English. That is what I was taught. That is how I convince my professor. I think my professor is excited to practice his English. He is very sweet and helpful.”

#### **5.1.4. The most significant challenges**

Lucas stated that finishing his doctoral study was his biggest concern. Since he was a MEXT scholarship recipient, he had to finish his doctoral in three years. He also had to present his research at conferences and publish manuscripts in academic journals. Tan, a master’s student, also had academic issues as her most significant challenge in Japan. She changed her major meaning that she needed to study much harder to fulfill her academic demands. Fatin was still trying to understand the lecturers taught entirely in Japanese. She actually used her study as a coping strategy when she felt lonely. The study could distract her from other adjustment problems.

Carlos and Tan believed that language was the underlying problem of all adjustment problems they had in Japan. Sophia found living alone to be her most significant challenge in Japan. It was her first time living alone on the other side of the world without any relatives. Moreover, she was a shy person who wants to change herself.

She wanted to make a friend or talk to new people. She is racially Japanese, but to make friends with Japanese was not as easy as she thought. Likewise, Phuong also thought that forming a relationship with the Japanese was hard. She believed that the Japanese would not change their mindset easily.

“I feel really left out of society. I think Japanese people still have the mind of *gaikokujin*<sup>6</sup>. They just call us *gaikokujin*, and we will never be a part of Japanese society ever, ever, ever. That is the most problem in Japan. Maybe I study that a lot. I also have a stereotype about it. But I do feel like that, even for *hafu*<sup>7</sup> people. The society will not accept *hafu* people, except they delete the other *hafu* of them and become fully Japanese.”

For Carla, her biggest challenge is the Japanese patriarchal system and sexism. She never understood why Japan, as a developed country, still discourage women from pursuing their career. She felt sorry for Japanese women who were forced by society to be a stay-at-home mother or wife. She questioned why people would pay thousands of millions of yen and spend three, four years in college, to end up not working. It was like spending money for nothing.

### 5.1.5. Summary of the adjustment issues

Table 5.1 shows the summary of adjustment issues and the causes in both countries.

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<sup>6</sup> foreigner

<sup>7</sup> half; somebody who is half Japanese

Table 5.1 *Summary of the adjustment issues*

<b>Adjustment Issues</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Japan</b>
Personal psychological issues	Homesickness, loneliness, stress, frustration, anxiety, and confusion	Homesickness, loneliness, stress, frustration, anxiety, and confusion
Causes	international or sojourn experience, length of stay, language proficiency, cultural distance, uncertainty, co-nationals bonding, relationship with local people and other international students, research progress, and regulations.	geographical distance with home countries, cultural distance, health condition, Japanese conservatism, relationship with local people and other international students, and also regulations
Academic issues	academic progress, gaining an understanding of school subjects, finding an effective learning style, and communicating with the staff	research and class progress, research resources, domestic students' interaction, effective learning style, academic information update, lecturing style, and time management
Sociocultural issues	cultural shock, stereotype and prejudice, racial discrimination, and difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs	cultural shock, cultural fatigue, stereotype and prejudice, racial discrimination, and difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs

Causes	sociocultural distance, assumption of similarities instead of differences, and local people's unfavorable treatments	sociocultural distance, assumption of similarities instead of differences, and local people's unfavorable treatments
General living issues	accommodation difficulties, financial stress, diet-related issues, relationship issues, transportation, and bureaucracy.	accommodation difficulties, financial stress, diet-related issues, and relationship issues
Causes	location of housing, unfavorable roommate situation, the limited amount of scholarship, language barriers, unfavorable characteristics of Indonesians, unreliable public transportation, and ineffective bureaucracy.	complicated housing systems, family issues, availability of vegan and halal food, sociocultural distance, language barriers, and Japanese unfavorable characteristics
Language issues	difficulties in communicating with local people, understanding the lectures, and writing up essays	difficulties in communicating with local people, understanding the lectures, and writing up essays
Causes	no encouragement from local people, Javanese language	unfamiliar writing system, <i>hougen</i>



## 5.2. Coping strategies

### 5.2.1. Personal psychological issues

#### 5.2.1.1. Homesickness and loneliness

Numerous coping strategies were used to overcome homesickness and loneliness. Participants usually communicated with their family and friends frequently via phone or text. They also tried to find or cook food which reminds them of home or watch films from their home country. As suggested by Lee (2004), international students should keep ties to their home culture to cope with homesickness and loneliness. Furthermore, participants tend to keep their social ties with their co-nationals due to the shared identities and cultures they have. Co-national friends are beneficial in providing a sense of belonging (Church, 1982). Putri, a doctoral student at Kyushu University, also sought comfort from her seniors who happened to be from the same country. The study of Kashima and Loh (2006) agreed with this finding, asserting that international students' ties with their co-nationals and other foreign-born students influence their intercultural adjustment positively. In addition, other participants, such as Tan, Putri, and Phuong, tried to keep busy to minimize homesickness and loneliness. They often hang out with friends or join extracurricular activities at their university.

#### 5.2.1.2. Stress

Various stressors of participants required different ways to solve or minimize them. Regarding academic-related stress, participants needed a significant support

system, including academic advisors, international office, and academic services, such as tutoring services. Besides, the participants sought bits of help for translation from domestic students or colleagues. For example, a medical student, Nilar, who has constant interaction with local people as patients every day, asked helps from her local colleagues to translate her patients' words. Establishing social relationships with domestic students or peers contributes to better experiences in the academic setting (Newcomb & Bangwell, 1995; Campbell, 2015). Moreover, since language barriers obstructed knowledge absorption and willingness to participate in the classroom, the participants tried to learn the host country's language harder.

#### *5.2.1.3. Frustration, anxiety, and confusion*

Regarding frustration caused by different time cultures, international students tried to adapt themselves to the host culture. Hans, for example, experience a behavioral shift by adapting to Indonesian's polychronic culture. He compromised his culture and tried to adjust himself to the host culture by imitating local people's behaviors. This strategy was often used by international students in prior studies (Gebhard, 2012; Yeh & Inose, 2002). Similarly, international students from a polychronic culture tried to be more punctual in order to function better in Japanese monochronic culture. Based on Berry's theory (1997), the behavioral shift is the first type of adaptation towards the dominant culture to reduce stress or intergroup conflict.

International students observed the situation to overcome confusion. For example, Mia overcame confusion by directly asking and observing how people do things. Meanwhile, Kohsoom had prepared herself by learning how things work in her host culture. Carla overcame her confusion by learning Japanese and getting to know what to

expect in Japan. By having the appropriate preparation, international students can adjust better (Wu, Hammond, & Barnes, 2009).

## **5.2.2. Academic issues**

### *5.2.2.1. Academic demands and progress*

Undergraduate students, Kulap and Malai, tried to study to overcome their academic issues by joining a study group with their peers. They stated that their academic performance was getting better because of collaborative learning. They could discuss, elaborate, and reflect upon their knowledge with their peers. Their peers also helped them writing their essays in the Indonesian language. Prior research by Palloff and Pratt (2010) has shown that collaborative learning can develop critical thinking, co-create knowledge and meaning, reflect, and transform learning.

Unlike Kulap and Malay, who have very helpful peers, Nada had to deal with free-riders in her study group. She tried to do all the work at first, but when she could not tolerate it anymore, she told her teacher about it. She directly asked the teacher not to put them in the same group in the future.

Somchai, Ratree, and Fatin were struggling with academic progress due to language differences. Somchai tried to acquire the Indonesian language as fast as possible by reading books and newspapers. Moreover, Somchai and Ratree made friends with domestic students who could help them improve their Indonesian. Similarly, although still exploring the best strategy to study, Fatin got her Japanese friends to correct her essay or teach her Japanese. Previous studies proved that friendships with domestic

students positively influence adjustment, in this case, helping to improve the language of the host country (Al-Sharideh et al., 1998; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002).

### **5.2.3. Sociocultural issues**

#### *5.2.3.1. Cultural shock*

Several students who did not experience any cultural shock such as Sophia, Phuong, and Kulap had learned about the host country's culture in advanced. They knew what to expect when they decided to choose to study abroad. Sophia stated, "Most of their behaviors were the ones that I am expecting. A little bit more than I expected, but there is no extraordinary. So, I do not have any shock experience." While Phuong admitted, "I came here, I do not really expect it is going to be like a pink life or heaven or something. I know that it is going to be like that. And then I am okay with that. I just find a better way to deal with it." Students should have realistic expectations of what could happen when they study in a foreign country (Zhou and Todman, 2009).

#### *5.2.3.2. Racial discrimination*

Foreign-looking students tried to cope with all the gazing and *bule*-calling by ignoring it or coming to terms with it. It is easier for them to live in Indonesia by accepting the fact that they are different. Moreover, to avoid *harga bule* or price for foreigners in tourist destinations in Indonesia, Mia suggested that international students bring KITAS or temporary stay permit cards so that they can pay at local prices.

Meanwhile, Putri, who experienced passive-aggressive racial discrimination in her laboratory, was feeling unsettled from time to time. She and other international students tried to discuss the issues with all laboratory members. They ask the Japanese to

talk directly to them if they have some concerns about international students regarding any misunderstanding.

#### 5.2.3.3. *Difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs*

Driven by the fear of being discriminated based on her appearance, Malai, a Thai student at an Islamic university, changed the way she dressed and acted more like an Indonesian. She wanted to be approved of by society. She wanted to be normal based on the Indonesian standard. She integrated her values into Indonesian values. Moreover, other Thai Muslim students also made compromises in Indonesia. For instance, handshaking between opposite genders. Although some of them still preserved their principles, some others did not want to appear rude to people who interacted with them. They tried to understand that there are many cultures, religions, and ethnic groups in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Fatin, who was striving to feel the sense of belonging in her university, admitted that she was ready to give it up. She knew she was a foreigner and will forever be a foreigner in Japan. She tried to overcome her loneliness by keeping herself busy with studying. She also reached out to her co-nationals in her university to provide a sense of belonging (Church, 1982). She also proactively tried to make friends with other international students.

Other participants in Japan, Shwe, and Tan felt uncomfortable whenever their laboratory members, colleagues, or friends planned to have *nomikai*. Even though they were reluctant to refuse the invitation at first, they were finally able to refuse it now and then. Their colleagues or friends were okay with them skipping *nomikai*.

Lastly, for participants in Japan, *honne-tatemae* is one of the challenging aspects of Japanese society. Since they found difficulties in reading 'air,' they opted to ask the Japanese directly. Asking directly what Japanese people mean could be a solution when feeling unsure about the interpretation. On the other hand, asking directly to the interlocutor may not always be easy, depending on the context or the interlocutors, for example, to professors or supervisors.

#### **5.2.4. General living issues**

##### *5.2.4.1. Accommodation difficulties*

Two Thai students managed the roommate situation differently. Kohsoom did not like confrontation; hence, she tried to avoid conflicts with her roommate. She cleaned the room by herself frequently. She hoped her roommate would be more considerate. On the other hand, Malai was more of a carefree person than Kohsoom. She preferred to talk to her roommate directly if there was something wrong. She believed that communicating her feelings would make her life easier.

Meanwhile, participants in Japan who had difficulties in finding a suitable house due to language barriers asked their Japanese-speaking friends to help them. The process was complicated and overwhelming to the participants. If they did not seek a language assistant, they were afraid there would be misunderstandings leading to serious consequences. In addition, some of the participants looked for real estate agencies that have English-speaking staff who could accommodate them.

#### 5.2.4.2. *Financial stress*

Kulap, a Thai student in Indonesia, admitted that scholarship from her university was sometimes not enough for her. Moreover, she had a lot of fieldwork which requires a considerable amount of money. To make both ends meet, she often borrowed some money from her co-national friends. She was lucky to have co-national friends who were willing to lend her some money. Additionally, she fasted to cut down on expenses and be healthier.

In contrast, participants in Japan who encountered financial stress did not depend on other people to solve their problems. They tried to look for part-time jobs to earn extra money. Part-time job opportunities for international students are widely available in Japan. The students have to for permission to engage in activities other than that permitted under the status of residence previously granted. The students could work up to eight hours a day or 28 hours a week. By doing a part-time job, students could solve their financial stress.

#### 5.2.4.3. *Diet-related issues*

Participants had various diet-related issues in Indonesia, such as difficulties in adjusting their taste to Indonesian food and food hygiene. Angel and James, who experienced digestive problems, tried to be more selective when eating out. The students who missed their home country's dishes sometimes cooked them themselves, which helped them reduce their homesickness as well. Since they could not easily find ingredients and seasonings in Indonesia, they would bring them to Indonesia when they went back to their home country.

Meanwhile, participants in Japan encountered a different diet-related issue: finding halal or vegan food. To find halal or vegan food outside universities is not as easy as to find them in the universities. Moreover, students had to carefully read the ingredients whenever they wanted to buy store-bought food or confirm the ingredients of food in typical restaurants if they were unsure. They also needed to cook by themselves to assure that their food was halal.

#### *5.2.4.4. Relationship issues*

The friendliness and openness of Indonesians made the adjustment process of students easier. However, the Indonesians' low English proficiency created barriers to communication. The students tried to improve their Indonesian to communicate better. They also used an online dictionary on their phone to smooth over language barriers. Moreover, the students tried to approach local people to practice their Indonesian proactively.

However, Indonesian friendliness created another adjustment problem for Thai Muslim students. Technically, having friends of the opposite gender is not forbidden; however, it is recommended to maintain the distance when interacting with the opposite gender (Hawramani, August 2017). As a result, those students tried to keep a safe distance with male friends at their university. A Thai student who was more flexible, Malai, tried to blend in Indonesian society. She was able to enjoy friendships with both male and female friends.

Similar to Indonesians, few Japanese could speak English. It is one of the reasons why it was hard for international students to make friends with Japanese people. Unlike participants in Indonesia who quickly approach the local people, participants in Japan



admitted it took a lot of time and effort to befriend Japanese. Their *uchi-soto* concept might influence the social boundaries set by the Japanese. As mentioned earlier, according to Hall (1983), *uchi* means in-group, and *soto* means outsiders. Japanese have an in-group who could not be entered by outsiders easily.

### **5.2.5. Language issues**

#### *5.2.5.1. Difficulties in communicating with native speakers*

Participants in Indonesia asked their local friends to teach them Indonesian. Lea also bought an Indonesian language book and started to talk to people in Indonesian everywhere. She also practiced with her host family. Likewise, Angel always tried to interact with domestic students and local people. Meanwhile, Nilar, who was an intern at a local hospital in Surakarta, depended on her friends to translate the patients' Javanese language. Interaction and relationship with domestic students are encouraged as a means of coping with adjustment challenges (Gebhard, 2012; Andrade, 2006).

Not having high proficiency in Japanese does not mean the students were helpless. Students could use a dictionary to search the meaning of words they do not know. Furthermore, there are many dictionary applications for smartphones available on both Android and iOS platforms nowadays. Putri, for instance, could survive with her beginner-level Japanese proficiency. Similar to students in Indonesia, she could use some bits of help from her friends if she needed to complete some paperwork.

#### *5.2.5.2. Understanding the lectures*

Undergraduate students who got enrolled in regular programs were taught entirely in Indonesian. Since their Indonesian proficiency was not enough for them to

understand the lectures, they would ask their local friends to explain it to them after class. Meanwhile, a Thai student, Kohsoom, bought a book to study Indonesian by translating parts of the book. She also had Indonesian friends in her shared house who helped her with vocabulary.

Similarly, an undergraduate student in Japan, Fatin, also had classes that were taught entirely in Japanese. Even though she felt terrible for not understanding the lectures, she was reluctant to ask her teachers. All her friends in her classes rarely asked the teachers any questions. She tried to study with the help of her Japanese acquaintances or other international students at SALC (Self Access Learning Center). She could discuss her academic problems freely with them; hence, she came to SALC frequently.

#### *5.2.5.3. Writing up essays*

Thai students at universities in Yogyakarta often sought help from their advisors. They stated that their advisor was very supportive. The advisors helped them proofread and copy-edit their essays, which should be in Indonesian. Meanwhile, the students in Japan could write essays or academic papers in English, although they were enrolled in the regular program. They only needed to ask permission from their supervisor to write in English. Their supervisor was usually fine with it.

### **5.3. Factors that ease the adjustment process and reasons to study abroad**

#### **5.3.1. Factors that ease the adjustment process of international students in Indonesia**

According to students in Indonesia, their adjustment process became more manageable because of the following factors.

- *Favorable characteristics of Indonesians*

Indonesians are kind, friendly, and accommodating. Nilar was surprised at how fast Indonesians can make friends with other people. Compared to Burmese, Indonesians were more open and welcoming. Furthermore, Somchai could see that Indonesians put aside differences, such as religion and language, when interacting with other people. They could still make friends with people from different cultural backgrounds. He stated, "I am Muslim, and I have non-Muslim friends. Even though we are different, they still want to help me."

- *Social support*

The students agreed that local friends, seniors, or co-nationals who could speak both English and Indonesian were beneficial to assist their intercultural adjustment process.

- *Supportive host institution*

Furthermore, supportive supervisors, teachers, and staff at the university could also make their life much more comfortable. They would give the students a hand if

needed. Many students were lucky to have such caring and nurturing supervisors to help them with study or administrative procedures.

- *The same religion*

The same religion played an essential role in Thai, Myanmar, and Sierra Leonean participants' adjustment process. They were a part of the majority in Indonesia for practicing Islam. Fatmata mentioned that being a Muslim was advantageous for her since she knew the way of doing things and the lifestyle. Whereas, for Thai and Myanmar students, being a Muslim in Indonesia was much more meaningful since they were struggling for peace in their home country.

- *Observing and imitating*

Nilar and Mia shared her strategy to adjust better. They observed how local people interacted with each other. They also analyzed the pattern of communication and tried to imitate it. They did not assume similarities instead of differences. Their strategy is similar to the stumbling block concept of Barna (1997). Assuming similarities of host culture will obstruct intercultural communication.

- *Open-mindedness*

Fatmata, Hans, and Malai tried to adjust to the host culture by becoming more open-minded. Their open-mindedness was vital to overcoming the differences between their culture and the host culture. By being open-minded, students could prevent themselves from being judgmental and discriminative towards people from different cultural backgrounds (Kim, 2011).

### 5.3.2. Reasons to study abroad of international students in Indonesia

The participants reported several reasons why they decided to study in Indonesia. Those reasons are listed as follows.

- *Interests in Indonesian culture*

Indonesian cultures and arts had attracted Angel from the Philippine, Kham from Laos, and Hans from Germany to study in Indonesia.

- *Opportunity to study abroad*

Three Thai Muslim students (Kulap, Ratre, and Malai) and a Myanmar Muslim student, Nilar, admitted Indonesia was not their first choice of study destination. The Thai students received the ASEAN Scholarship of the Islamic University of Indonesia. Meanwhile, Nilar was a scholarship recipient from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). The selected students were supposed to study in their respective countries, although, on an exceptional basis, the IsDB will place the students at selected universities in its member countries.

- *Peacefulness of Indonesia*

It was also the reason why another Thai Muslim student, Somchai, decided to study in Indonesia. In consonance with Somchai, a Sierra Leonean student, Fatmata, opted to come to Indonesia. The IsDB might place Nilar in Indonesia since it is a peaceful country with the biggest Muslim population.

- *Close cultural distance*

A Cambodian student, Piseth, chose Indonesia due to his familiarity with the culture. He stated that Indonesian culture is not very different from his culture.

- *A suitable place to study*

Somchai stated that studying international relations in Indonesia, and learning the language and culture could be beneficial for him in the future. He mentioned the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, which allows the free movement of goods, skilled labor, services, and investment among southeast Asian countries as a strong reason for him choosing Indonesia as a study destination. While participants who studied geology, i.e., a Cambodian (Visna), a French person (Lea), and a Laotian (Kham) chose Indonesia because it is a natural laboratory to study geology. As van Gorsel (2009) put forward, “Indonesia’s unique position at the convergence of three major tectonic plates, making it a natural laboratory for the study of mountain building and active tectonic processes.” Indonesia has hundreds of active and inactive volcanoes with frequent earthquakes. It is also blessed with natural resources, such as oil, gas, coal, and various economic minerals.

### **5.3.3. Factors that ease the adjustment process of international students in Japan**

Here are some factors that ease the adjustment process according to international students in Japan.

- *Pre-arrival preparation*

Lucas and Carla were trying to learn Japanese culture in advance so that they could reduce confusion and cultural shock. Lucas explained, “One thing that helps me a lot is I went to the university in Japanese language literature culture. At least half of my

colleagues were Japanese descents, Brazilian *nikkei*; my professors were either Japanese or Brazilian *nikkei*. So, I had much input about Japanese culture. How you were supposed to behave like you are not supposed to do this or that.” Students need to prepare for coming to Japan. By having the appropriate preparation, international students can adjust better (Wu, Hammond, & Barnes, 2009).

- *Social support*

Similar to students in Indonesia, Shwe and Putri agreed that supportive friends, lab members, and co-nationals would help their adjustment process better. As Constantine et al. (2005) stated, family and peer networks are an essential support system of international students. Shwe has three friends from the same lab whom she can trust, while Putri has two co-nationals, who were very helpful and reliable. They helped her adjust to her new environment smoothly.

- *Japanese favorable characteristics*

Carla, Desi, and Putri agreed that life in Japan is very much easier than in their home country. “My life in Japan is easy and comfortable. Everyone is so discipline, obeying the rule,” Putri uttered.

- *Supportive host institution*

The university helped Desi with her visa application and provided guidance when she first came to Japan. Similarly, she stated that Japan is such a great place to study where everything is easily accessible. The support from the host institution advances international students’ adjustment process.

- *English-speaking local people*

Tan stated that as long as she has people to communicate in English, her adjustment process would become more comfortable. Many people in Kyushu University could communicate in English.

- *Halal food availability for Muslim students*

According to Muslim students, the availability of halal food at the cafeteria, university, or in town helped them to adjust better. They could have a meal without being worried.

#### **5.3.4. Reasons to study abroad of international students in Japan**

The participants in Japan also had several reasons why they came to Japan.

- *Interests in Japan as a host country*

Lucas from Brazil majored in Japanese literature; therefore, studying Japanese in Japan is the best way to pursue his education. Putri, an Indonesian, and Tan, a Chinese, were interested in Japanese culture and education, so they decided to study in Japan. An exchange student from France, Carla, also came to Japan to study Japanese culture, politics, and economy since her study focused on France-Japan trading.

- *Opportunity to study abroad*

Carlos from the Dominican Republic and Shwe from Myanmar studied in Japan because they received a scholarship from the Japanese government. Shwe admitted that she applied for several scholarships in some countries, and finally, she got a MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) scholarship. It was such an excellent opportunity for them to pursue their education without spending any money.



- *Dream university*

Phuong, a Vietnamese, had always wanted to study abroad, and she chose Ritsumeikan APU as an ideal university for her due to its quality and multiculturalism. Likewise, Desi, an Indonesian, stated, "I am an only child. I want to get outside of my comfort zone. So, I started to find information about study abroad for undergraduates. Then I chose Japan, as it is a unique developed country that still preserves its traditional values. Then I decided to study at APU because it is multicultural, and it offers tuition fee reduction."

#### **5.4. Supportive programs provided by the host institutions**

Both the Japanese and Indonesian governments encourage their higher education institutions to establish programs for internationalization (Ninomiya, Knight, & Watanabe, 2009; Dewi, 2018). The host institution should aid international students in reaching their educational objectives and have positive experiences. As a result, the goal of attracting more international students can be achieved.

##### **5.4.1. Host institutions in Indonesia**

According to the participants' interviews, here are some support services provided by the host institutions in Indonesia.

- *Tutoring programs and homestay programs*

The programs from universities in Indonesia are student buddies or tutors who help international students adjust to Indonesian culture. Student buddies help the students from four months to a year, depending on the university or course of study. In

addition, the universities offer short-term (usually three days) homestay in touristic villages with a cultural program such as traditional music, dance, batik, traditional sports, or batik workshop. This program is suitable for cultural promotion to international students.

- *Indonesian language courses*

Participants who could speak Indonesian or Malaysian were not required to take the Indonesian class. For those who could not speak Indonesian, taking Indonesian class for two months to a year, depending on the programs the students enrolled, was obligatory. The Islamic University of Indonesia has as UII Asean Scholarship that started in 2015. The first batch of this scholarship recipients should experience a half-baked program. As one of the staffs at the international office said, it was a 'trial and error' period. The Thai students in the first batch did not have any language classes after their arrival. They had to learn Indonesian by themselves. The second batch students got a better experience because they had a six-month language class. They also had classes to learn about culture, language, and daily life in Indonesia. The first batch student did not get any of that. Their seniors taught them the basic knowledge for survival, and their teachers gave them an orientation about the academic system.

- *International office*

Every university has an international office that offers assistance to international students if needed. The international office helps the students with visa applications or other administrative procedures. There are also cultural events organized by the international office to facilitate international students introducing their culture and learning other cultures. Some staff could speak English so that the students had no

problem communicating with them, although many faculty members have low English proficiency. Sometimes, some student clubs at the university also hold some cultural events.

- *Preparatory courses*

Some universities have preparatory classes before the real classes begin, for example, Gadjah Mada University. Master's students had matriculation classes for their major. Every beginning of the semester, the department also has an orientation to guide the students, giving them information about academic demands, minimum score, and what classes they should take that semester. However, at the Respati University of Yogyakarta, the students did not have any preparatory class or orientation class, which makes it hard for them to understand the educational system in Indonesia.

- *Housing support*

Some universities, such as Islamic University of Indonesia and Surakarta State University, have dormitories for international students and the students. However, the students in Surakarta State University chose to live in a shared house rather than live in the dormitory due to its inconvenient location. Meanwhile, the Gadjah Mada University and Semarang State University helped the students find a house near campus.

#### **5.4.2. Host institutions in Japan**

- *Peer-support programs and tutoring programs*

Universities in Japan also have tutor programs or student buddy programs for international students, usually for six months. The tutor will help students, giving them advice and tips for daily life. They also help the students opening a bank account or

accompanying them to the ward office. However, Carlos, an executive member of Kumamoto University International Students Association (KUMISA), reported that the tutoring program has some flaws. Some students complained that the tutors are not entirely prepared to handle international students, especially with regards to language issues as most of the tutors at Kumamoto university do not speak English. Besides, sometimes tutors do not know what kind of support international students need. For example, when they ask questions about changing the address or getting a residence card, the tutors sometimes do not know.

In Ritsumeikan APU and Kyushu University, there is also a tutoring program that focuses on helping international students with academic problems, such as math, business, or even the Chinese language. In Ritsumeikan APU, students have to make a reservation a week before. The tutor then will help the students for around 20 minutes.

- *Japanese language courses*

International students who do not major in Japanese must take Japanese classes. Universities usually have several levels of Japanese class: beginner, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced. Some universities make Japanese classes for beginners a compulsory class because Japanese speaking ability is essential to survive in Japan. As well as learning Japanese, the students also learn Japanese culture and have field trips to different touristic places. There are many different topics, like costumes, food, and architecture. Universities also have homestay programs for approximately one year. Students can freely visit them for one or two months and do activities together with the host family.

- *Language programs*

Universities hold cultural events or create language lounges to facilitate international students having some interaction with domestic students. Kyushu University, for example, has SALC or Self Access Learning Center, which is a place for international and domestic students to get together and talk. There are teaching assistants, usually international students, who encourage domestic students to speak in English at SALC.

- *International office*

The international office also provides information for international students if they need part-time job information, look for apartments, or find clinics/hospitals. Some staff could speak English, some could understand English but would reply in Japanese. International students' associations also regularly organize intercultural activities for international students and Japanese people.

- *Housing support*

Many universities in Japan provide dormitories for international students for the first few months of their stay in Japan. The dormitories usually have a quota for international and domestic students. After the contract in the dormitories ends, the students have to find accommodation by themselves. Some apartments have discounts for students. The students could find information about housing in the university co-op. The staff would hand them a booklet consisting lists of apartments. The universities assist the students getting the accommodation by being the guarantor.

## 5.5. Summary of the chapter

This chapter investigates the intercultural adjustment problems of international students in Indonesia and Japan using an open-ended structured interview. The results indicate some similarities between adjustment problems experienced by participants in both countries. For instance, the participants faced similar personal psychological issues, including homesickness, loneliness, stress, frustration, anxiety, and confusion. These problems were frequently found in previous studies (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Gebhard, 2012; Lee, 2017). The participants also had similar unfavorable experiences with sociocultural issues, such as difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs and racial discrimination. Indonesians and the Japanese seemed to share the same attitude towards different-looking foreigners, i.e., Asian public space Fechter (2005). Therefore, in both countries some participants struggled to find a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the results also show differences in adjustment problems experienced in both countries. For example, unlike participants in Indonesia, participants in Japan did not experience difficulties in using public transportation because Japanese public transportation is much more well-developed than the Indonesian one. Another example, some participants in Indonesia reported that learning the Indonesian language is not too difficult, while participants in Japan had to struggle with unfamiliar writing system and local dialect or *hougen*. Furthermore, participants in Indonesia and Japan agreed that language differences were one of the most significant challenges. The participants in Indonesia also considered unfamiliarity with Indonesian food and unfavorable characteristics of Indonesians as the other most significant challenges. Meanwhile, their counterparts in Japan found the other most significant challenges were

loneliness, academic progress, academic demands, relationship problems, and unfavorable Japanese cultural practices, such as *nomikai*.

Participants in both countries overcame their adjustment problems. They shared similar coping strategies for some of their problems, e.g., keeping ties to home culture to cope with homesickness and loneliness, or having appropriate preparation to prevent culture shock. However, participants in both countries also used different strategies for some problems, such as financial problems. A participant in Indonesia who encountered financial stress borrowed some money frequently from her co-national friends. In contrast, participants in Japan tried to look for part-time jobs to earn extra money. Since part-time job opportunities are widely available in Japan, the participants in Japan have more solutions for their financial problems. Different conditions in the host countries influenced the way the students overcame their problems.

According to participants in Indonesia, some factors help the adjustment process to become more manageable. Those factors are favorable characteristics of Indonesian culture, social support, supportive host institution, similar culture and religion, and being observant and open-minded. Meanwhile, participants in Japan reported factors that eased their adjustment process were pre-arrival preparation, social support, supportive host institution, English-speaking local people, and also halal food availability for Muslim students. The participants in both countries agreed that social support and supportive host institutions are essential for their adjustment process.

Participants in Indonesia came to this country because it is peaceful and suitable for their study. Moreover, some participants chose it due to their interests in Indonesian cultures and the close cultural distance of Indonesian and their home country. However,

some others admitted that they came to Indonesia merely because they had the opportunity to study abroad. Meanwhile, some participants in Japan chose Japan as their host country because they had interests in Japanese culture, politics, and the economy. In addition, other participants came to Japan because they got the opportunity to study abroad. Moreover, some participants came to Japan because they wanted to study at their dream university, which happened to be located in Japan.

Moreover, there are some programs provided by host institutions in Indonesia, such as tutoring programs, homestay programs, Indonesian language courses, international office, and preparatory office. Meanwhile, the programs of host institutions in Japan are student buddies or tutoring programs, Japanese language courses, an international office, language programs, and housing.

The institutions in Japan have organized and well-structured programs to achieve their goals since the internationalization endeavors started much earlier than Indonesia. At the same time, their counterparts in Indonesia are still trying to figure out the strategies and programs suitable for their agenda and goals. The initiatives taken by the institutions seem to be focusing more on cultural promotion rather than assisting the adjustment process of international students. However, the Indonesian government and institutions can learn a lesson from Japan's strategies and experiences in internationalizing the higher education institutions. Therefore, they can expand their perspective on internationalization strategies and apply them in Indonesia.

In order to reveal the nature of international students in both countries, this study correlates the quantitative and qualitative results to draw out the big picture of what is



necessary to arrange suitable programs to accommodate students' need in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the main findings of the study more deeply. A thorough understanding of adjustment problems and the nature of international students is needed to develop suitable programs and services for international students. Thus, this study aims to investigate the intercultural adjustment problems, intercultural communication competence, and the nature of international students in Indonesia and Japan, as these are two countries with very different demographics while simultaneously having the same aim of internationalizing their higher education institutions. Moreover, it attempts to propose suitable supportive programs for international students' needs.

#### **6.1. A closer look at international students**

This subchapter aims to correlate the quantitative and qualitative results to learn further about the nature of international students in both countries and explore suitable programs for helping international students to adjust better.

##### **6.1.1. International students in Indonesia**

As Klemp (1979) argued in Deardoff (2006), "competence can be measured. But its measurement depends first on its definition." This study agrees with the definition of

intercultural communication competence by Bennet, Bennet, and Allen (2003) who referred to it as “the general ability to transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate appropriate behavior in one or more different cultures.” By using this definition, the use of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, Intercultural Willingness to Communicate Scale, and Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale is suitable to measure the intercultural communication competence of international students.

The statistical results indicate that a significant number of international students in Indonesia have a medium to a high level of intercultural sensitivity, and a low to medium level of ethnocentrism. This finding can be interpreted that international students in Indonesia are moderately interculturally competent. Moreover, this finding agrees with previous studies that suggested intercultural sensitivity and intercultural willingness to communicate negatively correlate with ethnocentrism (Chen, 2010; Matsumoto, Leroux, & Yoo, 2005; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Triandis, 2006; Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003; Lin & Rancer 2003; Lin, Rancer, & Trimbitas, 2005; Campbell, 2016).

Interestingly, intercultural communication competence correlates insignificantly with students' adjustment problems. In other words, an interculturally competent individual can still experience serious intercultural adjustment problems in the host culture. However, the participants in Indonesia are proven to have a low to medium level of adjustment problems, with the mean score of each of the problem is less than 5.

The course of study of the participants correlates with academic issues ( $\tau_b = .170$ ,  $p = .015$ ), personal psychological issues ( $\tau_b = .165$ ,  $p = .017$ ), and language issues ( $\tau_b = .178$ ,  $p = .011$ ). Regarding academic issues, undergraduate students (mean rank = 26.53) experienced less problems than master's students (mean rank = 34.02) and doctoral

students (mean rank = 37.75). The participants in Indonesia were 62.1% undergraduate students, 34.5% master's students and only 3.4% doctoral students. The academic demands of undergraduate students are not as high as master's and doctoral students. Thus, the scores of academic issues do not exceed 5, meaning the problems of the majority of the students in Indonesia were not significant. It is an explanation why international students in Indonesia do not have significant problems related to their academic life.

In spite of that, the host institutions in Indonesia should provide programs to help international students to adjust better or improve the existing ones. In the interview, the participants reported that they faced problems with difficulties in using educational support system. Kham and Visna, master's students from Laos and Cambodia, pointed out that their departments' website was not user-friendly since the information was only available in Indonesian. Moreover, the staff in the department office barely spoke English, which made them more frustrated and anxious in the academic context.

Hawawini (2011) stated that internationalization should include institution and the main stakeholders, i.e., its students, faculty, and staff to integrate into a globalizing world. By using English as the medium of instruction, the host institutions have opened the door of internationalization. Thus, English-speaking staff and more accessible sources of information are needed in the host institution.

The institutions can help to reduce the students' anxiety by developing an environment where the students have enough knowledge and information about the educational system in Indonesia, such as the registration, curriculum, and grading systems (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Moreover, websites or any platform to share information or news should use English to make it more accessible to international students.

The participants also stated that they have problems related to unfamiliarity with Indonesian educational system due to the vast differences. Somchai, for example, was struggling in his first and second semesters to follow the system in his university, whereas other Thai students relied on domestic students' help or their lecturers' explanation to help them understand the educational system.

- *Potential solution: preparatory courses and tutoring programs*

If the number of international students increases, well-structured preparatory courses are needed for helping those students. It does not have to be a class per se; it can be a session or academic orientation that provides information regarding academic demands, rules, procedures, or credits. At least the students should know their rights and obligations in their academic life. Also, cultural orientation programs are needed to inform international students about real life in Indonesia, also to promote and facilitate self-sufficiency. According to Samuelowitz (1987), the preparatory courses for students might enhance language, study skills, essay writing, social skills, and survival skills. Thus, the previous studies encouraged the students to enter preparatory courses before their degree-seeking courses (Samuelowitz, 1987; Passaporn, 2011).

Moreover, the students have problems with their academic demands and progress due to various reasons. The existing student buddy or tutoring program in Indonesia only currently focuses on sociocultural adjustment during the students' first months in Indonesia. Since many students have problems with their study, the institutions could plan tutoring programs aiming to help international students with their study, including Indonesian language courses and supplementary courses of specific academic content. This tutoring program will benefit international students, as well as domestic students.

Mlynarczyk and Babbit (2002) reported that international students who had tutors performed better in their academic courses and had better than average GPA. Moreover, domestic students can learn about new cultures and languages from international students (Lee, 2014).

Furthermore, this study found three significant issues experienced by international students in Indonesia: general living issues, language issues, and sociocultural issues.

#### 1. General living issues

- Financial stress

Financial stress is one of the significant issues the students faced during their stay in the host country, in this case Indonesia. This problem is in line with findings of other studies (Crano & Crano, 1993; Harman, 2003). Financial stress causes an unpleasant feeling from unmet financial demands. Kulap and Malai, for example, opened up about their financial vulnerability. Even though they receive scholarship from their university, they were struggling to make both ends meet each month. Their financial stress includes unforeseen expenses, such as compulsory field works for their study.

These students neither depended on the support of family members for more financial requests, nor had employment options available for them. Thus, their only way to cope with financial hardships is by borrowing money from their co-nationals. Similar to the findings of another study (Olivas & Li, 2006), instead of seeking professional help from university administrators and counselors, international students frequently seek out help from family or friends. The strategies used by these participants reflect their

cultural background and closeness to their co-nationals. The culture of a family, community, and country have a major influence upon an individual's behavior regarding the decision to borrowing money (O'Neill, May 2019). In addition, they cut their expenses by using a religious approach, fasting, as to solve their financial problems.

These students reported they were supported with tuition fees and boarding house; however, they had to provide their living cost, visa application, and other expenses. Fosnacht (2013) identified four latent ways or types that students cope with financial hardships: financially stressed, no impact; financially stressed, low impact; financially stressed medium impact, and; financially stressed, high impact. Based on Fosnacht's argument (2013), these students fell into financially stressed, low impact category since they worried about their financial situation and investigated borrowing money from others. They reported their financial concern did not interfere with their academic performance.

Financial problems deserve more attention from faculty staff, advisors, or financial aid providers, when working with students from this demographic. Akanwa (2015, p. 272) suggested higher education institution "must be committed to providing an enabling environment that is capable of meeting international students' needs as well as equipping international students with relevant social and academic skills." There advisors or faculty staff need to make sure this student demographic is well-informed about various important financial support systems available, such as research grants, awards, scholarships or employment opportunities.

## 2. Language issues

Language proficiency also has a correlation with overall intercultural adjustment issues ( $\tau_b = -.153$ ,  $p = .021$ ). Median adjustment problem scores are statistically significantly different between the different language proficiency,  $\chi^2(4) = 10.900$ ,  $p = .028$ . The posthoc using Dunn's (1964) procedure analysis finds statistically significant differences in adjustment problems scores between the beginner (mean rank = 36.14) and advanced (mean rank = 8.67) ( $p = .01$ ). The Table 5.1 shows the comparison of mean of adjustment issues between those two groups of students with different level of Indonesian language proficiency. The language issues' mean of beginner level is higher ( $M = 13.77$ ,  $SD = 7.934$ ) than the advanced level ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.633$ ).

However, the students with different level of Indonesian language proficiency found problems as follows.

- *Difficulties in communicating with native speakers*

Language differences are one of the main reasons why international students have negative experiences in Indonesia. Since the participants of this study live on Java Island, they had difficulties in understanding not only Indonesian but also the Javanese language. The Indonesian language is the national language, spoken by all of the Indonesian people. Meanwhile, the Javanese language is one of the most spoken languages in Indonesia, with more than 68 million native speakers (Britannica, 2010).

Formal Indonesian is learned in school and is associated with a formal setting, official media, and government pronouncements. Javanese people rarely speak formal Indonesian language in daily interaction as it feels too rigid, impersonal, and humorless to ever function as an everyday language (Anderson, 1966). In reality, Indonesians use their local language far more often in casual conversation. Indonesians sometimes find



the Indonesian language to be inadequate in conveying meaning. They are more comfortable and find it easier to communicate in their local languages. It also resonates with cultural pride (Fetling, July 2008).

Indonesian and Javanese are in Malayo-Polynesian or Austronesian language family (Fillmore, 1999). Indonesian and Javanese share several similarities, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. However, Javanese has three levels of speech, *ngoko*, *madyo*, and *kromo* (Poedjosoedarmo, 1968), which indicate the degree of formality and the speaker's respect towards the addressee. The participants with a high level of Indonesian language proficiency still found difficulties in communicating with local people when the local people spoke in the Javanese language. Nilar has been living in Surakarta for more than four years, pursuing her study as a medical student. She had to deal with patients who use Javanese every day when doing her internship at a public hospital in Surakarta. Even though she is an excellent Indonesian speaker, it was still frustrating and exhausting for her. Another participant, James, reported:

“My Indonesian is good enough to get around. My homestay family does not speak English. So sometimes, it is hard to communicate with them. Sometimes they also speak in Javanese when they are talking to each other. And it is a little frustrating because I want them to speak Indonesian or English with me.”

Some universities provide Indonesian language classes for international students. However, as reported by Nilar and Kulap, the classes and books to learn Indonesian only teach formal Indonesian language. Consequently, as the participants only operate in formal Indonesian, they sometimes hardly comprehend the slang or neologism (a newly coined word or expression) used by Indonesians in informal settings.

To overcome the language problems by students, the Indonesian institutions could use preparatory language courses as a possible solution. Many Indonesian institutions already have Indonesian language courses for international students. Since international students only operate in formal Indonesian, they could not easily communicate outside the classroom. The institutions should provide classes and books which teach international students informal Indonesian language. Moreover, it is better to provide local language courses for international students since many students reported that the local people in Central Java and Yogyakarta province rarely use the Indonesian language in their daily life. Domestic students or locals, in general, should be knowledgeable when to scale up and scale down speech style. They should be considerate and utilize simple formal phrases or introduce basic local language to international students.

Furthermore, the international students in some universities found it hard to find domestic students eager to speak to them. Indonesian institutions could follow Japanese institutions to make some language lounges or initiate language partner programs. This would aid International students in finding some students to practice their Indonesian with. Moreover, the domestic students could improve their English, which benefits for them too. It is a mutualistic symbiosis. The domestic students probably want to talk to international students, yet they are reluctant to start a conversation out of the blue. By providing a designated place with the sole purpose of speaking practice, the students will be more encouraged to make friends and interact with each other. Moreover, evidence suggests that friendships with domestic students positively affect adjustment (Al-Sharideh et al., 1998; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002).

Moreover, the institutionally-organized gatherings at language lounges are a place for domestic and international students to expand their network and gain access to a circle of friends. As Umino and Benson (2016) suggested, guided participation in an institutionally-organized gathering appears to serve as a scaffold to participation in self-organized activities. Their longitudinal research on an Indonesian student studying in Japan put forward the importance of institutionally-organized gathering as a start to open windows of opportunities to improve target-language proficiency.

### 3. Sociocultural issues

- *Relationship issues*

The language differences also create barriers for international students to communicate with local people. According to Kim (2001), communication with local people is essential for intercultural adjustment since the sojourner will receive social support and gain valuable information about the host culture. However, when Fatmata, a Sierra Leonean student, tried to approach local people, she did not receive a reciprocal enthusiasm. She got discouraged when trying to speak Indonesian. Another participant, a Nigerian, reported via a questionnaire that the locals were unwilling to encourage and cooperate with international students.

Meanwhile, the white Euro-American students were struggling with personal space violations by local people. James and Mia admitted that they often get asked personal questions by their acquaintances, such as relationship status or future plans. Besides, random local people might suddenly come to them for a selfie, or a photograph that one has taken of oneself, usually with a smartphone.

The local people might directly call these students '*bule*' as they move through public space, attempting to engage in some kind of exchange. The term *bule* is semantically ambiguous. Although many foreigners considered *bule* as a derogatory term, Fechter (2005) explained that *bule* is a neutral term that can carry positive or negative connotations depending on the context. Indonesians use *bule* in a practical way, which is as a shorthand to describe a white foreigner. However, these attitudes made the students feel unsettling and exploited.

The insensitive and discouraging behaviors of Indonesian people create a harsh environment for international students to adjust to. The previous studies (Parks & Raymond, 2004; Schutz & Richards, 2003) validate this finding. Both studies found that a low host country language proficiency, being a minority, and insensitive behaviors of professors and peers negatively influenced the international students to make friends in Canada.

- *Racial discrimination*

Foreign-looking students were racially marked in Indonesia. Similar to Fechter's work on expatriates experiencing whiteness in Jakarta (2005), these students were also experiencing the 'gaze of the Other,' which fixes them in an identity: a foreigner. However, the racial mark given to the African students and the white Euro-American students seems to result in different treatments.

Indonesia, like most postcolonial countries with a history of European colonization, has a complicated relationship with race and colorism. Under colonialism, groups of people from different ethnics, cultures, and religions shared the same inferiority complex towards the European colonizer. Skin color serves as an indicator of

socioeconomic class and attraction and beauty in Asian. People in Indonesia and other Asian countries also subconsciously forced to believe the fairer skin is more beautiful and desirable by the media and beauty industry (Filippi, August 2019). Filippi added, the capitalistic society successfully monetizing the fair-skinned obsession in Southeast Asia due to Western influences on beauty perception.

Many dark-skinned people shared their experiences in Indonesia (Haughton, February 2019; Bodenner, October 2016; Rosa, August 2017). Bodenner (October 2016) shared Akousa's story as an English teacher in Indonesia. Akousa reported she had encountered negative interactions due to her skin color in her home country, the United States. However, she experienced a more intense colorism in Indonesia. She said, "One irony I have found is that even the darker-skinned Indonesians point, stare, and laugh. It is not only confusing but disappointing as well." Similarly, Rosa, a jeweler living in Bali, wrote in her blog (2017) about the discrimination she encountered, not only from the locals but also from other tourists. However, according to Haughton (2019), being a black person in Indonesia does not always result in negative experiences. The constant pointing, staring, and photo requests could be annoying, but he enjoyed his privileges and kindness from the locals.

The darker-skinned participants from Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and East Timor did not report that they were discriminated personally in this study. The Sierra Leonean and Nigerian students only reported the Indonesians' unwillingness to cooperate with international students and their discouraging attitude when these participants wanted to practice Indonesian. It needs more explanation of the context and full story from these students to safely consider the attitudes as racial discrimination or not.

Indonesia consists of thousands of ethnic groups, and many communicate interculturally on a regular basis. However, Indonesians may not have experienced a massive influx of foreigners. Although insensitive attitudes of Indonesian people towards foreigners may be a form of curiosity or ignorance, they still cannot be justified.

Furthermore, Thai Muslim students who were students of the Islamic University of Indonesia reported that they experienced microaggressions by domestic students based on their appearance. In contrast with Trilokekar and Kukar's (2011) findings, which stressed perceived discrimination is based on racial and cultural stereotypes, this study found that cultural and religious similarities may not be sufficient to eliminate prejudice and discrimination. This finding, however, agrees with the previous study by Yu, Bodycott, and Mak (2019), which found that a significant number of Asian-born international students perceived some degree of discrimination from their (typically Chinese) Hong Kong peers and people on the broader community. It will be discussed further in the following section.

- *Difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs*

Indonesia is not an Islamic state even though the Muslim population makes up approximately 88% of the Indonesian population ("Islam Radikal di Indonesia," May 2018). The majority of Muslims are moderate; hence, Indonesia is a secular democratic country which has a pluralist society. Islam has many faces in Indonesia, from liberal, moderate, conservative, or even radical, which only consists of a small number. Muslims have various perceptions regarding the role of Islam in Indonesian politics and society.

Even though the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998 led to progressive democratic reform, Indonesia has experienced the rising social and political power of hard-line

Islamists which transformed into populist conservatism in recent years (Menchik, 2016; Yusuf, Shidiq, & Hariyadi, 2020). The end of this regime created room for everyone to be more open and expressive, including Islamic-based political organizations. Compared to Muslim fellows in the Middle East, Indonesian Muslims have been known as tolerant, moderate, and friendly (Yusuf, Shidiq, & Hariyadi, 2020); however, these characteristics have changed in the post-Soeharto regime. Religious intolerance has become a more concerning issue of Indonesian society.

The religious intolerance influences the shape of Indonesian politics as well. The presidential election in 2014 and 2019 is a major evident of the religious intolerance. In the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, the president/vice president candidates Joko Widodo/Ma'ruf Amin, perceived as nationalist and representing moderate Islam, competed against the candidates Prabowo Subianto/Sandiaga Uno, who were supported by increasingly active conservative Islamists (Gueorguiev et al., 2018). The clashes between the two groups of supporters were inevitable, creating huge gaps between the conservatives and moderates.

Moreover, Indonesia, like other South East Asia countries, has suffered from terrorist violence for decades (Caruso, 2018; Kustana, 2017). Terrorists have threatened the safety and peace of the nation, the people, and the national interests of Indonesia. After a series of terrorist attacks by radical Islamist groups, terrorism today is frequently associated with Islam. According to the fourth president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid (2009), in Kustana (2017), Islam is a peaceful religion that never teaches terrorism. The terrorists use Islam to gather support from the marginalized and mistreated Muslims to serve their agenda.

Since Indonesia is battling terrorism, the media and society are more aware of radicalism. Radicalism inevitably leads to an increasing interest in Islamic symbols, such as Arabic names, religious rituals, and Muslim dress codes, e.g., *niqab* (Kustana, 2017). Thus, this situation directly affected the Thai Muslim students at the Islamic University of Indonesia. These students admitted that adjusting to social customs in their environment was challenging. They received microaggressions from domestic students in their university who seemed to be moderate Muslim based on their appearance. Constant stares and insensitive comments about the way they dress created an unsettling academic and social life. Ratre, one of the Thai students, was advised by her friend to change the way she dressed, whereas Malai reported that her modest clothes seemed to scare people away. It is such a heartbreaking reality when Muslims judge other Muslims based on their appearance.

### **6.1.2. International students in Japan**

According to statistical tests, a significant number of international students in Japan have a medium to a high level of intercultural sensitivity, and a low to medium level of ethnocentrism. Similar to their counterparts in Indonesia, the participants in Japan are moderately competent interculturally. The statistical results show that the participants in Japan have a low to medium level of adjustment problems, with the mean score of each of the problems less than 6.

There are three significant issues faced by international students in Japan. Those are academic issues, language issues, and sociocultural issues.

#### **1. Academic & language issues**



- *Academic demands and understanding the lectures*

Course of study has a correlation with academic issues, as mentioned in the previous subchapter. The doctoral students found more problems because of the bigger academic demands they have. They usually stumbled upon issues related to their research, for example, Shwe was struggling to organize and analyze her enormous data, and Lucas faced academic problems due to rarity of literature for his subject. Since the problems of these doctoral students are highly personal and complicated, they consult it to their advisors or supervisors for help.

Meanwhile, for undergraduate or master students who still have many classes, they often found difficulties in understanding the lectures entirely. The professors in Japan often fail to recognize the complexity of language issues confronting international students in the classroom, which can lead to the insufficient understanding of the topics. A solution to be used for improving students' achievement is tutoring and peer-support program.

The universities in Japan have various programs that could help international students' process of adjustment, including tutoring and peer-support programs. Ritsumeikan, for example, has a peer support program to help students with their academic problems. According to Mendelsohn (2002), domestic students who intend to be a tutor must have background knowledge in the content area, help international student understand the textbook, clarify of lecture contents, and help with the note taking to optimize the peer-support programs.

In addition, Japanese universities' tutoring programs also aim to assist social adjustment of international students. However, as the participants reported, it needs to

be improved. Tutors' unfamiliarity with students' needs and poor English proficiency should be the primary concern. A study by Bamford (2008) in Wu and Hammond (2011) showed that many tutors might fail to provide a suitable assistant to international students. Thus, domestic students should fulfill several requirements to be able to apply for a tutor position. Afterward, specific training should be conducted to prepare the tutor assisting international students.

Language proficiency also has a correlation with overall intercultural adjustment issues ( $\tau_b = -.153, p = .021$ ). Similar to participants in Indonesia, the groups of participants with different language proficiency in Japan also has median adjustment problem scores which are statistically significantly different,  $\chi^2(4) = 13.146, p = .011$ . The posthoc using Dunn's (1964) procedure analysis finds statistically significant differences in adjustment problems scores between the beginner (mean rank = 57) and advanced (mean rank = 21.88) ( $p = .004$ ). The Table 5.3 shows the mean comparison of adjustment issues mean between those two groups of students with different level of language proficiency.

Table 6.1 *Mean comparison of beginner level and advanced level participants in Japan*

<b>Adjustment issues</b>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Personal psychological issues	31.83	22.92
Academic issues	28.33	17.08
Sociocultural issues	33	13.50
General living issues	14.33	9.75
Language issues	29.83	10.92

The previous table clarifies that participants with a higher level of language proficiency faced fewer problems in their intercultural adjustment process in general. Besides difficulties in understanding the lecture, difficulties in communicating with native speakers was also a significant problem which they stumbled upon during their stay in Japan.

- *Difficulties in communicating with native speakers*

Due to language differences, participants found difficulties in many aspects of communication. The participants who have a higher proficiency experienced fewer adjustment problems, according to Kendall's tau-b correlation ( $\tau_b = -.153, p = .021$ ). Lucas, for example, could communicate smoothly with the Japanese without any obstruction. However, if the interlocutors started to use their *hougen* (dialects) or slang, he would not understand it.

The indirect way of speaking in Japanese also creates some obstacles to participants. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Japan is at the top of the list of high-context cultures (Hall & Hall, 1990). It has all the characteristics of high-context cultures, i.e., indirect communication, reliance on contextual cues, and respect for long silences. Japanese people often communicate through the use of 'atmosphere,' which indicates that one is expected to read the situation to understand the real meaning hid under the surface (Trinidad, 2014).

Phuong, a Vietnamese, had misunderstandings with her Japanese co-worker at a part-time job due to the indirect way of speaking. Phuong, like other participants, could not easily decode cues given by Japanese in communication. Asking directly what Japanese people mean can be a solution when feeling unsure about the interpretation.

However, it depends on the context or the interlocutor. While it is relatively easy to ask friends or colleagues directly, it takes extra effort to ask socially superior people. It may be insulting to them in some contexts.

## 2. Sociocultural issues

- Relationship issues

Japanese communicative style is characterized by marked dichotomies of public and private, i.e., inside (*uchi*)–outside (*soto*), front (*omote*)–rear (*ura*), and *tatemaehonne* (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2002). Makino (2002) in Whitsed and Volet (2011) explained that “the fundamental semantic property of *uchi* is one of involvement,” while *soto* referred to the exclusion of those perceived as being *soto*. A *soto* or outsider cannot enter into the *uchi* group.

The *uchi-soto* cultural construct may influence the Japanese way of communication since *uchi-soto* permeate all spheres of Japanese society. For this reason, Putri, Desi, and Fatin reported that they were struggling to form a relationship with Japanese people. It leads to frustration for not being accepted wholly into Japanese society for some participants.

Furthermore, international students also frequently have problems with *honne* – *tatemaehonne* concepts. Japanese people also use high-context communication frequently when talking to other people. According to Sugimoto (2010), Japanese people show their true selves when their in-group members or *uchi* surround them. Meanwhile, when talking with an outsider, or *soto*, they employ superficial outward appearance. Using

*honne – tatemae* is considered proper social etiquette to be able to keep harmony in society.

However, since the Japanese might not feel confident with their English, they were reluctant to communicate with international students. Like Fatmata in Indonesia, Phuong felt that Japanese students in her university seemed to avoid speaking English to her. If they tried to speak English to her, she would put more effort into speaking Japanese to them.

- *Racial discrimination*

Skin color is an indicator of socioeconomic class and beauty in Asian countries, including Japan. An old Japanese proverb, “a fair complexion hides faults,” shows Japanese preference for a fair complexion as a beauty form (Yamashita, January 2014). A researcher at Pola Research Institute of Beauty and Culture, Tomizawa, in Ushijima (October 2013) describes, “the tone the Japanese seek to achieve is not milky white but translucent, like a polished stone. Since the Edo period, women have gone to great pains to achieve this.”

Mori in Russell (June 2018) concluded in his work that Japanese participants indicated an implicit preference for ‘white people’ due to the media portrayal in which whites are used ‘for delivering a good message.’ In consonance, Torigoe (2012) stated that globalization of the media is an essential tool to spread global whiteness in Japan. Japanese favor white people, and the participants in this study have acknowledged that. For example, Lucas, a white Brazilian noted:

“I just acknowledge the privilege of being a white male. It is like most of the places people like me will not suffer racial discrimination. In Japan, everywhere, white

people got racial glorification. I mean, I am not proud of it, but I recognize the privilege that I have and try not to take advantage of it.”

On the contrary, Indonesian students were discriminated against by the Japanese. Putri faced racial discrimination by Japanese in her laboratory; for instance, the Japanese would automatically assume that international students made laboratory room messy. Meanwhile, Desi had been discriminated against the manager in her part-time job in a hotel restaurant. The manager treated Japanese part-timers much better than they treating her and other foreigners.

Japan still does not have a fundamental law to protect the livelihood or rights of foreigners. The Bureau of Human Rights took on 21,600 cases of rights violations in 2007, and there were 126 cases of discrimination towards foreigners (Asahi Simbun, October 2008). However, all the Bureau could do was issuing ‘explanations’ (*setsuji*) or ‘warnings,’ not setting the right measures. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights, Doudou Diene, reported that Japanese authorities were not doing enough to minimize Japan’s ‘deep and profound racism’ and xenophobia, particularly towards its former colonial subjects.

- *Difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs*

A challenging social custom for the participant is *nomikai* (drinking party). Alcohol has never been considered as a crucial social problem in Japan, according to Partanen in McDonald and Sylvester (2014). The importance and centrality of alcohol to religious events, rituals and festivals, and social interaction indicate the unproblematic relationship between Japan and alcohol (Moeran 2005; Partanen, 2006). Moeran (2005) regarded drinking as a symbol of the ‘wet’ relations of the night, which is necessary to

balance the 'dry' relations of the day in Japanese society. Moeran viewed drinking as a way to open up an individual's inner (*uchi*) space, which means that they can express themselves more freely and openly to others.

In school settings, drinking parties are a safe space for the students to open up and to let off steam (Suchan, 2007). Suchan, an American teaching undergraduate and graduate business and managerial communication courses at Chuo University, was struggling to get students to interact with each other in classroom. Drinking parties helped him understand his students better because of the openness, trust, and easy conversation they have during the drinking party. The drinking party is also considered an essential component of participating in the club culture at universities (McDonald & Sylvester, 2014). The reciprocal nature of drinking alcohol provides a collective experience which can create open communication between members of the group.

The participants reported that joining *nomikai* is challenging for religious and financial reasons. Muslim students, for instance, are forbidden to drink alcoholic beverages. Tan, a Muslim Chinese was trying to be more independent by doing part-time jobs. She felt the money for chipping in *nomikai* would be used for something more useful to her. The vast difference of culture regarding alcohol drinking created a difficulty in adjusting to Japanese society. People cannot just change the right form and order of doing things or *kata* in the host culture. Thus, reciprocal understanding and intercultural awareness are important to minimize the adjustment issues. Tan could join the *nomikai* once in a while, whereas the other members of the group could make an exception for her regarding contribution since she does not consume alcohol.

Meanwhile, Shwe, thought that *nomikai* brought a false sense of belonging. She wanted to fully participate in her group, however, the closeness she felt during *nomikai* would last only until the *nomikai* ended. The informal 'wet' relation returned to the formal 'dry' relation the next day. This different cultural knowledge on how social relations work also create adjustment issues. Partanen (2006) suggested that drinking is one of few socially-accepted ways to unwrap formal social relations which aims to provide the chance to have a more direct form of communication with Japanese people. It may take a little longer to develop a real friendship with Japanese, so if Shwe could wait a little longer and put in a little more effort she might see results. Moreover, *nomikai* provided an opportunity for Shwe to interact using Japanese, as a means of enacting and reconfirming her status as a member of the group.

## **6.2. Are Indonesian and Japanese people ready for internationalization?**

The previous chapters have provided evidence that the international students in both countries are moderately interculturally competent. This finding shows that none of the international students have a low level of intercultural sensitivity, which supports the prior research proving sojourn and study abroad experience is linked with greater intercultural competence (Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Morrel et al., 2013). The international students in both countries are also not highly ethnocentric, aligning with prior studies (Dong, 2018; Chen, 2010; Dong, Day, & Collaço, 2008) which suggested intercultural sensitivity negatively correlates to ethnocentrism. Also, a considerable number of international students in Indonesia and Japan have a medium to high level of intercultural



willingness to communicate. Many of the students were actively trying to make friends with domestic students or local people, although they did not get reciprocal enthusiasm.

The distinction between public and private (*uchi-soto*, *ura-omote*, and *honne-tatemae*) is essential in Japanese culture; however, such distinction is a universal value (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2002). Despite the vast cultural differences and different demographic profile, Indonesia and Japan are both collectivist societies which differentiate the 'public face' and 'private face' (Hall and Hall, 1990). These values may cause problems for international students in both countries. All participants in Indonesia agreed that Indonesian people are friendly and kind; however, a German student, Mia, was curious about the Indonesians' real face behind their smiles and friendliness. She explained:

"They are just so nice and helpful and always smiling and so happy. But sometimes it can just be a façade. There is something hidden. Maybe they are angry. Maybe they just not admit it. Maybe because it is a culture to maintain harmony. That would be the worst thing for Indonesians to lose their faces."

The majority of the sociocultural issues elaborated on in the previous sections are caused by local people. The local people may have reasons for being apprehensive over communicating with people from different cultural background. As Kassing (1997) argued, intercultural communication triggers a high level of stress due to more effort being required to communicate with people who do not share the same cultural values or speak the same language. In addition, ethnocentrism could be another reason why people may opt for not engaging in intercultural communication (Neuliep & McCroskey 1997). The higher the level of ethnocentrism, the more people become anxious when interacting with strangers (Gudykunst, 2004). In addition to language differences, it may

answer why the international students found difficulties in forming relationships with local people. Also, if people have a high level of ethnocentrism, they tend to be prejudiced, as Chen (2010) noted. It may also give an explanation as to why international students struggled with racial discrimination in the host country.

The familiarity with intercultural communication can affect ethnocentrism level. For example, Korean students were found to be significantly more ethnocentric and less willing to communicate interculturally than American students because American students have more exposure to intercultural communication (Lin, Rancer, & Lim, 2003). This is probably what is currently happening with domestic students and local people in Japan and Indonesia. Both countries have not experienced a large influx of foreigners so consequently the domestic students and local people may be not yet familiar with intercultural communication with foreigners.

Even though international students should make efforts to adjust in the host country, the responsibility for making intercultural adjustment easier is not exclusively their responsibility. The government and higher education institutions also need to take steps to make their institutions a welcoming place for international students. Additionally, they have to prepare the domestic students and local people to be ready for internationalization and acceptance of international students coming to their home country. It is certainly not an easy task to make the domestic students and local people be more open and interculturally competent for internationalization. Thus, future research needs to address these issues to contribute to better internationalization endeavors.

### 6.3. Recommendations for higher education institutions

This study found that the academic issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues are intertwined with one another in academic settings in both countries. The institutions should acknowledge these issues and develop supportive programs for international students. The programs should not merely address the present problems, but also future problems. Indonesia may not have many international students currently; however, the number of students will increase when the higher education institutions are able to attract them with well-established internationalization programs.

Kuroda et al. (2018) suggested that studying abroad significantly affects the future careers and lives of international students; however, the impact is determined by how rewarding their study abroad experience is. As a consequence, the international students' attitude and behavior in adjusting to the host culture are as important as the environment provided by host institutions.

Based on the significant issues found, several recommendations are suggested for a better implementation of study abroad programs at higher education institutions in Japan and Indonesia.

- *Autonomous language learning*

Language problems have been well-documented in many studies as a significant problem faced by international students (Ku et al., 2008; Jou & Fukada, 1996; Gebhard, 2012; Mustafa & Illias, 2013; Lee, 2017). Many students were struggling due to their low level of proficiency in the host country's language. This posthoc analysis in Chapter 4 finds a statistically significant difference in adjustment problem scores between the

beginner (mean rank = 72.11) and advanced (mean rank = 38) ( $p = .02$ ). The students would presumably have less issues if they could enhance their host country language proficiency.

The host institutions are providing language support to international students to assist with their adjustment process, i.e., host language courses for several months after their arrival. Many students interviewed in this study reported they could communicate in the target language to some extent; however, they were struggling to understand lectures. Hence these programs could use some improvements to optimize the outcome. The students are expected to acquire the target language to adjust better and have a higher quality of life during their study overseas.

Learner autonomy has been an interesting area of study in second or foreign language education research. Learner autonomy is “the capacity to take control over one’s own learning,” while autonomous learning is “learning in which learners demonstrate a capacity to control their learning (Benson, 2011, pp. 123-124). The learners are given the responsibilities to set their learning objectives, make plans to achieve the objectives, monitor their learning process, and solve their learning problems (Yabukoshi & Kato, 2017).

Prior studies have suggested potential effects of autonomous learning programs. Gardner and Miller (1999) put forward self-access language learning centers, while Ying (2002) suggested computer-assisted language learning courses as autonomous learning programs. The study by Yabukoshi and Kato (2017) found out that autonomous learning support program has the potential to enhance Japanese college students’ TOEIC score. Hoven and Crawford (2001) proposed the utilization of QUIPNet (Queensland Indonesia

Project Internet) as an autonomous learning program to help connect students from Indonesia and Queensland to enhance their language proficiency and cultural awareness through inclusion in their language program of computer-mediated exchanges. This networking model implemented in the project could raise students' interest and motivation to learn the target language.

The autonomous learning could help the students acquire the target language from outside the classroom continuously. According to Najeeb (2013), the strategies to achieve successful autonomous learning include the use of the target language as a medium of teaching and learning from the start, the gradual development of creating useful learning activities by the learners, and an ongoing evaluation of the learning process by a combination of teacher, peer and self-assessment (Najeeb, 2013).

The host institutions in Indonesia and Japan may use the autonomous learning strategies to optimize the ongoing language courses. Independence and autonomy of the learners could be encouraged by giving them tools to help them develop skills and achieve their goals in learning the target language (Najeeb, 2013). Learners should be aware of their own learning styles and use them to their advantage. The instructor or teacher has to monitor them and encourage them constantly to give them confidence and a sense of achievement.

- *Intercultural workshops and courses for teachers, staff, and students*

To ease the adjustment process of international students, the teachers and staff, particularly those who work at the international students' office, should be interculturally and linguistically sensitive. Thus, the host institutions could provide intercultural workshops to the teachers and staff in order for them to be more aware of

intercultural diversity and be more effective in dealing with international students. Moreover, by becoming more sensitive, the teachers could develop and adopt more suitable teaching methodologies for their international students (Lin & Scherz, 2014).

In addition, international students have been documented as having significantly higher levels of intercultural sensitivity than domestic students (McMurray, 2007; Bosuwon, 2017). The potential ethnocentrism and unwillingness to communicate interculturally of domestic students can be minimized by increasing intercultural sensitivity (Dong, Day, & Collaço, 2008). In addition to teachers and staff, the domestic students also need an intercultural workshop or a course to make them well-prepared for facing internationalization.

Even though there is no instant fix to developing intercultural understanding, implementing cultural sensitivity and awareness within the social context of schooling could normalize 'otherness' and the appreciation of diversity (Driscoll & Simpson, 2015). According to Bennet (2009), there are three ways to develop intercultural communication competence: to cultivate attitudes that give motivation, seek informative knowledge, and develop useful skills for intercultural communication. The host institutions could incorporate these strategies in their curriculum.

- *Intercultural interaction programs for international and domestic students/local people*

Host institutions should provide not only general student support services but also social support programs. Prior research suggests that international students respond well to social support programs, such as intercultural interaction programs and transformative learning programs (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). The host institution could

make an intercultural interaction program for both international and domestic students. The interview with international students indicated that many domestic students in Indonesia and Japan were not reluctant to interact with international students. This intercultural interaction program could help domestic students develop their intercultural awareness and sensitivity toward cultural diversity.

Moreover, institutions both in Indonesia and Japan have homestay programs where the students get to know the host country's culture. While homestay programs in Japan aim to make international students experience authentic life living with local people, the homestay programs in Indonesia only focuses on cultural promotion. By having a short-term homestay, the students only get to experience the surface of Indonesian culture. The institutions probably prioritize the agenda to advertise their exotic programs to attract more international students; however, if the institutions aim to assist international students with their adjustment process, a 3-day homestay program is insufficient.

Homestay programs should not only promote cultures but also provide an authentic experience living in the host culture. Prior research proved that homestay programs are helpful for social adjustment and language proficiency development (Lee & Wesche, 2000; Lewthwaite, 1996). A more extended homestay period could help international students cope with new cultures. According to Matsumoto, Leroux, and Yoo (2005), international students could observe the similarities and differences of their cultures and host country's cultures, and then build their cultural dictionary during the homestay. Furthermore, students could understand the characters of Indonesian people by observing their homestay family. The students could have many opportunities to communicate with local people, which is essential for intercultural adjustment based on

Kim's theory (2001), since they receive social support and gain valuable information about the host culture.

#### **6.4. Summary of the chapter**

This chapter addresses several significant problems faced by international students in Indonesia, i.e., general living issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues, and in Japan, i.e. academic issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues. Since Japan and Indonesia have different cultures, languages, histories, and demographics, the causes of those problems are different. Furthermore, this chapter explores the nature of international students in Indonesia and Japan.

This chapter also proposes various supportive programs to assist international students in achieving their educational objectives and having positive experiences. The Japanese and Indonesian governments and higher education institutions should strive to design programs and strategies to achieve quantitative goals while maintaining or enhancing the quality of internationalization initiatives. The institutions in Indonesia need to create well-structured programs and strategies other than merely seeking financial support from the government to enhance the nation's competitiveness and be more internationalized. Meanwhile, if Japan aims to take advantage of the benefits of international students to aid the shortage of highly skilled workers and improve global competitiveness, the institutions in Japan need to design the programs or strategies which can help the international students integrate into the traditionally homogenous Japanese society.



## Chapter 7

# CONCLUSION

This chapter comprises of a conclusion based on the findings, some comments on the significance of the study, an acknowledgement of the limitations, and finally some suggestion for further study.

### **7.1. Conclusion of the dissertation**

This study used sequential mixed methods that combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The questionnaire participants in Japan were 68 international students studying at cities on Kyushu Island, while participants in Indonesia were comprised of 58 international students from three major cities on Java Island. There were ten interviewees in Japan and sixteen in Indonesia. A questionnaire was used to find out the international students' intercultural adjustment problems, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural willingness to participate, ethnocentrism, and variables that correlate to them. An open-ended interview was used to explore in-depth the adjustment issues, the coping strategies, and the nature of international students in this study.

The quantitative results for the research questions reveal that international students' adjustment problems in Indonesia and Japan are relatively few. Moreover, the statistical results show that a significant number of international students in Japan and Indonesia have a medium to a high level of intercultural communication competence. A series of statistical tests prove that the level of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, intercultural willingness to communicate slightly correlate with the intercultural adjustment problems. Thus, individuals with high intercultural communication competence could experience as many problems as individuals with low intercultural communication competence. Some external factors influence the adjustment problems, i.e., course of study, language proficiency, university, and environmental circumstances, such as number of culturally-different friends, frequency of communicating interculturally, and impression of intercultural communication.

The qualitative analysis found adjustment problems experienced by participants in both countries in five categories: personal psychological issues, academic issues, sociocultural issues, general living issues, and language issues. The significant problems faced by international students in Indonesia are general living issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues. Some problems were found only in Indonesia, such as transportation and racial marking, which includes personal violation. Moreover, the participants in Indonesia struggled not only with Indonesian but also Javanese since the study took place in Yogyakarta, Surakarta, and Semarang, where the locals communicate in Javanese. Additionally, they must deal with the insensitive behavior of Indonesians, which explicitly discriminates against them based on their skin color. Moreover, since Indonesia has suffered from terrorist violence for decades, the media and society are more aware of

radicalism. Consequently, participants wearing modest Islamic clothing had to deal with negative prejudice.

Meanwhile, the significant problems in Japan are academic issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues. Some problems were only experienced by participants in Japan, such as time management and racial discrimination in a part-time job. The participants also found difficulties understanding cultural constructs, such as *uchi-soto*, *ura-omote*, and *honne-tatema*. Since those cultural constructs permeate all spheres of Japanese society, participants must deal with the indirect way of speaking and social boundaries. Moreover, some participants were discriminated against racially. Some cultural elements made their life uncomfortable, i.e., *nomikai*.

The findings suggest that a considerable number of international students in Indonesia and Japan have a moderate level of intercultural communication competence; however, they still experienced difficulties in communicating with domestic students and local people. The significant sociocultural issues faced by the students were primarily caused by local people. They may have reasons for being apprehensive about communicating with people from a different cultural background. Aside from language differences, they may have a low level of intercultural sensitivity and a high level of ethnocentrism which leads to prejudice and unwillingness to communicate interculturally.

## **7.2. Recommendation**

International students should be aware of the potential challenges in the host country before deciding to study abroad. They also need to be prepared beforehand to

overcome potential issues effectively. It is essential that they secure financial assistance and carefully plan the financial support for studying abroad. Although having linguistic and cultural knowledge does not automatically make them competent in intercultural communication, learning about the language and cultures of the host country in advance could ease the adjustment process. International students should be open-minded and willing to accept differences.

Even though international students should make efforts to adjust, the responsibility for intercultural adjustment is exclusively their responsibility. The higher education institutions also need to take steps to make their institutions a welcoming place for international students. They also have to prepare the domestic students to be ready for internationalization and accepting of international students coming to their home country.

Institutions in Japan established many well-developed on-going support programs to help the students adjust to Japanese culture, such as tutoring programs, Japanese language courses, language programs, i.e., SALC or Self Access Learning Center. However, if Japan wants international students to work in Japan to overcome the shortage of highly skilled workers and to enhance global competitiveness, the institutions in Japan need to design programs or strategies which can help the international students integrate into the traditionally homogenous Japanese society.

Meanwhile, higher education institutions in Indonesia seem to have different priorities compared to their counterparts in Japan. Instead of prioritizing assisting students with their intercultural adjustment, many support programs have the goal of promoting Indonesian cultures and arts, such as 3-day homestays at the touristic village,

or a traditional dance class. Even though there are some programs established for helping students' adjustment, the higher institution internationalization is still in its infancy. The institutions in Indonesia need to create well-structured programs and strategies to enhance the nation's competitiveness and be more internationalized. The Indonesian government and the institutions can take notes from Japan's strategies and experiences of higher education institutions' internationalization endeavors. Thus, they can expand their perspective on internationalization strategies and apply them in Indonesia.

Since the significant problems of academic issues, sociocultural issues, and language issues there were found in both countries mostly occurred in academic settings, this study proposes some programs which address not only the present problems, but also future problems. Those programs are: 1) autonomous language learning, 2) intercultural workshops and courses for teachers, staff, and students, and 3) intercultural interaction programs for international and domestic students/local people.

However, exploratory studies are not enough to make informed decisions about program establishment or refinements. Developing suitable support programs or redesigning existing programs for international students need to consider many things, such as budget, resources, or regulations. Thus, evaluative studies that yield in-depth assessment data are needed.

### **7.3. Significance of the study**

This study may hold potential significance for practical and theoretical considerations. First, the quantitative and qualitative results can give insights related to intercultural adjustment issues for international students who are living in Indonesia or

Japan, or planning to live in either of those countries and can be extrapolated to countries with similar demographics. Having insights regarding potential problems in the host countries can help international students prepare themselves so that they can adjust better. Second, the findings may have significance for higher education institutions to establish strategies and programs for effective internationalization. The higher education institutions may be able to design new initiatives or enhance existing ones to ensure international students can achieving their educational objectives and have positive experiences during their study abroad. Third, the findings might be beneficial for theory development since it may contribute more data and theories in intercultural communication studies and internationalization endeavors, especially in the context of Indonesia and Japan.

#### **7.4. Limitations**

Interpretations of the findings of this study should be made with great caution on several counts. First, the sample of this study does not have enough representative cultures due to the limited number of international students from numerous countries. Thus, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Moreover, the small sample size limits the statistical power, meaning the findings may not be transferable to other international students in different contexts. Second, the qualitative data collected entirely using interviews may be biased since the interviews may not have elicited informed or accurate responses. Other data collection apparatuses need to be used to triangulate data, such as field notes or focus group conversations. Third, the interviews were conducted in English and Indonesian language. The results are also cautioned since participants may find difficulties in expressing certain types of issues or emotions in those languages.

## **7.5. Suggestions for future studies**

For further studies, the sample should include more international students quantitatively in order to generate more accurate findings. Since this study is exploratory, its objective is to explore the various group of international students. Future research should focus on a specific group of samples to make a more in-depth, generalizable analysis possible. The studies also need a more focused group of samples to obtain more in-depth, generalizable results. Additionally, various apparatuses for data collection are required for more precise and reliable findings. The studies should probably use longitudinal data to support the findings of this study and to increase the reliability and credibility of the data. Moreover, they may need to incorporate behavioral data, involving actual interactions in examining the adjustment problems of international students in Indonesia and Japan. Lastly, the implementation of proposed supportive programs for international students needs to be studied further to investigate their effects on the goal of internationalization.

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# Appendix I

## Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) Scale

Based on your knowledge and opinion, please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

For example: 3 Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.

1. \_\_\_ Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.
2. \_\_\_ My culture should be the role model for other cultures.
3. \_\_\_ People from other cultures act strange when they come into my culture.
4. \_\_\_ Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.
5. \_\_\_ Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.
6. \_\_\_ I'm not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.
7. \_\_\_ People in my culture could learn a lot from people of other cultures.
8. \_\_\_ Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.
9. \_\_\_ I respect the values and customs of other cultures.
10. \_\_\_ Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture.
11. \_\_\_ Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.
12. \_\_\_ I have many friends from other cultures.
13. \_\_\_ People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.
14. \_\_\_ Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.
15. \_\_\_ I'm very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.

16. \_\_\_ I apply my values when judging people who are different.
17. \_\_\_ I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.
18. \_\_\_ I do not cooperate with people who are different.
19. \_\_\_ Most people in my culture just don't know what is good for them.
20. \_\_\_ I do not trust people who are different.
21. \_\_\_ I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.
22. \_\_\_ I have little respect for the value and customs of other cultures.

## Appendix II

### Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)

Based on your knowledge and opinion, please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

1. \_\_\_ I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
2. \_\_\_ I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.
3. \_\_\_ I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
4. \_\_\_ I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.
5. \_\_\_ I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
6. \_\_\_ I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
7. \_\_\_ I don't like to be with people from different cultures.
8. \_\_\_ I respect the values of people from different cultures.
9. \_\_\_ I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.
10. \_\_\_ I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
11. \_\_\_ I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.
12. \_\_\_ I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.
13. \_\_\_ I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
14. \_\_\_ I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.



15. \_\_\_ I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.
16. \_\_\_ I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.
17. \_\_\_ I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
18. \_\_\_ I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.
19. \_\_\_ I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.
20. \_\_\_ I think my culture is better than other cultures.
21. \_\_\_ I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.
22. \_\_\_ I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.
23. \_\_\_ I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.
24. \_\_\_ I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.

## Appendix III

### Intercultural Willingness to Communicate (IWTC) Scale

Below are twelve situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Keep in mind you are not reporting the likelihood that you would have an opportunity to talk in these instances, but rather the percentage of times you would talk when the opportunity presented itself. Indicate in the space at the left what percentage of the time you would choose to communicate.

0 = never, 100 = always

For example: 92 Talk with a close friend.

1. \_\_\_ Talk with a close friend.
2. \_\_\_ Talk with a spouse or significant other (girlfriend, boyfriend).
3. \_\_\_ Talk with someone I perceive to be different than me.
4. \_\_\_ Talk with someone from another country.
5. \_\_\_ Talk with a physician.
6. \_\_\_ Talk with someone from a culture I know very little about.
7. \_\_\_ Talk with a salesperson in a store.
8. \_\_\_ Talk with someone of a different race than mine.
9. \_\_\_ Talk with a relative or family member.
10. \_\_\_ Talk with someone from another culture.

11. \_\_\_ Talk with someone at work.
12. \_\_\_ Talk with someone that speaks different language.



Norms and regulations and participating in intercultural/social activities																				
Relationship problems																				
Other ...																				
<b>General living issues</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10									
Accommodation difficulties																				
Difficulties in using student support services																				
Financial stress																				
Dietary restrictions																				
Safety threats																				
Other ...																				
<b>Language issues</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10									
Difficulties in communicating with native speakers																				
Understanding lectures																				
Writing up essays																				
Others ...																				

### Socio-demographic factors

1. Gender:

- male
- female
- prefer not to disclose

2. Age:

- 20 or under
- 21 – 30
- 31 – 40
- 41 – 50
- 51 – 60
- 61 – 70

- 70 or older
- 3. Race/ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Course of study:
  - undergraduate
  - master's
  - doctoral
  - other
- 6. Academic major: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. University: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Student status:
  - full time student
  - exchange student
  - other
- 9. Native language: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. Number of culturally-different friends:
  - none
  - 1-3 people
  - 4-6 people
  - 7-9 people
  - 10 people or more
- 11. Frequency of communicating with culturally-different people:
  - everyday
  - often
  - rarely
  - never
- 12. Impression of communicating with culturally-different people:
  - very negative
  - negative
  - neutral
  - positive

very positive

13. Host country language proficiency:

beginner

elementary

intermediate

upper-intermediate

advanced

14. Length of stay in the host country: \_\_\_\_\_