

A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WHO LEARN ENGLISH AT UNIVERSITAS NEGERI MALANG

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Abstract: Nowadays, many students all over the world leave their home countries to go abroad to continue their study and pursue promising future. Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) opens the opportunities for the international students to continue their study by giving them scholarships and provide them a quality teaching and learning process. Each International student who studies at UM brings their culture and way of study from their home country. For International students who learn English in non-native speaking country like Indonesia, they face challenge to integrate and engage culturally and academically. This research observes how the international learn English at UM. It was conducted by applying multiple case studies to get the data from the international students who learn English at UM. The research subjects are three international students. Each of them studies English in undergraduate program student, graduate program, and postgraduate program. The researchers not only interviewed the international students, but also the lecturers who teach them, the classmates, and the staff of Research and Development staff of Office of International Affairs. The research instruments of this study are in the form of interview guide and video recording. Then, the researchers transcribed the video recording into a written form, summarized the transcription of the interview, and sorting the data in order to answer the research questions. This research is expected to be a valuable reference for future researchers who have interest to observe how the international students learn English.

Keywords: *international students, integrate and engage culturally and academically, learn English at UM, multiple case study*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a product of culture. Therefore, a good way to learn a language is to understand the culture. Accordingly, it helps the language learners to know the context of the expression that they use when they speak to someone who is from different culture, particularly different language. As the integral part of culture, language cannot be separated from culture. When the students communicate, they also deliver a lot of cultural values in it. In this globalized world, seemingly the people cannot see the borders among countries and English as a *lingua franca* plays a very important role to unite the communication among those countries. However, it is far from possible for language itself to bridge the diversity of cultures of those countries. So that, as language teachers, we need to integrate cross cultural understanding in our teaching and learning process to develop the students' intercultural competence. Adelman & Levine (1993) state that English teaching and learning process is interwoven with cross cultural understanding. The cultural aspects contained in English language should be integrated in every classroom activity. Moreover, everyone should know the cultural aspect of English so that they can communicate appropriately.

Integrating cross cultural understanding in teaching English can help the students to speak contextually and in culturally relevant way. Otherwise, misunderstandings and even conflicts can happen. Mukminatun (2009) describes a misunderstanding made by Adi, Indonesia Australia Language Foundation (IALF) teacher on Exchange to Goff's Harbour, New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Adi was feeling upset when his host-mother offered him to have "tea time". He was almost angry by saying: "What? Tea again? You know what? I drank a *cuppa* in the morning, then two at school, one more as I got home and now again? Please, I can't have anymore. Can I have

water?" In fact, his host mother explained that tea time means having dinner. Adi was really embarrassed.

In this globalized era, we cannot ignore that communication is going broader and wider. Many students all over the world leave their home countries to study in countries that can make them more effective to pursue their dreams. In the past, people might only communicate with those who come from the same cultures and nationalities. But nowadays, people often communicate with those who come from different cultures and nationalities, whether it is productive communication (speaking and writing in another language) or receptive communication (reading and listening in another language). When people communicate with those who come from different cultures, intercultural communication happened.

The success of intercultural communication will be influenced by the understanding of other cultures (Brown & Lee, 2015). Building intercultural awareness nowadays is very important because we cannot hide the truth that people always communicate with those who are from different cultures in their daily lives. As a result, good intercultural communication can create healthy relationship among countries in the world.

The international students who learn English in UM are mostly parts of the program of KNB (Developing Country Partnership Program) Scholarship. KNB is a scholarship program from Indonesian Government for developing country students. UM has been working with Indonesian Government to implement this program and graduating excellent graduates since 2008 (oia.um.ac.id). The international students who learn English in UM are the key factors of this study. They can be valuable resources to know how cross cultural understanding, intercultural competence, and communicative are interwoven when they learn English in the context of non-native speaking country. The research questions of the study are described as follows:

- a. How did the international students learn English before studying at UM?
- b. How do the international students integrate in a new culture and learn English at UM?
- c. What barriers have made them face difficulties in communicating and engaging in teaching and learning process?
- d. What do the international students do to learn English well at UM?

METHOD

This research uses multiple case studies which is a branch of qualitative research methods to study in depth the international students who study English at UM. Latief (2012) states that case studies can be single or multiple-case designs where a multiple design must follow a replication rather than sampling logic.

This research was conducted at English Program of Universitas Negeri Malang (UM). UM is a prestigious university in Malang, which is located in Jl. Semarang no. 5. The ELT program in UM is known for its excellence in academic world. The subjects of the study are three international students who study English as their major. The international students are Dareeya Jantharattana (Subject 1) who is an undergraduate program student from Thailand, Ahmed Djoumoi (Subject 2) who is a graduate program student from Comoros, and Khalil S.M. Jahbel (Subject 3) who is a postgraduate student from Libya. Since UM has the Office of International Affairs which accommodate the international students who study at UM, this study relies on the sources from it.

The researchers developed the instrument based on their own observation toward the international students. In his observation, the researchers found that the international students need to be well integrated in Indonesian culture as well as the academic demands of UM. The

researchers approached the subjects of the study via mobile phone and meeting. After all subjects agreed to be interviewed by the researchers, then the interview could take place as appointed. Before conducting the interview, the three international students were asked to sign letter of consent as the legitimacy that they are willing to be interviewed by the researchers. The instruments of this study include the interview guide which contains the list of questions asked to related people; international students, the lecturers who teach English to the international students, the classmates of the international students, and the head of international affairs. The data collection was based on the data that the researchers got from the research instruments above in the form field notes, transcription of the interview with the international students, the lecturers, the international students' classmates, and the head of the international affairs.

The researchers did the data analysis based on the result of the data that the researchers got from the research instruments. The research data is in the form of transcription of video recording. The researchers sort the transcription by doing data reduction. The data reduction process transferred the literal transcription of the interview into the form of the summary of the interview.

FINDINGS

Each research subjects are coming from different countries and background of English. Moreover, the amount of years of English exposure is also different from one another because of their level of study and age. The status of English in each subjects' countries are foreign language. The variety of English exposure on research subjects makes the data found in this research is heterogeneous and later it can be generalized.

How the International Students learned English before Studying at UM

Before studying at UM, Subject 1 only learned English at school. It was insufficient for her to be able to speak English fluently at that time because the main reason to learn English was to pass the examination. Subject 1 never took any private English class before coming to continue her study at UM. She even said that she did not like English before. That attitude toward English changed after she met a lady who can speak English fluently who is working as a cleaning service in a hotel. That experience encouraged and motivated Subject 1 to learn more about English.

Back to his undergraduate program, Subject 2 studied Applied Linguistics in Foreign Language, focusing on Arabic, French, and Swahili. He did not study English specifically; he only took it as an optional class for at least two years. In order to develop his English skills, Djoumoi joined a private English school for three months. But he personally did not think that it was helpful for him because the material that he got there, he already learned it in college. That was why he did not want to extend his time of study there. It is rare for a Comorian like Djoumoi to speak English in his native country. They only speak English probably when they meet tourists in some tourism spots.

Subject 3 is an English lecturer in Zaituna University, Libya. He used to be the head of English Department for more than three years there. Subject 3 speak English mostly while he is in the university in Libya because it is nearly impossible to speak English outside the university. For his undergraduate program, Subject 3 studied English in teacher institution in Libya. After graduating, he taught English in a primary school. He also joined two-year-English-course in Malta and got a diploma. Afterwards, he was assigned to teach secondary school and joined the Ministry of Education in Libya. Then he was awarded a scholarship by the Ministry of Education to continue his study in UK. He studied English to get his master degree for two years in UK. Then, he

came back to teach English in Zaituna University. Fortunately, the university awarded him a scholarship to continue his study in doctoral program at UM.

How the International Students Integrate in a New Culture and Learn English at UM

Living in Indonesia is not quite difficult for Subject 1 because she finds that the culture of Indonesia and South of Thailand is more or less the same. She views the culture through the perspectives of religion, which is why she concludes that the cultures are quite similar. In the classroom, Subject 1 is not only exposed with English but also Bahasa Indonesia. Furthermore, Subject 1 learns Javanese language from her Javanese friends outside the classroom. The lecturers of Subject 1 have the impressions that she is a shy person. She tends to be quiet in the classroom, she did not really engage in classroom, and she was only mingling with one or two friends. One of her classmates thinks that Subject 1 has difficulty in speaking. Her classmate thinks that Subject 1 can manage her time well to finish all the assignments from the lecturers and she is good in grammar and choosing suitable dictions in doing her projects.

Subject 2 finds that there is no big difference in terms of cultures of Indonesia and Comoro because the majority of people living in both countries are Muslim. He needs to adjust and adapt when he came to Indonesia because it is his first time to live in a country which has many religions beside Islam. Subject 2 thinks that studying in graduate program of ELT at UM is easier for those who did their undergraduate program at UM as well. For those who did not, it is going to be quite hard. Subject 2 experienced such a stressful time when he was on his first semester of studying at UM because he did not have enough schemata about ELT. The classmate of Subject 2 observes that his background knowledge of English is not quite sufficient to study in graduate program of ELT. That's why in his study now he is doing both learning and acquisition of English. The classmate of Subject 2 also stated that his English proficiency is quite good but not excellent. Likewise, the lecturer of Subject 2 stated that he is lack of both of proficiency and theoretical knowledge of pedagogical English. So that he does not really know what to observe in teaching and learning process.

Living in Indonesia is not an easy task for Subject 3. Communication is the main problem that Subject 3 faces because it is hard for him to find someone who is able to speak English when he needs to ask information on the street. Generally speaking, subject 3 likes to live in Indonesia because he finds it is nice and enjoyable – everything about Indonesia is good. Subject 3 thinks that in terms of culture, Indonesia and Libya are quite similar because the majority of people living in both countries are Muslim. Subject 3 views the teaching and learning process at UM are fantastic because the students are taught by the experienced lecturers. On the first semester of his study, most of the lecturers allow students to deliver presentations related to their projects. Then, at the end of the semester, the students have to write final projects. The classmate of Subject 3 stated that he has good proficiency in English and he is good in managing his time so that he can submit the assignments on time. Furthermore, the lecturer of Subject 3 stated that it was quite difficult for Subject 3 to understand the lecturers' instructions. Gradually, the communication between the lecturer and Subject 3 are getting better because Subject 3 tries his best to improve his English.

Barriers that Make the International Students Face Difficulties in Communicating and Engaging in Teaching and Learning and Process

Speaking is the main problem for Subject 1. She even prefers to write than to speak. Likewise, the classmate of Subject 1 also mentioned the same thing. Because of the exposure of many languages in Subject 1 - like Thai, Bahasa Indonesia, and Javanese language, she cannot literally translate a word in English directly to Thai – her mother tongue; she firstly translates it to

Bahasa Indonesia. The classmate of Subject 1 also stated that Subject 1 has difficulty in pronunciation; it makes him hard to listen properly to what Subject 1 said. It is because Subject 1 speaks English with Thai accent and sometimes it is unclear for the listener to understand the words. The lecturers of Subject 1 stated that Subject 1 tended to be quiet in the classroom and didn't really actively engage in teaching in learning process. Not only she has problem in speaking, but also, she is a shy person. She was only interacted with one or two friends that are close to her.

Subject 2 has difficulties to communicate and engage in teaching and learning process because he does not have sufficient proficiency of English and background knowledge of ELT. He did not study English back in his undergraduate program in Comoro because he only learned English for two years as an optional class in his university. Because his background knowledge of ELT and proficiency of English is not sufficient, the classmate of Subject 2 stated that he was doing both learning and acquisition. Accordingly, the lecturer of Subject 2 stated that it is hard for Subject 2 to engage in classroom activity especially in group work because Subject 2 was not studying English or specifically ELT back in his undergraduate program. When the lecturer of Subject 2 asked him to do a research for his thesis in a school, he did not really know what to do.

Mostly similar to Subject 1 and Subject 2, Subject 3 has difficulty in understanding Bahasa Indonesia when the lecturers or the classmates speak Bahasa Indonesia deliberately or not deliberately. Subject 3 does not want to learn Bahasa Indonesia because he thinks he is quite old to learn a new language. Moreover, on his first year studying at UM, he faced difficulties in understanding the accent of both lecturers and classmates. When he was delivering his presentation and there was a question asked by his classmate, he prefers his classmate to write down the question on a piece of paper because it was hard for him to understand the accent.

Subject 3 also find it hard to understand the announcement which is written in Bahasa Indonesia. Also, it is hard for him to communicate with the staff of the department and librarian who cannot speak English fluently. The classmate of Subject 3 stated that it was hard for Subject 3 to understand the lecturers' explanation in the first semester of his study. Accordingly, the lecturer of Subject 3 also stated that in the beginning it was hard for Subject 3 to understand the lecturer's instruction and probably Subject 3 saw that it was quite demanding for him and he did not expect to be that hard. The lecturer of Subject 3 also stated that Subject 3 does not have good English proficiency as he expected. It was affected to his reading skill which was insufficient according to the lecturer.

What the International Students Do to Learn English Well at UM

Subject 1 finds the best way to learn English is through listening to the music. When she finds some songs that she likes, she will try to research the song to know more about its meaning. By researching some songs that she likes, she could be able to know many new vocabularies and can apply it in her study.

Subject 2 likes to play games and having conversation with his friends to improve his English skills. Through playing games, he is encouraged to practice his English and learning some new vocabularies as well. Having conversation with his friends helps Subject 2 to sharpen his speaking and listening skills and getting corrective feedbacks from his friends.

Subject 3 improves his English skills by reading books, listening to the news, and watching videos. Moreover, Subject 3 usually invites his students in Libya to practice English in his house. In Indonesia, he usually invites his classmates to have a meal in his house and then they can talk to one another.

DISCUSSION

From the findings stated above, we could see that every international student has their own experience in learning English before and while studying at UM. In general, they have different exposure of English due to the length of their English learning. All research subjects are coming from countries where the status of English is a foreign language. This is the reason why they seldom used English back in their home countries or only use English in specific context. Every international student has different mastery and fluency from one another. This condition leads to several problems that they face in learning English at UM where they have to be active speakers of English.

Previous studies have shown that in general, international students have good hardworking attitude, however they may face language, academic, and culture related challenges (Burns, 1991). We could see it from the way all subjects did all their best to continue their study at UM. Nevertheless, Andrade (2006) states that international students possibly face difficulties in English, the official language where they live to study, and other aspects of living abroad. Additionally, most international students could adapt and adjust quite well to their new environment but for some of them, the condition could quite demanding and hard (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). Subject 1 integrates in Indonesia better than Subjects 2 and 3. Probably it is because the age of Subject 1 who is younger than others and the Subject 1 study at UM longer than subjects 2 and 3. When the interview was conducted, Subject 1 has been in Indonesia for about three years while Subject 2 and 3 have been Indonesia for about 2 years.

Studying overseas can open wider opportunity to succeed in the future. In one hand, becoming international students in one hand can be very enjoyable because we can have more experiences and benefits rather than learning inside the country. On the other hand, it can be very demanding because they get to adjust and integrate to a new system. The challenges faced by the international students who are learning English at UM are quite complex because they learn English in non-native speaking country that is why they need to work hard to be integrated academically and culturally. Andrade (2006) states that adjustment problems are mainly caused by English language proficiency and culture. Meanwhile, achievement is influenced by English proficiency, academic skills, and educational background. Thus, understanding international students' adjustment process is related to intercultural education. Adaptation and adjustment process in a new environment can be both stressful and enjoyable. In terms of culture, all subjects can easily integrate because they view culture through the perspective of religion. All subjects are coming from Muslim background that is why it is quite easy for them to integrate with the culture in Indonesia, specifically in Malang. In terms of academic, all subjects state that the academic atmosphere at UM is quite high. Whenever they find problems in their study, their classmates are willingly help them to do their assignments and projects.

Every language learner surely faces hindrances and barriers in learning a new language. It is a normal process that the learners should cope with. Indeed, the overseas students have more challenges than the local students due to their ability in adapting academic atmosphere. Thus, research about all challenges faced by the international students will be a good tool for the internalization of a campus and could help them have a better experience in their study (Bauerschmidt, 2015). Moreover, international students have much diversity: differing languages, religious orientation, traditions, politics, world view, and cultural constructs of reality (Ozbay, 1993). Additionally, language is considered as one problematic issue on the international students' academic adjustment. Moreover, Peruci & Hu (1995) state that international students have to deal not only with academic challenges, but also with new customs, languages, food,

living arrangements, social life, etc. Ramsay et al. (1999) state that major problem that the international students experience is to understand the content of the lecturers either their own linguistic abilities or the speed at which the lecturers are talking.

The international students also experience problem in understanding their professor and classmates because of the accent or rate of their (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). The result of the study on non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) students at an Australian university conducted by Mulligan & Kirkpatrick (2000), they conclude that 10% of the participants understand their lecturers very well, but almost 25% of them did not understand the lecturers at all. All subjects face problems in teaching and learning process mostly on speaking and listening. In terms of speaking, some subjects may speak more fluent than the others yet still make some grammatical mistakes, some may still use more filled pauses such as *uhs* and *uhms* than others, some use more silent pauses, and some use longer silent pauses than others (Steinel et al, 2010). All research subjects also speak with the accent influenced by their mother tongue which for some classmates can be hard to understand. In terms of listening, especially during the first year of their study, all subjects were quite difficult to understand the lecturers and classmates when they were speaking. Furthermore, when the lecturers and classmates speak Bahasa Indonesia deliberately or not deliberately in the class, it is hard for all research subjects to understand the meaning, especially for Subject 3. For Subjects 1 and 2, listening Bahasa Indonesia in the class can help them to enhance their ability in Bahasa Indonesia.

When language learners find the best way to learn a language, they can be more motivated and encouraged in following teaching and learning process. Andrade (2006) points out that the international could build meaningful and fruitful relationships with both domestic students and other international students from all over the world. It could help them to succeed in their academic sphere and also their career in the future. Furthermore, a research on international students conducted in UK shows that international students help each other emotionally and academically through psychological encouragement and practical academic help (Montgomery & McDowell, 2008). Not only among the international students, but the domestic students also help the international to be well integrated academically and culturally. Most importantly, both the lecturers and classmates of all research subjects are very helpful and willing to assist them whenever they find difficulties.

CONCLUSIONS

International students who study at UM bring their own culture and way of learning English. To be integrated in a new environment, they need to follow through adjustment and adaptation processes which are both challenging and enjoyable. In general, all research subjects find living in Indonesia is enjoyable and the culture is quite similar with the culture of their home countries. All research subjects view the culture in Indonesia, especially in Malang, through the perspectives of religion, so that, it is easy for them to be integrated culturally, since they are all Muslim. The English exposure of each International student is different from one another because the length of their English study, their level of study and their age.

All research subjects are coming from the countries where the status of English is a foreign language, so as Indonesia. All of them are not the active speakers of English because they only speak English in particular contexts like in campus or in tourism spots. This is one reason why they cannot speak English fluently or can speak fluently but still make some grammatical mistakes. Moreover, their English accents are highly influenced by their mother tongues which make them hard to speak and listen to both lecturers and classmates, vice versa. Learning English in a non-

native speaking country like Indonesia is quite challenging because the international students probably may only have the chance to learn and practice English in classroom setting. Outside the classroom, they need to communicate in Bahasa Indonesia. Sometimes when the lecturers and the classmates of the international students deliberately or not deliberately speak Bahasa Indonesia in the classroom, the international students hardly understand it and should ask their peers to know the meaning. Moreover, most announcement and information at UM are written in Bahasa Indonesia which makes the international students have to know Bahasa Indonesia as well.

All research subjects have their own way to learn English well. Subject 1 likes to develop her English by listening to the music and find out the meaning of the song by scrutinizing its lyrics of. Subject 2 prefers to enhance his English by having conversation with friends while playing games. While Subject 3 likes to read books, watching videos, invite his classmates to his house to have a conversation, and chatting with the people who could speak English. Those activities help them to improve and enhance their English skills. Furthermore, the international students can access some English materials and references at UM where they can get from books in library, American Corner in main library, and English Self Access Center (ESAC) in undergraduate program of English.

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