

## Culture Shocks Experienced by Indonesian Students Studying Overseas

Ernofalina

([valerina\\_november16@yahoo.com](mailto:valerina_november16@yahoo.com))

Senior High School 8 Pekanbaru, Indonesia

**Abstract:** This qualitative study is aimed at investigating culture shocks experienced by Indonesian students studying overseas in both academic and non-academic settings. It is intended to answer three research questions: 1) What stages of culture shocks did they experience?; 2) How did culture shocks affect their life?; 3) How did they solve the problems of culture shocks? Data were collected by distributing a questionnaire to 40 respondents and conducting an in-depth interview with selected respondents. Data were analyzed by categorizing information, sorting out similar information, and interpreting information. The data were validated by triangulation, member checks, and as clear description as possible. The findings showed that the students experienced culture shock in varying levels; initial euphoria, irritation, gradual adjustment, acceptance and integration. The study revealed that language was the most problematic aspect experienced by the students. Culture shocks affected students' life in both academic and non-academic settings. Lack of confidence in class participation was the effect of culture shocks experienced by most of the students because of the language problem. To survive in host country, students solved the problems through various activities, such as by interacting with Indonesian people staying in host country, communicating with family and friends, consulting lecturers, academic advisor and counselor, tolerating with cultural differences, understanding host culture as well as introducing Indonesian culture, having positive attitude towards culture shocks, writing journals, and keeping physically and mentally healthy.

**Keywords:** *Culture, culture shocks, Indonesian students, studying overseas*

### INTRODUCTION

The term 'culture shock' has been defined in similar ways by some scholars in the field. Levine and Adelman (1993), for instance, define culture shock as the response that an individual may have in a new country; the person may feel confused and disoriented, and every aspect of life may be difficult. In the same vein, Guanipa (1998) states that culture shock is a term which describes the anxiety produced when a person moves to a

completely new environment. This term expresses the lack of direction, the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate. Milton (2005) states that culture shocks happen in a different environment. The most severe and costly cases of culture shocks occur to individuals who live outside of their native country for an extended period of time such as international students.

Studying overseas and delving into the unknown society indeed can be a daunting task for international students since many of them experience culture shocks while adjusting to a new culture. They might face culture shocks in academic and non-academic settings, which might be frustrating and challenging.

In academic settings, the problems can be in terms of language and study: the different atmosphere of an overseas university, different attitudes of lecturers and students towards study and research, and the need to adjust their old study habits to a new way of working. In non-academic settings, the problems can be in terms of food, seasons, accommodations, homesickness, loneliness, and relationship with others where the life systems are very different.

Reactions to a new culture vary. Yet, experience and research have shown that there are distinct stages in the adjustment process. Levine & Adelman (1993), Jandt (1998), Pavese, Bohlmann & Gladding (2003), Thomas (2001) identify the stages of culture shock as initial euphoria, irritation and hostility, gradual adjustment, acceptance and integration. In initial euphoria, the new arrivals may feel euphoric and be pleased by all of the new things encountered. They may have some problems but usually accept them as just part of the newness. In addition, Schneider (2005) reveals that in euphoria stage, everything is great, nothing is wrong and individuals are having a wonderful time. Therefore, in initial euphoria people are fascinated by everything in a new culture. However, this period did not last forever.

In irritation and hostility stage individuals are immersed in new problems. They may encounter some difficult times and a crisis in daily life. In this stage, there may be feelings of discontent, impatience, anger, sadness, and feeling incompetence. They may begin to feel aggressive and start to complain about the host culture. This happens when a newcomer is trying to compare the new culture which is very different from their own culture. The transition between the old methods and those of the new country is a difficult process and takes time to complete. During the transition, there can be strong feelings of dissatisfaction. At this point, a newcomer starts to reject the host country, complaining and noticing only the bad things. The same idea is also stated by Guanipa (1988), Thomas (2001), Ferguson (2002), and Schneider (2005).

In gradual adjustment stage, individuals become more comfortable in the new culture. They begin to relax in the new situation and are generally easy to work with. Everyday activities are no longer major problems. They may not yet become fluent in spoken language, but they can now express their basic ideas and feelings. More things are predictable, people feel more in control and more comfortable and fewer feelings of

isolation. At this point, they are beginning to feel more at home in new surroundings and to accept norms and social codes around them.

In acceptance and integration stage individuals have the ability to function in both cultures. It occurs when they feel at home in host culture and have the ability to live successfully in two cultures. They become more comfortable with the language and with the customs of the host country. They gain some understanding of host culture. A new feeling of pleasure and sense of humour may be experienced. One may start to feel certain psychological balance. They can now move around without feeling of anxiety.

A number of studies on culture shocks have been conducted by other researchers, such as Levine and Adelman (1993), Ballard and Clanchy (1996), who investigated culture shocks experienced by international students studying in USA, Australia, and Canada respectively. Research done by Karjadi (2003) showed that the most problematic problem experienced by Indonesian students studying overseas is language.

This study is carried out to explore three research questions: 1) What stages of culture shocks did Indonesian students experience?; 2) How did culture shocks affect their life?; 3) How did they solve the problems of culture shocks?

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is characterized by a case study and was carried out in a single case (Merriam, 1991). This means that this study investigated students preparation to study overseas, stages of culture shock they experienced in academic and non-academic settings and how the culture shock affected their life during their study overseas This study employed multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). Data were collected through questionnaire and interviews. The use of multiple data collection was intended to enhance the construct validity of the study (Yin, 2003).

The respondents of the study were Indonesian students studying overseas which were classified into two categories: 1) students who were still studying overseas: 2) students who once studied overseas and completed their studies in the last five years. The researcher had access to respondents by sending e-mails to Indonesian students association overseas and they facilitated the researcher to get in touch with the students through e-mails. The researcher also had access to Indonesian students studying overseas through AMINEF.

The 40 respondents of the main study were from different background in terms of gender, age, countries where they study, and the level of education taken. There were 23 males and 17 female respondents studying in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea, and the USA. From the 40 respondents, 30 of them were still studying overseas and 10 respondents had

completed their study overseas. All of them ranged from 19 years to 45 years old studying undergraduate, master and short course.

The data were collected by distributing a questionnaire to 40 respondents through emails and conducting interviews to six of them through yahoo messenger application. There were two types of questionnaires used in this study; open questionnaire and closed or forced-choice questionnaires (Merriam & Simpson, 1989). The open questionnaire was aimed at getting the data from the respondents that allow greater freedom of responses, whereas a closed questionnaire was conducted based on Guttman scale in order to get a firm answer of YES and NO from the respondents.

Interviews were employed as another source of data to get information which was not gained from the questionnaire and to get in-depth information derived from questionnaire responses. As stated by Yin (2003) interview is one of the most important sources of case study information and it can be a valuable way of gaining a description of action and events (Maxwell, 1996, p.76). A guided or semi-structured interview was employed in this study. This kind of interview was used to get all the information required without forgetting a question, while at the same time to permit the participants' freedom of responses and description to illustrate what they experienced (Field & Morse, 1985, p.6). A focused interview was also used in which a respondent was interviewed for a short period of time (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990).

The data gained from the questionnaire responses were read during and after data collection. Memos, notes, and codes were written to fracture the data and to rearrange them into categories (Maxwell, 1996, p.78). The data gained from closed questions were presented in tables to calculate the percentage of respondents' responses of YES and NO for each item in the closed questionnaire. After that, the data were compared, contrasted, and interpreted to answer the research questions. The data from the interviews were transcribed, read, categorized, compared, contrasted, and interpreted to get the answer to the research questions. The transcription of the interviews was sent back to the respondents to make sure that it was exactly what the respondents said and meant.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

There are three kinds points discussed as the findings of this study; 1) stages of culture shock they experienced; 2) the effects of culture shock in their life during their study overseas; 3) the ways they solved the problems caused by culture shock.

### **1. Stages of Culture Shock Experienced by Indonesian Students**

Students experienced culture shock in an academic setting which refers to language, the educational situation at overseas universities, academic administrative procedures, students-lecturers interaction, and students-students interaction. Besides, students also

experienced culture shock in a non-academic setting which refers to students' social interaction with local people, with Indonesian people staying in the host country as well as with other foreigners in the host country. It deals with homesickness, loneliness, seasons and weather, food, public facilities, and non-academic official procedure. It can be said that Indonesian students experienced stages of culture shocks: initial euphoria, irritation and hostility, gradual adjustment, acceptance and integration.

### ***1.1.Initial Euphoria.***

The data revealed that almost all respondents experienced initial euphoria stage where everything is new, intriguing, and exciting. A respondent who studied in the Netherlands, for example, claimed as follows.

I felt everything was new and different. I was very excited when I saw the views and buildings which I only saw on TV.

(DW, studying in the Netherlands)

The excitement of the host country was also experienced by students studying in the USA, Japan, and Germany saying that they were fascinated by sophisticated learning facilities such as high-speed internet and a huge library. They were also excited by the new people they met in the host country who had different characters. One respondent shared her experience in the following extract.

I had new friends of different citizenship and different characters. I admired Australian people who are polite and respect time much.

(RP, studying at University of Adelaide)

Meeting new people who had different character is also an interesting part of studying overseas. They learn can each other and even they can intermingle and have a close relationship. The students experienced initial euphoria stage for the first week until the first month of their stay. They were fascinated by the newness around them. They might have some problems but accepted them as just part of the newness. However, this stage did not last forever. After that, they started to suffer from difficulties and problems studying and living in the host country.

### ***1.2.Irritation and Hostility***

Students experienced irritation and hostility stage when euphoria stage was over. They started to have difficulties and problems in academic and non-academic settings which are summarised in the following table.

Table 1: Aspects of culture shock students experienced.

No	Aspects of culture shock	Responses	
		Yes	No
1	Language	36 (90%)	4 (10%)
2	Daily schedule	18 (45%)	22 (55%)
3	Non-verbal communication	21 (52.5%)	19 (47.5%)
4	Homesickness and Loneliness	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)
5	Seasons and weather	29 (72.5%)	1 (27.5%)
6	Food	28 (70%)	12 (30%)

As indicated by the table, 90% respondents reported that they had language problem when they came in contact with new culture. Although students had learned the target language before studying overseas, they still had problems to understand what host people said. Even, an English lecturer studying in the USA assumed to have a good English skill still had problems to understand spoken language in the campus community. It happened because the host people speak very fast and her unfamiliarity with the dialect used. During the interview, she shared her experience below.

People here speak very fast and they have their own dialect that it was difficult for me to understand, I often asked them to repeat what they said.

(IL, studying at California State University)

A respondent studying in Germany had difficulty to be understood by the native people. He was very confident with his language ability since he used to speak German in the home country. However, once he talked to local people in Germany, he was down because the people did not understand him. Again, it happened because of different dialect and accent.

I was very confident in my ability to speak German but once I arrived in Germany and talked to local people, they did not totally understand me because of different dialect and accent.

(SH, studying in Germany)

The case will be more complicated when students have to understand the different language used in both academic and non-academic settings. It was experienced by a respondent studying in non-English speaking countries in which English is used in academic setting and the target language is used in the community as stated by a respondent below.

Besides trying to understand English on campus, I also had trouble in using Korean when communicating with people because I did not understand Korean well. The pronunciation and the writing system of Korean are difficult.

(RN, studying in South Korea)

The respondent had trouble when communicating with local people in target language caused by her inability to communicate in target language fluently. Mostly the respondents studying in non-English speaking countries prepared themselves better with the language used in academic setting and neglected the target language used in the community.

Difficulty to understand lecturers' explanation is one of the problematic aspects of culture shock students experienced dealing with language problems as stated by one respondent below.

I had trouble in understanding lecturers in the classroom because the lecturers spoke English very fast with a thick Indian accent.

(IR, studying in India)

The same thing was experienced by students studying in Singapore saying that they had difficulty in understanding the lecturers on the first month of their study because of unfamiliarity with the dialect used by the lecturers. This difficulty was also mentioned by students studying in Japan, as indicated in the following excerpt.

Japanese was totally used in teaching and learning process. It was difficult for me sometimes to understand lecturers' explanation because they had different dialect in communication.

(JH, studying undergraduate at Kagoshima University)

In addition to the language problem, respondents claimed that official procedures can also be the problems for students studying overseas as stated by a respondent studying in South Korea in the following extract.

It was difficult for me to deal with academic official matters such as applying student card, library card, and other administrative matters because I could not speak Korean fluently and the administrative officers could not speak English well. Unfortunately, I had to fill in the form in Korean.

(RN, studying in South Korea)

The table shows that 45% respondent stated that they got a problem with the daily schedule. Some of them did not only study in the host country but also do other non-academic activities and even some of them work to add their income. Therefore, it was difficult for them to adjust the time for class and the time for work as stated by one of them as follows.

Generally, daily schedule was overloaded. I had to manage the time to do an academic assignment and to do my part-time job. I felt irritated till the last semester because the daily schedule was loaded by academic tasks such as entering the class, writing a thesis, reading, and routine activities such as visiting a museum, watching the play, socializing with friends, corresponding by emails, and web browsing.

(IN, studying at John Hopkins University, Baltimore)

It seems that the respondent had a problem with time management because there were so many things to do such as academic assignment and other non-academic activities. It happened to her perhaps because she was not used to doing lots of academic assignment and at the same time also worked when she studied in the home country.

In nonverbal communication, people express meaning or feeling without words and different cultures have a different symbol of nonverbal communication. The research indicated that 52.5% respondents had problems in nonverbal communication as stated by one respondent below.

In America, people talk by making eye contact. For me, it is not polite especially when talking to professors. In my hometown, people usually talk to other people by bending their heads down because it is regarded polite. In fact, in America, it is considered impolite to bend head down when talking to other people.

(UA, studying at Duke University)

In Japan, one respondent had problems in understanding nonverbal communication because of many nonverbal expressions which confused him as he stated below.

There were many kinds of nonverbal expressions in Japan that confused me because I didn't understand what they mean.

(JH, studying in Japan)

It was difficult for the respondents to understand what other people mean because they could not interpret the cues. There are, however, nonverbal differences across cultures that may be a source of confusion for foreigners. It happened to Indonesian students because of the unfamiliarity to nonverbal codes such as gesture, body language, facial expressions, and eye contact used by people in the host country.

Another problem faced by international students is homesickness and loneliness. The research showed that 35 out of 40 respondents claimed that they experienced homesickness and loneliness because they used to live with family members and friends around them in the home country. On the other hand, most of them did not take their family members when studying overseas. One respondent stated as follows.

I did not take my family with me and I felt homesick and lonely. All my life, this was the first time I felt homesick although I went overseas before.

(KS, a journalist studying at Ohio University)



29 out of 40 respondents mentioned that they had problems with seasons and weather in the host country as stated by one respondent as follows,

I arrived in America in winter and I suffered from sickness right away probably because of physical shock.

(RS, studying in Baltimore, USA)

This problem happened because students come from a country which has different patterns of seasons and weather with the host country. It is not surprising when they had difficulties to adjust to new seasons and often times they got physical disorders.

Food is also a problem for international students. 28 out of 40 respondents claimed that they had problems with food in the host country and most of them got problems to get food which they could consume as Moslems. One respondent stated in the interview below.

I had an unforgettable experience when I was invited to eat on campus canteen by my Korean friends. I told them that I do not eat pork. Then they ordered noodle and said that it did not contain pork. After I ate the food, I felt it contained meat and asked them in the Korean language whether the food contained pork. They said that it did not contain pork but ham. I was shocked because ham is just the same with pork.

(RN, studying in South Korea)

Some respondents complained about the taste and variation of food, besides it was difficult for them to find a place to get food acceptable to their appetites as claimed by one respondent studying in Canada.

### ***1.3. Gradual Adjustment***

During this stage, everyday activities are no longer major problems for the students but they can now express their basic ideas and feelings. The students experienced this stage in different ways and at a different time. As the time went by, they were able to solve the problems and finally, they got accustomed to. The data showed that the respondents were able to be accustomed to daily routines as stated by one respondent as follows.

No more big problems in daily routines such as shopping.

(MD, studying at Syracuse University)

Besides getting adjusted to daily routines, the respondents started to get used to the language. They were able to express basic feelings although they might not be fluent yet. The research indicates that some respondents passed gradual adjustment in the language in different times and different ways.

### ***1.4. Acceptance and Integration***

The respondents could undergo the acceptance and integration stage with different experiences. They became accustomed to language, academic situation, social interaction, food, seasons and weather. They were able to handle homesickness and loneliness. They felt comfortable with host culture and felt at home living in the host country. Some respondents claimed that they had no problems with the language after some months living in the host country as stated by one of them below.

I became more fluent in speaking English and I could adopt local dialects, talk about topics on media and get accustomed to local issues that gave me chance to get more local friends.

(KS, studying at Ohio University)

Besides getting accustomed to language, the respondents also got accustomed to the academic situation. They claimed that they had no more hard problems dealing with campus matter as stated by one of the respondents below.

I finally understood education system in the Netherlands and I could follow the principle of self-studying. I had no more problems in studying and I had good relation with lecturers and friends in the campus.

(DW, taking summer course in the Netherlands)

The respondents were also able to involve themselves in social interaction during their study overseas and felt comfortable and one respondent claimed as follows. Another student studying in Belgium stated the same thing as follows.

I have been very comfortable with the culture, friends, and environment in Belgium. I have found good friends and I knew where to go on weekends, how to socialize with other foreign students and local people. However, I did not totally penetrate into their culture and I limited myself without reducing my respect for them.

(NM, studying in Belgium)

After several months living in the host country, trying to learn the host culture and the people, and having more friends, joining an organization of local people or Indonesian people, the students finally could adjust themselves with new environment successfully.

## **2. Effects of Culture Shock on Students' Life**

Effects of culture shock on the respondents' during their study can be seen in the following table.

Table 2: Effects of culture shock on students' life during their study

No	Effects of Culture Shock	Responses	
		Yes	No
1	Lack of confidence in class participation	31 (77.5%)	9 (22.5%)
2	Lack of confidence to interact with the lecturers	28 (70%)	12 (30%)
3	Confusion in academic assignment	27 (67.5%)	13 (32.5%)
4	Inability to meet the deadline	26 (65%)	14 (35%)
5	Unsatisfying academic result	22 (55%)	18 (45%)
6	Lack of confidence to communicate with host people	21 (52.5%)	19 (47.5%)
7	Criticism to host people	21 (52.5%)	19 (47.5%)
8	Tendency to interact with Indonesian people	20 (50%)	20 (50%)
9	Physical disorder	20 (50%)	20 (50%)
10	Insecurity, suspicion, worries, and frustration	18 (45%)	22 (55%)

Lack of confidence in the class participation was the effect of culture shock experienced by most of the respondents and it was caused by language problems and different system of teaching and learning process. Most of the respondents claimed that they did not feel confident in expressing their ideas and thoughts in class discussion because they felt they were not good at speaking the target language, as stated by one respondent as follows.

I was not confident expressing my ideas because I was not accustomed to it and I was silent most of the time.

(RMH, studying in German)

It happened to this respondent because of unfamiliarity with the class environment in host country which demanded students to be active while in home country the student got accustomed to the passive class environment.

Furthermore, 70% respondents also experienced lack of confidence to interact with lecturers or academic supervisors as stated by a respondent below.

I felt lack of confidence to interact with lecturers because I was worried to make mistakes and I could not speak Japanese.

(MI, studying at Gunna University, Japan)

The respondent was not confident to communicate with lecturers because he was afraid to make mistake and considered him as an impolite person. He also felt reluctant with lecturers because of the language problem.

International students can experience confusion in doing the academic assignment as the result of culture shock as stated by Schneider (2005). Data of the research shows that 67.5% respondents experienced this problem because of language:

Lecturers in the classroom spoke very fast that I was confused and I did not understand the assignment given.

(IL, studying at California State University)

Another culture shock effect on students' life was an inability to meet the deadline in which they could not complete an academic assignment on time. 65% respondents claimed this effect, as stated by one of the respondents below.

Sometimes, I could not meet the deadline for the assignment given by the lecturers and my work did not meet the lecturers' expectation.

(TZ, studying at Ohio University)

Inability to meet the deadline happened to the respondents because of unfamiliarity with the education system at the university where they studied. It also happened because of daily overload schedule which hampered them to complete the assignment.

The unsatisfying academic result was experienced by 55% respondents as the result of some academic problems as stated by one respondent in the following extract.

In the first semester, my academic result was not good as in the following semester because of difficulty in language that I did not understand the lesson.

(PH, studying in Germany)

Language problem affected the respondent in terms of class participation, interaction with the lecturers and confusion in completing academic assignment which resulted in unsatisfying academic achievement.

Lack of confidence to communicate with host people is another effect of culture shock caused by language problem, worries not to be accepted, different lifestyle, and different character. One respondent studying Germany stated as follows.

I felt reluctant to make friends with German people because I could not speak German fluently and I did not have the same mind with them.

(HW, studying Stuttgart Institute of Management and Technology in Germany)

Thus, students' reluctance to host people was caused by some problems including different lifestyle, different character, different view, students' anxiety, and language problem.

Then, 52.5% respondents were critical and they complained the host culture and thought that their own culture was better as stated by one respondent below in the interview.

I do not like the Korean culture to have an alcoholic drink to show friendship and friendliness. It made me uncomfortable to be around them during dinner  
(RN, studying in South Korea)

Related to intercultural communication, it is called prejudice where the people have irrational dislike, suspicion, or hatred of a particular group, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Similar to what the students experienced that they showed prejudice to host people by showing their dislike to them and criticizing them.

Culture shock can give the feeling of unwillingness to interact with others, which seem threatening or unpleasant. The present study revealed that some of the Indonesian students avoided communicating with other people including host people. They tended to communicate with Indonesian people staying in the host country to reduce the pain of culture shock they experienced. A respondent who was studying in Montreal, for instance, stated that he preferred to socialize with Indonesian because she could share his experiences with the said it during the interview.

Culture shocks made me intermingle more with Indonesian in Montreal especially with Indonesian students that I could share my experiences with them and relieve the burden I have. (MR, studying in Canada)

Culture shock may give physical disorders to the individuals as claimed by Pavese, Bohlman & Gladding (2002), and Schneider (2005). The present study indicated that 50% respondents of the research claimed that they suffered from physical and physiological disorder as the effect of the culture shocks they experienced as claimed by a respondent below.

I had physical disorder during wet season because the weather was very cold whereas I had to be in campus every day (A student who was studying at Agra University, India)

Other respondents felt worried to eat instant food because they were doubtful whether it could be consumed by Moslem. Therefore, they always asked the ingredients of food before having it. It also gave them stress and pressure, as stated by one respondent as follows.

Age difference, the way of communication, and the people behaviour made me a bit frustrated because I felt they did not try to understand me.  
(FM, studying at Northern Illinois University, USA)

The student felt frustrated because of different culture and different character of the people he found in the host country. It happened to him because he expected them to understand him rather than he tried to understand them.

### 3. Students' Strategies Dealing With Culture Shock

Indonesian students experienced different culture shocks and different effects of culture shocks in their life during their study overseas. Therefore, they also have different ways to solve the problems of culture shocks. The present study indicates that Indonesian students studying overseas had several ways to solve the problems of culture shock, as seen in the following table.

Table 3: Students' Strategies to Deal With Culture Shocks

No	Strategies dealing with Problems	Responses	
		Yes	No
1.	Interacting with Others	39 (97.5%)	1 (2.5%)
2.	Consulting lecturer, academic advisor, or counsellor	38 (95%)	2 (5%)
3.	Tolerating with culture differences	37 (92.5%)	3 (7.5%)
4	Understanding host culture as well as introducing Indonesian culture	37 (92.5%)	3 (7.5%)
4.	Having positive attitude to culture shock	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)
6.	Writing journal	28 (70%)	12 (30%)
5.	Keeping physically and mentally healthy	29 (72.5%)	11 (27.5%)

The table shows that 97.5% respondents claimed that they interacted with other people to solve the problems of culture shock such as interacting with other Indonesian people in the host country, communicating with family and friends in the home country, interacting with host people, and interacting with other international students. It was mentioned, for example, by a respondent studying in Germany in the following extract.

I intermingled with Indonesian people because it could cure my loneliness and homesickness.

(RMH, studying in Germany)

Interacting with Indonesian people in host country did not only reduce the pain of homesickness and loneliness among Indonesian students, but it also helped them solve

other problems by sharing what they experienced. The students wore their experiences as follows:

I had Indonesian friends to share because I felt more comfortable sharing my experiences with Indonesian people because I could talk in Indonesian language and they could understand me more and helped me solve the problem.

(HW, studying in Germany)

Besides interacting with Indonesian people staying in the host country, respondents also communicated with family and friends in Indonesia to reduce the problems caused by culture shocks as stated by one respondent below.

Communicating with family in the home country is the most effective medication to cure homesickness and loneliness. (MA, studying in the Netherlands)

Furthermore, the respondents also interacted with host people in order to involve themselves in social interaction. Making friends and communicating with host people helped the respondents improve their target language, learn and understand host culture, and get advice from local people and local friends since they had experienced with other international students. One respondent expressed as follows.

I intermingled with local people in order to be able to use the Dutch language because it is used in communication in the Netherlands. (MA, studying at Leiden University)

Apart from improving the target language, interacting with host people could also help students learn and understand host culture, as stated by one respondent below.

Make friend with local people, join gathering activities such as parties, festivals, exhibitions, and campus events because these things will help us in learning and understanding their culture. Holding Indonesian culture is good but it does not mean that we have to be closed and conservative. (NJ, studying in Germany)

Interacting with other international students is also important to solve the problems of culture shock since they experience the same thing in the host country and students can share with them and discuss the way out of the problems as claimed by one respondent below.

I made friends with many people including students from other countries that I could share my experiences and could find the solution to the problems we had.

(NM, studying in Belgium)

They experienced the same thing with other international students that they had the same problems and the same feeling about culture shock they had. They could share the bad and good time they experienced and could discuss the way out to solve the problems.

The findings show that 95% (38 out of 40) respondents of the research consulted lecturers, academic advisors, or counsellor to help them solve the problems in their academic life as reported by a respondent below.

I often consulted my lecturers and academic advisors for academic problems I had. They were very helpful. I always confirmed them before submitting the assignment that they could give me some more ideas.

(TZ, studying at Ohio University)

Beside consulting lecturers, academic advisors and friends, international students can also ask the help of counselling service to solve the problem. One of the students wrote his experience below.

I felt lack of confidence in writing my thesis because of my poor academic writing ability. Finally, I tried to come to counselling service to solve my problem and it worked. (AT, studying at La Trobe University, Australia)

Consulting lecturer, academic advisor or counsellor is one good way to solve academic problems. It was beneficial because students got help from the right person.

About 92.5% respondents revealed that they solved culture shocks by being tolerant to cultural differences, refusing politely friends' invitation, which was not suitable for their culture, religion, and principal. They also tried to understand host people's way of thinking and eliminate the feeling of prejudice. A respondent studying in Australia suggests that international students have to admit cultural differences between host culture and their original culture as he stated as follows.

We have to admit the difference between our culture and other people's culture. We have to be tolerant and respect other culture. However, we have to respect what other people do and to control ourselves not to do things, which are not suitable for our principle and belief.

(AT, studying in Australia)

To prevent serious depression of culture shock, a student studying in Montreal tried to be tolerant of cultural differences. However, she did not force herself to follow host culture, which is inappropriate to Indonesian culture and herself to follow host culture, which is inappropriate to Indonesian culture and her beliefs. She expressed her experience below.

I tried to be tolerant of cultural differences to prevent culture shock becoming a hard depression. However, it did not mean that I had to imitate culture which was not suitable with our culture and religion. (EN, studying in Canada)



Understanding host culture as well as introducing Indonesian culture can also be done as a strategy dealing with culture shocks as mentioned by 92.5% respondents. It helped them in adjustment process as expressed by a respondent below.

Learning host culture and understanding the habits of my American friends helped me in the adjustment process. I also introduced Indonesian culture to them.

(IL, studying in the USA)

To understand the host culture, Indonesian students can also ask local people about their culture. The following respondents expressed their experiences below.

I did not feel reluctant to ask my American friends about their culture because basically they were ready to help when we asked them. I also joined social gathering such as party and I told them that I do not consume pork and alcohol and they understood my culture.

(NW, studying in Madison, USA)

In order to solve the problems of culture shock and to keep survived in the host country, students must have a positive attitude to culture shock (Thomas, 2001). About 87.5% respondents (35 out of 40) claimed that this was one way for them to overcome culture shock problems, as one of the respondents stated as follows.

I just passed the culture shock as the way it was because I realized that it would not last forever. I did not want to say that it was a culture shock, but 'culture shake' which would end someday. Therefore, when I had a problem, I did not want to make it serious. It really helped me in the adjustment process.

(AN, studying in the USA)

The same thing was also suggested by respondents studying in Montreal and New Delhi saying that one has to have a positive attitude to culture shocks he or she has and it will help students find more ways to solve the problems.

Being physically and mentally healthy is important to survive in the host country. The data shows that 29 respondents did this way to help them well cope with culture shock problems by consuming healthy and nutritious food, having enough rest, doing some sports as well as joining religious activities. Stress because of culture shock could be reduced by doing fun activities such as shopping, having recreation and party as stated by one of the respondents as follows.

Get relaxed and do fun activities such as dinner party, summer trip, skiing, karaoke could relieve stress.

(MR, studying in Canada)

Writing bad and good experiences in a journal was also a way done by the 28 respondents to cope culture shock problems as stated by one of them below.

I wrote my sadness, happiness, and all problems I had in a journal because it really helped me lessen the burden I had. Journal was my friend in bad time and good time

(SH, studying in German)

When students had nobody to share the feeling, a journal can replace the existence of friends. They could write sad and happy moment or even their negative behaviour when they reacted to cultural differences that resulted in more problems and they would not do the same mistake anymore and shift to positive behaviour. They could also write the efforts they had done to solve culture shock problems and evaluate if they worked well

## CONCLUSION

Studying overseas is not an easy task for Indonesian students. They faced some culture shock problems that affected them in academic and non-academic settings during their stay overseas. Preparation prior to the departure to host country did not guarantee them not to have problems studying in the host country but they did preparation to minimize the problems of culture shock.

This study revealed that Indonesian students experienced culture shock in some stages; initial euphoria, irritation and hostility, gradual adjustment, acceptance and integration. It was found that language was the most problematic aspects of culture shock experienced by Indonesian students both in academic and non-academic settings. It was caused by unfamiliarity with the target language in terms of dialects, slang, idioms, intonation, and vocabularies. Language problems influenced students' in interacting with host people.

Culture shock affected students' life in different ways. The study found that lack of confidence in class participation was the effect of culture shock experienced by most of the respondents which were mainly caused by the language. It was also caused by the different academic system, different classroom atmosphere from what they used to experience in the home country. The process of adjustment involved many aspects such as getting used to everyday activities, language, academic situation, seasons and weather, food and social interaction until they could get accustomed to host country and feel comfortable living there. They needed a different time and passed through different experiences to survive.

The study also identified different strategies Indonesian students employed to solve the problems caused by culture shock. Some strategies are that they interacted with other Indonesian people staying in the host country, host people, and other international students. They also communicated with family and friends at home. Other strategies are by consulting with their lecturers, academic advisors, and counsellors if they have cultural issues. They also started to be more tolerant of cultural differences. Understanding host culture as well as introducing Indonesian culture, building positive

attitude to culture shocks, writing journals, and keeping physically and mentally healthy are found to be other strategies practised by Indonesian students overseas to solve culture shock problems.

## REFERENCES

- Ballard, Brigid and Clanchy, John. (1996). *Study Abroad – A Manual Asian Students*. Kuala Lumpur: Longman Malaysia.
- Ferguson, Julia. (2002). *Culture Shock*. Retrieved January 10, 2006, from <http://www.juliaferguson.com>.
- Field, P. & Morse, J. (1985). Interview Techniques. In R. Wiseman. (Ed). *Research Methodology: Issues and Methods in Research*. Melbourne: Deakin University.
- Guanipa, Carmen. (1998). Culture Shock: A Fish Out of Water. Retrieved May 15, 2005 from <http://edweb.sdsu/people/Cguanipa/cultureshock.htm>.
- Jandt, Fred E. (1998). *Intercultural Communication: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Karjadi, Emilia. (2003). *Culture Shocks and Adjustment: A Case Study of Indonesian Students Studying Overseas*. Unpublished Thesis. Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Bandung.
- Levine, DR & Adelman, M.B (1993). *Beyond Language*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. (1996). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. London: Sage Publication.
- Merriam, Sharan B. (1991). *Case Study Research in Education – A Qualitative Approach*. San Fransisco: Josey – Bass Publisher
- Merriam, Sharan B., Simpson, Edwin L (1989). *A Guide to Research for Educators and Trainers of Adults*. Florida: Robert E Krieger Publishing Company.
- Merton, R.K., Fiske, M., Kendall, P.I. (1990). *The Focused Interview: A Manual of Problems and Procedures*. New York: Free Press.
- Milton, Thomas J. Understanding Culture Shock. Retrieved January 9, 2006. From <http://www.faoa.org/journal/cshckfao.html>.
- Pavese, Josphine Jane, Paul, A, Gladding, Sophie. (2000). *Before You Go Overseas Travel Advise*. Cambridge: OCS Publications. Harvard University.
- Schneider, Katherine. (2005). Cultural Differences: International Students Coping with Culture Shock. Retrieved January 12, 2006, from <http://www.uwec.edu/counsel/pubs/shock/htm>.
- Thomas, Sharon. (2001). *The Culture Shock Phenomenon, Symptoms, Cures, and Implications*. *International Journal: Language, Society, and Culture*. Retrieved November 16, 2005. from <http://www.educ.utas.edu.au/users/tle/JOURNAL/Articles/Thomas>.
- Yin, Robert K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and methods*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.