

Intercultural Communication in Adaptation Process to Minimize Culture Shock

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Abstract

Malang City has evolved into a prominent hub for students. Embracing this new role, it has become a sought-after destination for learners from outside Java who wish to pursue their education at local universities. The influx of international students brings a vibrant intercultural dynamic to the city, affecting both the local community and the students themselves. As these students undergo the adaptation process to integrate and thrive in their new environment, they often face challenges such as culture shock, which arises from insufficient preparation and knowledge about their new surroundings. Culture shock can be minimized in the process of student adaptation by the application of intercultural communication, which can bridge the constraints of understanding in society. This research aims to examine the impact of intercultural communication on the adaptation process of Hindu students in Malang City, focusing on how it can reduce the incidence of culture shock. Employing a qualitative-interpretative approach, the research gathers data through comprehensive and interactive interviews based on the informants' personal experiences. Informants are selected using purposive sampling, and data is analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework, which involves data collection, reduction, and interpretation. The outcomes highlight that culture shock among Hindu students in Malang City is influenced by internal factors, including personal abilities, insufficient factual information, and experiences in intercultural social interactions. While external factors include language, food, customs, and climate. The phases of culture shock development in the adaptation process include the optimistic phase, cultural phase, recovery phase, and adjustment phase. The duration for students to transition from experiencing culture shock to achieving adaptation ranges from one month to a year. Effective intercultural communication plays a crucial role in this adaptation process, helping to reduce the impact of culture shock by facilitating stages of convergence, divergence, and maintenance.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Social Adaptation, Culture Shock, Hindu Students, Tolerance.

Malang City has emerged as a prominent educational hub, attracting students from across Indonesia to pursue higher education. With 62

universities contributing to its reputation as a student-centric city, Malang offers a favorable environment with a pleasant climate, affordable

living costs, and sufficient public amenities. These factors drive the enthusiasm of the younger generation to research in Malang. Over the years, the growing student population has fostered a multicultural atmosphere in the city. The close interactions between the local residents and incoming students significantly impact various aspects, including economic, social, and cultural dimensions, ultimately shaping urban development and governance.

Malang City, renowned for its prestigious universities, attracts students pursuing undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees. Hindu students from across Indonesia select institutions and fields of research based on their interests and abilities. Popular choices among these students include Brawijaya University, Bina Nusantara University, State University of Malang, and Merdeka University, among others. They enroll in a diverse range of programs such as Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Business Management, Accounting, Engineering, Informatics, Visual Communication Design, Communication Science, Psychology, and Education.

Hindu students researching in Malang come not only from Bali but from various regions including Lombok, Palembang, Lampung, Medan, Riau, Manado, Makassar, Palu, Kendari, Samarinda, Balikpapan, Kupang, and Jakarta. The convergence of students from different backgrounds fosters significant social interactions. Humans, as social beings, rely on these interactions to meet their needs, with communication playing a central role in establishing relationships within their environment. Social interaction involves reciprocal communication between individuals and can occur at any time and in any place, often involving people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Navigating these intercultural exchanges requires sensitivity to different cultural norms and standards.

Hindu students migrating to Malang City inevitably engage in intercultural interactions with local residents through activities such as

renting accommodations or purchasing food. These students, each bringing their unique cultural backgrounds from various regions, must learn to adapt both to their peers and to the local community. This adjustment requires mental preparedness, knowledge, and experience to navigate and adhere to cultural norms effectively. Adaptation involves modifying one's behavior to fit into a new environment for personal adjustment. In social interactions, successful cultural adaptation is crucial for maintaining effective communication between individuals. As noted by Kim, cultural adaptation is an ongoing, interactive process that evolves through the communication of migrants with their new socio-cultural surroundings (Soemantri, 2019).

Cultural adaptation is important to prevent a person's inability to adjust to their new environment, which can affect their behavior psychologically. The inability to adapt will potentially experience culture shock, which is described by deep and negative responses such as depression, frustration, and disorientation. Culture shock is usually triggered by persistent anxiety due to the loss of signs and symbols of social relationships that have been present in social interactions, such as habits, norms, gestures, and facial expressions. Culture shock will hinder the adaptation process, because it can reduce a person's self-confidence which will have an impact on his ability to build self-identity and culture (Devinta et al., 2015).

Student adaptation requires the role of intercultural communication to minimize the potential for culture shock. Intercultural communication can bridge the process of social interaction that experiences constraints on people's understanding, so that it does not lead to cultural conflict (Dasih et al., 2023). Intercultural communication is the exchange of messages between people with different cultural backgrounds, both verbal and nonverbal (Ngalimun, 2019). In communicating, humans use their souls, feelings, values, hopes, interests, and needs, so that in their interactions they will

directly make judgments that are considered good, polite, or beautiful according to the context of norms and culture. Intercultural communication emphasizes the principle of difference rather than similarity (Sanjani et al., 2023). In intercultural social interactions, one party does not make judgments and compare other people's cultures with their own culture. Instead, cultural differences can establish relationships of mutual respect and understanding, promoting tolerance, so as to adapt to the environment (Riberu et al., 2015).

Culture shock is generally experienced by students who are still in the early semesters, but can be minimized by continuing to interact and communicate so that they can slowly adapt by exchanging information and knowledge. Cultural diversity and a new place of residence for Hindu students can broaden horizons, because they can establish intercultural communication and collaboration more broadly. The principle of intercultural communication forms a harmonious life, bringing together two or more people from different cultures to form a new culture. Humans learn to think, feel, believe, and strive for what is appropriate according to their culture (Dasih et al., 2023). Humans view culture as a way of life or order of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meaning, hierarchy, religion, time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, material objects and property obtained by a large group of people from generation to generation through individual and group efforts (Mulyana, 2015).

In contrast, students who have entered the final semester have mostly been able to adapt to their environment and do not experience culture shock anymore, instead intercultural interaction and communication are getting more intensive, comfortable, and deep. Some students form relationships that extend beyond friendship, including dating and even marriage. Cultural differences do not equate to a loss of identity for Hindu students; rather, they must develop open-minded attitudes and balanced perspectives to appreciate that intercultural communication

fosters connections free from discrimination. The goal of intercultural communication is to enhance understanding of human interactions, particularly those involving subconscious communicative behaviors (Andini et al., 2023; Quyen, 2021). This form of communication helps address and mitigate misunderstandings related to cultural practices, thus preventing miscommunications in both verbal and non-verbal interactions (Papalangi et al., 2023).

Methods

This research employs a qualitative-interpretative approach, focusing on data gathered through direct observation and detailed interviews based on the informants' experiences to accurately describe the current situation. The research principle is centered on the researcher as the primary instrument, although this is complemented by additional tools such as interview guides, cameras, and smartphones. Data collection methods include observation, interviews, and literature review. Primary data is derived from interviews and observations, while secondary data is sourced from literature, including books, journals, and prior research. The technique of determining informants used purposive sampling, with the consideration that the selected informants were considered to know and understand the research topic, so that the data obtained was valid. Informants in this research were Hindu students from all over Indonesia who studied at several campuses in Malang City. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model, because during the interview an analysis of the informant's answers has been carried out, so that unsatisfactory data will continue with the interview process to other informants until the data is considered credible. Furthermore, it is analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Results and Discussion

In the process of adaptation through intercultural communication, it is also accompanied by obstacles, such as language barriers, cultural differences, ethnocentrism, and communication stereotypes (Letek et al., 2024). Intercultural communication involves communication participants to represent personal, interpersonal, or community, with differences in cultural environments that affect the communication behavior of the participants (Karmilah et al., 2019). The elements in intercultural communication include people, messages, codes, media or channels, feedback, encoding and decoding, and interference (Nasrullah, 2014).

Hindu students pursuing their education in Malang City aim to broaden their perspectives and advance their lives by reinforcing their values, emotions, beliefs, culture, and knowledge. Additionally, the presence of Hindu students in Malang is not limited to those of Balinese descent but includes individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Consequently, their adaptation process involves not only interacting with local residents but also engaging with other Hindu students from different ethnic groups. The role of intercultural communication is used to minimize the potential for culture shock. Furnham and Bochner (1970) show that culture shock can be caused by three things, as follows:

1. Losing familiar cues or signs. Cues are part of everyday life such as signs, gestures, facial expressions, or habits that can tell a person how to act in certain situations.
2. The breakdown of interpersonal communication at both a conscious level leads to frustration and anxiety. Language barriers are an obvious cause of this disorder.
3. Identity crisis by going out of his area, a person will re-evaluate the picture of himself (Liliweri, 2021; Bouguerra, 2024).

Samovar further states that individuals generally go through four levels of culture shock.

These four levels can be described in the form of a U curve, so it is called the U-Curve as follows:

1. Optimistic Phase,

The first phase depicted is in the upper left part of the U-curve. This phase contains excitement, hopefulness, and euphoria as individuals anticipate entering a new culture.

2. Cultural Issues,

The second phase is where problems with the new environment begin to develop, for example due to language difficulties, a new traffic system, a new school, and so on. This phase is usually characterized by a sense of disappointment and dissatisfaction. This is the crisis period in culture shock, people become confused and dumbfounded by their surroundings, and can become frustrated and irritable, hostile, irritable, impatient, and even incompetent.

3. Recovery Phase,

The third phase is where people begin to understand the new culture. At this stage, people gradually make adjustments and changes in the way they cope with the new culture. People and events in the new environment become predictable and less stressful.

4. Adjustment Phase,

The last phase, at the peak of right U, people have understood the key elements of their new culture such as values, special manners, communication patterns, beliefs, etc. (Mulyana, 2015; Eslit, 2024).

The following will be described about the factors that trigger the occurrence of Hindu student culture shock in Malang City, and the accompanying impacts in the adaptation process.

1. Factors Causing the Occurrence of Culture Shock of Hindu Students in Malang City

In this research, a migrating student is defined as an individual who relocates from their hometown or homeland to another city or even abroad voluntarily to pursue higher education for a specified period before returning home. The primary motivation for these students is to attend their chosen institution, adapt to their new surroundings, complete their studies within the

designated timeframe, and eventually go back to their place of origin.

As social beings, Hindu students must adapt to their new environment, which involves understanding and integrating into the local culture. The adaptation process can sometimes lead to challenges, such as language barriers, differences in customs, and variations in communication practices. These challenges require students to undergo a process of self-adjustment through learning and experience. Without proper adaptation, students may experience culture shock, which can lead to communication issues, anxiety, discomfort, and frustration. Interviews with informants have identified several factors contributing to culture shock among Hindu students in Malang City, including:

1.1 Internal Factors

The interview results show that internal factors are often caused by psychological influences that show the intrapsychic ability to deal with the new environment desired by the internal control center. Internal factors that determine the occurrence of culture shock lie in intrapersonal abilities, intercultural social interaction experiences, and lack of factual information. All three have an influence on the human self-management management system which includes memory, sensation, perception, and thinking. This can trigger the discomfort of Hindu students in Malang City which has an impact on the mood and continuity of their studies.

a. Intrapersonal Ability

Intrapersonal abilities greatly affect students' skills in communicating, socializing, and highlighting student characteristics. Students' intrapersonal behavior is also influenced by their attitude and independence away from their families, so that they are able to build a system of support and supervision for themselves. The size of the intrapersonal influence appears in the way decisions are made and supervision of attitudes and tolerance, if the decision is overwhelmed with anxiety, it indicates a culture

shock in students. Culture shock is more common in new students, in the first semester they have to adjust to the social environment and courses. Conversely, if there is a sense of comfort, it will facilitate the adaptation process so that it is far from anxiety and fear as a characteristic of culture shock.

b. Cross-cultural Social Interaction Experience

The experience of cross-cultural social interaction shows students' readiness to socialize with their environment, including psychological readiness to accept lectures according to the chosen research program and university. Students who already have cross-cultural socialization experience will find it easier to adapt to their new environment, so that they can socialize well and can build new friendships to support their continued life in Malang City, thereby reducing the potential for culture shock. In contrast, students who have never had intercultural interaction experience will experience difficulties in initiating communication due to fear of being wrong or offending others, so that they experience obstacles in the socialization process and will even affect the continuation of their studies and will increase the potential for culture shock.

c. Lack of Factual Information

Intrapersonal skills should be complemented by students' creativity in acquiring knowledge through reliable information sources. Advances in technology and communication facilitate rapid and accurate access to information, enabling students to find what they need more easily. For students relocating to Malang City, effective adaptation requires a thorough understanding of their new environment, which can help them navigate social interactions more smoothly. Having prior knowledge about the destination reduces the likelihood of experiencing culture shock. In contrast, students lacking such information may face increased anxiety and uncertainty, exacerbating the risk of culture shock.

1.2 External Factors

The results of the interviews show that external factors are more often due to sociocultural variation, which is an ability related to the level of cultural differences that affect the high and low transition between the original culture to the new culture. The greater the perceived difference, the faster it causes culture shock. These differences include differences in socio-culture, customs, religion, climate, food tastes, language, facial expressions, gestures, ways of dressing, lifestyles, education, technology, social norms, rules, and behavior of the local community as the host. External factors that determine the occurrence of culture shock in Hindu students in Malang City in the adaptation process lie in:

a. Food Types and Flavors

Differences in the type and taste of food are a major problem for students in the adaptation process. Food is closely related to the culture of the place of origin and has been attached to each individual. For Hindu students migrating in Malang City, food is a source of sensitivity because of the different flavors and types of food that are very different. Most students are accustomed to their home region with the taste of food and spicy and savory, when they are in Malang City the taste of food becomes sweet. This causes shock and frustration leading to culture shock, especially requiring a long adaptation process to get used to the taste of sweet food. The food factor is the main external cause of culture shock, because on average all dominant informants expressed complaints of discomfort in the taste of food. Moreover, most Hindu students who continue their education in Malang City come from outside Java.

b. Language

Language is a crucial medium for human communication and interaction; without it, social interactions would be significantly hindered. Beyond the national language, Indonesia is home to a diverse range of regional languages, each with its own distinct characteristics. Local languages, which are often the mother tongues of

various ethnic groups, serve as a reflection of cultural heritage. Mastering language involves not only understanding its meaning but also navigating its accents and dialects. Hindu students researching in Malang City often face challenges in communicating with locals who predominantly use Javanese in their daily lives. This becomes particularly problematic when students visit food vendors near their lodgings, as many of these vendors speak Javanese rather than Indonesian, making communication difficult and adding to the students' frustration. Meanwhile, students who come from outside Java also do not understand Javanese, so language as a means of communication can hinder social interaction between students and local residents. Students are confused because they do not understand the language using signs, but have different meanings so that it has an impact on discomfort that leads to the emergence of culture shock. This is very natural because language can have multiple meanings.

c. Customs

The variety of cultures and traditions in different regions necessitates that migrant students adjust to the local customs of Malang City. This adjustment involves respecting and integrating with the local community, who serve as the hosts. However, this process of adaptation can be challenging, especially for students experiencing culture shock. Hindu students, for instance, may find certain local practices unsettling. In Malang City, it is common for residents to hang clothes higher than head height, which can be uncomfortable for Hindu students who consider the head a sacred part of the body. Additionally, Hindu customs emphasize cleanliness and purity, including the practice of keeping food preparation and cleaning separate from bathroom activities, which can further contribute to their discomfort when encountering local practices that differ from their own.

d. Climate

Malang City is characterized by its cool climate and frequent rainfall, leading to chilly temperatures, especially in the mornings and

evenings. Hindu students, who typically come from warmer climates, often find themselves surprised by the cold weather in Malang. It's common for newcomers to the city to experience flu-like symptoms, fever, or allergies due to the lower temperatures. With temperatures sometimes dropping to as low as 13° Celsius, students may face culture shock and need to adjust by incorporating warm foods and vitamins into their diet to stay healthy.

2. The Development Phase of Culture Shock in the Adaptation of Hindu Students in Malang City

A temporary change of residence for students within a certain period of time will definitely cause some problems at the beginning, known as culture shock. Over time, culture shock can be eroded by interacting and communicating to get information and experience in a new environment. Samovar divides into four phases of culture shock, namely the optimistic phase, cultural phase, recovery phase, and adjustment phase (Mulyana, 2015; Yulianti & Darmayuda, 2023). The interview results show that the development of culture shock among Hindu students in Malang City goes through the following phases:

a. Optimistic Phase

In the optimistic phase, students come to Malang City with the aim of continuing their education at university. At the beginning of his month living in Malang City as an overseas student, he will first experience a period of isolation from his home culture, especially away from his family. There is a sense of worry, anxiety, and longing for family covering his life so that it disturbs feelings and slowly appears discomfort such as difficulty sleeping. Over time, the process of disintegration occurs and makes students aware of the differences between the culture of origin and the new culture, thus rejecting the new culture. This phase began the development of culture shock in Hindu students in Malang City.

b. Cultural Phase

During the second phase, students who encounter culture shock are particularly susceptible to forming negative stereotypes about new cultures. These stereotypes involve exaggerated and often unfavorable beliefs about certain groups (Putri et al., 2020; Dung, 2023). If these stereotypes are allowed to persist, they can foster ethnocentrism among students, which may result in inappropriate behavior. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to evaluate other cultures based on one's own cultural norms and standards, rather than on the standards of the cultures being observed (Permana, 2021; Ninh, 2023). This behavior leads individuals to judge other cultures through the lens of their own cultural values.

Based on the results of interviews, there have been no cases of culture shock among Hindu students in Malang City that lead to ethnocentrism behavior. Some students stated that culture shock occurred at the stereotypical stage such as comparing food flavors, languages, mindsets, dialectics, and manners. The condition of criticizing a new culture for students in the influence of culture shock, generally due to resentment and procrastination in learning the language and habits that apply in a new place so that it hinders the adaptation process. In the integration process, it will lead students to melt and increase the level of tolerance in themselves characterized by feelings of interest and desire to learn the local language and culture which will gradually lead to student independence.

c. Recovery Phase

Hindu students enter the recovery phase once they have successfully resolved their initial crises without regret. Over time, they become open to embracing the new culture in Malang City voluntarily, without external pressure. They begin to appreciate the differences in norms and values between their home culture and the local culture in Malang City, leading them to engage in the social adaptation process with a positive attitude. They start to explore new places, enjoy social interactions, and find their own rhythm and behavior in the new environment. Students who navigate this adaptation phase without

psychological stress are better able to identify their socio-cultural values, communication styles, and behaviors.

During this recovery phase, students gradually discover places and activities that align with their personal preferences. They might find dining spots that suit their taste and are easy on their digestive system, manage health concerns related to the colder climate, and feel a sense of independence and comfort. This phase marks the students' growing awareness of their purpose in coming to Malang City and their increasing satisfaction with their experience.

d. Adjustment Phase

The adjustment phase is the last stage of culture shock. At this point students have realized that each culture has its own uniqueness, nothing is better or worse depending on the individual as the perpetrator of the culture. Hindu students in Malang City realize that the integration process will lead them to independence in determining and determining their search for themselves. In this phase, students are usually able to interact and communicate comfortably with both local residents and the general public, making it easier for them to get along or research on campus. Students are considered mature in understanding the environment and have enjoyed their life in Malang City well.

3. The Role of Intercultural Communication in the Adaptation Process of Hindu Students in Malang City

The research of intercultural communication in the adaptation process of Hindu students in Malang City is informed by Giles' (1973) communication accommodation theory, which focuses on the dynamics of convergence, divergence, and maintenance in interactions. Convergence involves individuals adjusting their speech patterns—such as speech rate, pauses, and pronunciation—to align with each other. Divergence, on the other hand, occurs when individuals emphasize the differences in their communication styles to distinguish themselves from others. Maintenance refers to the

consistency of an individual's communication patterns throughout the interaction. Interview outcomes reveal the interplay between these elements—convergence, divergence, and maintenance—and their roles in the adaptation process.

a. Convergence

Hindu students who will continue their education at universities in Malang City have prepared themselves before their departure. In the convergence process, students look for brief information about Malang City both culturally and linguistically through social media. This information is expected to facilitate the adaptation process in a new environment. However, not all Hindu students who come to Malang City have adequate preparation due to limited costs and access to technology they have. This is an inhibiting factor in the adaptation process so that it experiences a phase of culture shock.

Students who experience difficulties in the adaptation process try to open themselves up and start learning so that a negative stigma does not arise that makes them feel inferior. Adaptation difficulties that come from within themselves will begin with learning to adjust to the taste of sweet food and gradually learning Javanese which is often used as an introduction when shopping or just saying hello to local residents in Malang City. The time required by students to adapt starts from one month to one year, depending on the readiness of students to accept social changes, especially with climate, food, customs, and language. Self-confidence will arise after gaining comfort and independence in adapting to a new environment.

In the adaptation process, Hindu students in Malang City do not leave their original culture. The habits that are maintained will characterize the self-identity and culture of Hindu students, such as continuing to use traditional Balinese clothing with *kamen*, *kebaya*, *saput*, and *udeng* when praying to the temple. There are several temples in Malang City as places of worship for Hindus. Hindu students in Malang City continue

to establish religious communication in the KMHDI (Kesatuan Mahasiswa Hindu Dharma Indonesia) organization. Many religious and community service activities are carried out by students in synergy with the community.

b. Divergence

Hindu students in Malang City typically use Indonesian for their everyday communication, including interactions with local residents. However, some locals do not speak Indonesian, prompting students to use Javanese for greetings as a sign of respect and courtesy towards the host community. Additionally, students employ nonverbal communication, such as handshakes and smiles, to enhance their interactions and aid in their adaptation process.

c. Mantenans

Hindu students in Malang City have a unique way of maintaining communication relationships and social interactions in order to remain harmonious without causing problems that result in hostility. In addition to maintaining speech and manners, students also build an attitude of tolerance to maintain harmony while living in Malang City. An attitude of tolerance is developed to prevent conflicts between fellow students or local residents, by prioritizing mutual respect and respect for others, it is hoped that good relationships will be fostered. In addition, students also participate in working together to maintain the cleanliness and order of the environment around the boarding house. In fact, there are also students who contribute in securing the environment when a celebration is held by local residents.

Cover

Adaptation refers to how individuals adjust themselves within their social surroundings. The effectiveness of this adjustment varies among people based on their communication traits. Hindu students researching in Malang City, for instance, go through their own adaptation process due to various motivations for choosing universities in that area. As these students relocate, they must integrate with the local community. Nonetheless, they frequently face cultural shock during this period, which can impact their self-esteem. Culture shock is a deep response of someone who feels depressed or surprised when dealing with a new environment and culture. Culture shock can be prevented through the role of intercultural communication, which can bridge social interaction relationships so that obstacles do not arise in understanding society. The role of intercultural communication in preventing culture shock in the adaptation process includes the stages of convergence, divergence, and maintenances. Factors causing culture shock in the adaptation process of Hindu students in Malang City lie in internal factors such as intrapersonal abilities, lack of factual information, and experience of intercultural social interaction. While external factors are influenced by language, food, customs, and climate. The phase of developing culture shock in the adaptation process of Hindu students in Malang City with a grace period between one month and a year, with four phases, namely the optimistic, cultural, recovery, and adjustment phases.

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