

Intercultural competence development during the adjustment period of Indonesian students in the UK

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ABSTRACT

International students must adjust to cross-cultural differences effectively to achieve learning excellence while studying abroad. As a result, students must acquire new skills, especially intercultural competence, to properly communicate with people from other cultures. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Indonesian students in UK universities integrate various components of intercultural competence. This study explains why intercultural competence is necessary and how it may be fostered. It is based on an ethnographic framework involving twelve student blogs and seven student interviews and observations. The findings of this study classified the intercultural competencies required by Indonesian students in the United Kingdom into two types: attitudes and skills. Accepting cultural differences and having an open mind are examples of necessary attitudes. Some necessary skills are the ability to learn new things about a different culture and the ability to follow the rules of the host society. Intercultural competence is a distinct and complex phenomenon that has received little academic attention and merits additional examination. The data show that all individuals had difficulty adjusting to cultural differences during their studies. According to the findings of this study, Indonesian students studying in the United Kingdom must adjust to cultural differences to create favourable views about living abroad. This study serves as evidence that intercultural competence is essential in this situation.

Keywords: Ethnography; Indonesian international students; intercultural adjustment; intercultural competence; qualitative study

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a period of globalization, during which cross-country travel has become more economical and accessible to everyone. Lantz-Deanton (2017) contends that globalization accelerated the migration of individuals and connections between them throughout the world. As a result of this period of globalization, the number of international students grows each year. Additionally, these changes have increased the opportunity for higher education institutions to attract international students to continue their education.

The number of students studying abroad has increased steadily during the past two decades. For instance, in 2017/18, 14% of the total higher education (HE) student population in the United Kingdom were students from outside the European Union (EU) (Higher Education Statistics Authority 2019, as cited in Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021). The UK is also a top choice for international students studying outside their home country (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021). Furthermore, international students accounted for one-third of all tuition revenue at UK universities (Lantz-Deanton, 2017).

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The number of international students has recently been boosted by adding students from Indonesia. Many Indonesians are now opting to continue their education in the UK. The Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France are Indonesian students' preferred study-abroad locations. The largest group of Indonesian students (3,210) who studied abroad in 2016 went to Germany, followed by the United Kingdom (2,950), France (1,300), and the Netherlands (1,113). (Eurostats Statistics; cited in the Jakarta Post, 2016). In addition, the LPDP scholarship program run by the Indonesian government's finance ministry has greatly increased the number of Indonesian students attending universities outside of Indonesia, especially in the United Kingdom (Koran Sindo, 2021).

OECD (2018) states that foreign students face "emerging economic, digital, cultural, demographic, and environmental" concerns in their daily intercultural contacts with people from all over the world (p. 4). Opportunities for people of different backgrounds to interact in the host country have grown as the number of international students has risen. Thus, students may profit from studying abroad because of the possibility of developing multicultural interactions. For instance, by visiting a foreign country, they could learn about and experience a new culture. However, misunderstandings that arise from interactions between cultures can put a strain on students and their academic achievement. International students need to know the pros and cons of living in a diverse society, and they need to learn the intercultural skills they need to take advantage of the pros and deal with the cons (OECD, 2018).

The study-abroad experiences of Indonesian students have been under-researched (i.e., Aisha & Mulyana, 2019; Mulyana & Eko, 2017; Novera, 2004; Samanhudi & Linse, 2017). As they learn about both Indonesian and Western cultures, these students often find themselves surprised by the differences. For example, a 2004 qualitative study by Novera looked at the educational, social, and cultural backgrounds of Indonesian students in universities in Victoria, Australia. She discovered that students had difficulties with academic English usage, met other academic standards, and needed facilities that were appropriate for Muslim students. Mulyana and Eko (2017) examined the ways in which Indonesian students in South Korea dealt with the challenges of intercultural adaptation. The four stages of the cross-cultural adaptation paradigm were all experienced by the participants in this study: the honeymoon phase, the crisis phase, the recovery phase, and the adjustment phase. Additionally, Indonesian students studying in South Korea faced "differences in language and friendship values, cross-cultural preconceptions, and prejudices

that led to discrimination" (Mulyana & Eko, 2017, p. 144).

Substantial studies have been conducted on the topic of international students' intercultural competence development at UK universities, with publications from Jackson (2018), Schartner (2016). However, none of these studies focused on the intercultural competence necessary for Indonesian students in order for them to adapt effectively and in a responsible manner to the aforementioned cross-cultural gaps. More research is required to fully understand this intercultural competence element and fill in the gaps left by existing studies. Because it incorporates the most up-to-date ideas and fills in a significant knowledge gap, my study will also benefit intercultural communication and applied linguistics.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states that individuals who are culturally competent are better able to work together in diverse groups (OECD, 2018). This study provides important insight into why intercultural competence is important, how it is developed, and how international students manage intercultural encounters during the intercultural adjustment period by employing an ethnographic framework that includes student blogs, observations, and interviews.

Intercultural interactions, defined as "a situation in which the participants' cultural difference is substantial enough to have a demonstrable influence on the interaction or communication of at least one of the parties," served as the theoretical underpinning for this research (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009, p. 3). This study's particular research question is as follows: How can students from Indonesia develop the intercultural skills they need during the process of acculturation?

Intercultural Interactions: A Framework to Intercultural Communication

Multiple potentials for cross-cultural interaction can be found in literary works. For instance, Jandt (2018) defines intercultural communication as "communication and culture," suggesting that both parties adopt a common set of codes and symbols in order to communicate. Culture cannot be understood apart from the study of communication; hence, the two fields must be studied simultaneously.

The focus of this research, on the other hand, is on the language employed in multicultural contexts as a means of approaching intercultural communication, a field known as applied linguistics. In this study, the cultural distance between the participants is significant enough to have an adverse effect on communicative success unless it is appropriately accommodated by the participants (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 3). Spencer-Oatey and Franklin's definition of intercultural

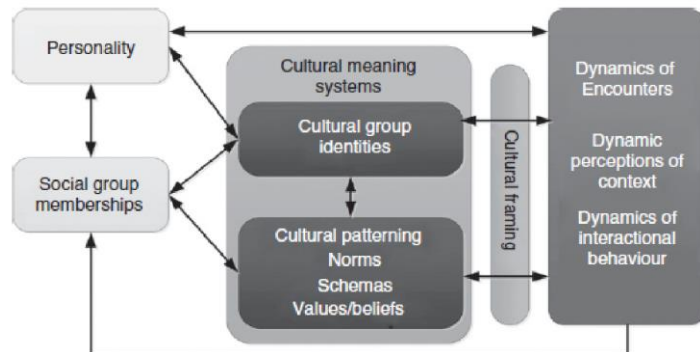
interaction are used as the framework for intercultural communication.

Figure 1 provides an illustration of how culture influences behavior and how behavior is understood in cross-cultural interactions. This diagram illustrates the various contexts that need to be taken into account when establishing intercultural

interactions. This can be accomplished by discussing the components of various values, beliefs, and behavioral standards. Group identities, cultural traditions, and individual personality qualities may all have an impact on the dynamics of relationships, as depicted in the image below (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021).

Figure 1

Overview of the influence of culture on interaction (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021)



Participants in this study should be mindful of the many levels of context depicted in the picture above when creating intercultural contacts. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to take into account the factors that contribute to the expression of distinct norms, values, and beliefs in social behavior. Group identities, cultural patterns, and individual personality features can all have an impact on the dynamics of our relationships with others, as depicted in the image above (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021). Following a brief explanation of what we mean by "intercultural contacts," the next part will move on to a discussion of the concept of "intercultural competence" as it applies to this research.

Culture

There are many ways to describe culture, especially in the field of anthropology, which looks at a region's typical way of life. In 1952, two American anthropologists defined culture as "patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior that are learned and passed on through symbols and that represent the unique achievements of human societies, including their embodiment in artifacts" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, as cited in Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 14).

Also, there are two kinds of culture: big C culture, like art and music, and small c culture, like language and behavior. This study used the "small c" culture type to look at how people from different cultures communicate when the differences between them are less clear (Brooks, 2000, cited in Hua 2014, p. 5). Several people who study intercultural communication have tried to explain what "culture" means. Since its beginning, it has been thought to include the values, beliefs, and behaviors that everyone shares (Gudykunst, 2004, as cited in

Jackson, 2011). In general, culture is a set of rules for how to act that are taught through things and symbols. These overt and covert patterns of behavior are what make human societies unique, and they are communicated through symbols (Jackson, 2011). As was said above, the word "culture" can mean a lot of different things. Still, it is important to talk about the idea of culture, which will be used to guide this study and make sense of the results. Because this study focuses on the intercultural exchanges that happen when people use language, the word "culture" will be used in that context. This study looks at four parts of culture (p. 15) using the words of Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009):

- A. Culture manifests itself in numerous ways, some more overt than others.
- B. Culture is tied to social groups, yet no two individuals are identical; members of a group share the same cultural characteristics.
- C. Culture influences behavior and perceptions of behavior.
- D. Culture is acquired and/or constructed via interaction with people.

Applied linguists define culture as collected and disseminated knowledge that is connected to language and behavior (Jackson, 2010). Moreover, this study uses the term "culture" through the lens of applied linguistics from two supplementary perspectives: language use that may be valued differently among cultural groups and patterns or styles of language use that may reflect variable mean frequencies across cultural groups.

Focusing on verbal and nonverbal interactions across varied cultural backgrounds between

Indonesian students and the host culture, this study will build on the preceding section's description of the perspective of this study in defining the term "culture." Below is a discussion of how we defined intercultural competence for this study.

Theorizing Intercultural Competence

The term "intercultural competence" has been conceptualized by intercultural communication scholars based on their research interest. For example, Intercultural communication competence is widely defined as the perception that someone's behavior is appropriate and effective in a given situation (Samovar et al., 2014). Normally, competence is regarded as an ability or a set of competent behaviors.

Byram (1997) provides another example of a widely cited definition of intercultural competence; in this case, it is in the context of institutional global integration. To paraphrase his definition, intercultural competence is "knowledge of others, comprehension of oneself, ability to interpret and communicate, capabilities to investigate and/or interact, appreciation of others' values, beliefs, and behaviors, and relativization of oneself" (Byram, 1997, as cited in Deardorff, 2006, p. 248).

As was also mentioned, the study's overarching goal is to identify the requisite intercultural competency for students in Indonesia to cultivate peaceful intercultural interactions. Therefore, the skills needed to navigate cross-cultural interactions are a primary focus of this research. This study will

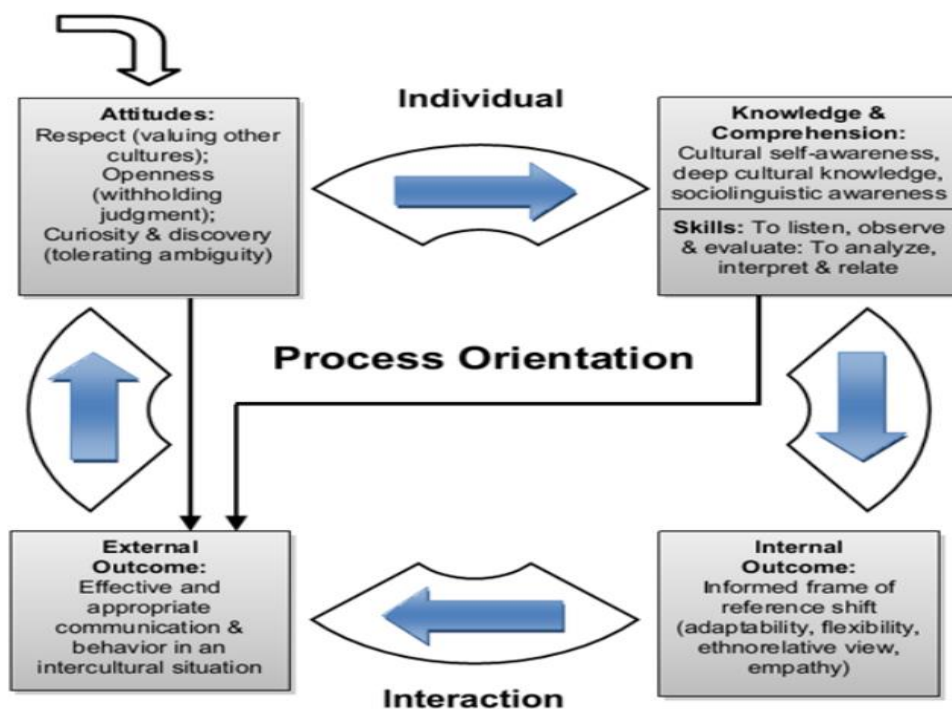
employ Spencer-Oatey and Franklin's (2009) concept of intercultural interaction competence. Having the ability to communicate (verbally and nonverbally) and behave appropriately with people of various cultural groups, as well as to manage "the psychological demands and dynamic results" of such relationships, is what is meant by "intercultural competence" during exchanges (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 51). Intercultural competence is characterized in terms of knowledge, abilities, and values in addition to the requisite capacity to interact effectively across cultural boundaries. Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that may be used to interact effectively with persons from different cultural origins are what the OECD (2018) calls "intercultural competence" (p. 7). Components of intercultural contact that may be examined in the discipline of applied linguistics will be discussed once the idea of intercultural competence used in this study has been discussed.

Components of Intercultural Competence

Many researchers have developed the components of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Deardorff (2009) divides intercultural competence into components, as indicated in the image below. Figure 2 concentrates on the internal and external outcomes of intercultural competence, which are the result of specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to intercultural competence.

Figure 2.

The process model of Intercultural competence proposed by Deardorff (2009)



As can be seen in the illustration above, Deardorff's (2009) model of intercultural competence begins with the attitudes and knowledge that travelers need to prosper in a new environment. As shown in Figure 2, one's intercultural competence at the interactional level is dependent on their acquired degree of attitude, knowledge, and skill (Deardorff, 2009).

In addition, the data analysis was substantially influenced by a number of factors that contribute to intercultural competence when managing harmonious intercultural contacts (e.g., Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Some components of intercultural competence for managing relationships have been proposed, for instance, by Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009). Individuals' impressions of one another's (dis)harmony and conflict are all aspects of rapport (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 102). In addition, "relationship interest, interpersonal involvement, emotional sensitivity, and self-awareness" are described as parts of intercultural competence by Mendenhall et al. (2010). (pp. 9-14). Relationship management is a core component of intercultural competence and is explicitly acknowledged in these frameworks.

METHOD

Research Designs

The approach of this study was chosen to be qualitative. In general, qualitative researchers begin the research process by uncovering and discarding their assumptions. "Qualitative *methods* are ways of studying people and their social worlds by going there, observing them, in their natural setting, and learning how they understand their situations and account for their behavior" (Richards, 2014, p. 1). In addition, "qualitative research aims to create a naturalistic setting to explore the daily lives of individuals, groups, societies and organizations" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 9). "Through qualitative data, researchers have more chance to concentrate on people's lived experiences by relating the topic to the social world surrounding them" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 11).

In a nutshell, the current research relies on a qualitative methodology, which also serves as the study's foundation for gathering information. Participants' insights into their own experiences are proven to be invaluable. Because this research concerns a natural phenomenon with ties to the participating Indonesian students and is comprised of a wide range of actions, a qualitative approach is appropriate.

The main study used an ethnographic method to collect data, which consisted of two parts: interviews and observations. Applied linguists and interculturalists who want to study international students who live abroad for a long time are now more likely to use an ethnographic method (Jackson,

2006; Jackson, 2010; Covarrubias, 2008). An ethnographic study tries to learn more about some kind of behavior that a certain group does at a certain time (Jackson, 2006).

Research Participants Selection

Purposive selection was employed to recruit all participants so that I could inquire about their time spent in the UK as students. Qualitative researchers often employ a selection method called "purposive selection," also known as "purposive and selected sampling," to find sources that might shed great light on their study issue. Selecting participants is essential in the anthropological study since it is necessary to find people who exhibit characteristics that are pertinent to and acceptable for the research (Jackson, 2018). Picking people for study on the basis of their traits and characteristics is called "purposeful sampling" (Bamberg, 2020). Seven people who had signed up for the blog contest in the past were selected for the ethnographic research because they had created interesting and useful blogs that were central to the inquiry. Then I reached out to a few people by email and phone, and they kindly consented to take part in the study.

Data Collection

The primary research utilized an ethnographic strategy for data collection, which consisted of three methods: interviews with students, observations, and blog posts written by students. Recently, the ethnographic method has gained popularity among applied linguists and interculturalists who are interested in conducting in-depth research on international students who are currently residing in another country (Jackson, 2018). An attempt was made by an ethnographic study to obtain a better knowledge of the behavioral activities that were being carried out by a certain group at a specific moment (Jackson, 2018).

Students' Blog Posts

In a blog post, the Indonesian Student Association welcomed the perspectives of Indonesian students studying in the United Kingdom. Participants were instructed to make their blogs publicly available online. There was a raffle with an Amazon gift card as the prize to liven up the procedure. The Indonesian Student Association organized, transmitted, and managed this stage. From September 2018 to January 2019, the Indonesian Student Association ran a blog contest. There were 12 willing participants. Many students enthusiastically contribute their insights, knowledge, and experiences through blogs and other forms of online learning, which is why this method of data collection was developed (Jackson, 2018). Students today frequently document their lives online via blogs and other media platforms. Students are more inclined to document their study abroad experiences

online in the early stages of their program when everything is still novel and thrilling. Table 1 displays the participants' demographic information as well as the institutions and courses in which they

are enrolled across the United Kingdom. The group was made up of students who were enrolled in a UK university for the first time.

Table 1

The academic program that each participant in the web blog competition

No	Sex	Study Program
1	Male	Social and Political Thought
2	Female	Contemporary Media Culture
3	Male	MSc Islamic Finance and Management
4	Female	Advanced Nursing Practice
5	Female	Chemical Engineering
6	Female	Population Health
7	Male	Mechanical Engineering
8	Male	Economic Studies
9	Female	Applied Linguistics
10	Male	TESOL
11	Male	Human Resources
12	Female	Computer Science

This data collection also tried to find people to recruit for the ethnographic project for this study in order to get more data. Following the data gathering from the students' blog entries, the following step was ethnographic linguistic data-collecting via interviews and observation. Several participants from the blog competition were chosen for the ethnographic study because they had written fascinating and significant blogs that were relevant to my research. After that, I contacted some possible participants personally via emails and phone conversations, and they consented to take part in the study. The remaining participants were my personal friends who had also entered the blog competition, so I had easy access to their perspectives on daily life in the UK.

Linguistic Ethnographic Research: Interviews and Observations

This ethnographic approach relied on in-depth interviews and observations for further context. After receiving applications from people interested in participating in the blog competition, seven people were chosen to take part in the ethnographic study because they had previously built interesting and exceptional blogs that were appropriate for the study. Over the course of the 12-week experiment, I spent 12–15 hours per week observing the participants, conducting in-depth interviews, and having informal chats with them in order to understand their relationships with individuals of various cultures. The study's intensive research involved going everywhere, from student dorms to coffee shops, pubs, supermarkets, public transportation hubs, and city centers. Interactions were also observed in academic settings, such as classroom instruction and student government events. During the data collection phase, participants were asked to consider their personal contacts with people of other cultural origins and

their attempts to embrace a new social identity, as suggested by Jackson (2018).

Thematic Discourse Analysis

The thematic analysis looks at the subjects that come out of the collected data. It is an important research method and a straightforward formula that can be used as a great starting point for a qualitative study. The first and most important step in analyzing qualitative data is to keep finding themes and building concepts and propositions (Taylor et al., 2015). All of the information gathered, like in-depth interviews, field notes, and observations was put through thematic analysis. This means that the information was "integrated into meaningful groups and classified based on themes or keywords" (Gibson & Hua, 2016, p. 191). Thematic analysis is a way to look at and describe both pictures and words. Also, ethnographic data were looked at with an eye toward the intercultural setting or discourse. Braun and Clarke's (2014) method was used to analyze all of the ethnographic data for thematic discourse analysis. This analysis focused on the constructive role of language as well as multiple and changing meanings, while keeping a special interest in patterned meaning (discourses) in the dataset.

Then, I drew attention to the ethnographic findings by putting the results of my interviews and observations into a narrative essay with citations and narratives from the participants. "Texts, interviews, dialogues, and arguments" are all parts of a story, which is a type of interactive discourse (Bamberg, 2020, p. 262). The data was analyzed by looking at themes and ideas that kept coming up. Then, a concept was made to help understand the data. NVivo 12, a component of computer software, was used to help the researcher with the analysis of qualitative data. To back up the findings, the narrative will be given below in both Indonesian and English.

Ethical Considerations

The participants' personal information was made anonymous to protect their privacy and keep the information secret. Only my PC was used to store information. Before any research could begin, the relevant Ethics Committee at Anglia Ruskin University had to give its approval. After getting approval from the ethics committee, I was able to start the experiment. From the start of the student blog competition to the end of the ethnographic investigation, no other ethical approval was needed. Before the interviews and observations started in the ethnographic study, all of the people who agreed to take part were told verbally what the purpose of the study was. All of the people who took part had to sign a consent form, which made it clear that they could leave the study at any time. Before the audio recording began, permission was asked for and given to record the interviews. All of the people who took part were told that any report that came out of the research would be kept secret. So, this report uses fake names, and some parts may be changed to keep people from being identified. All audio and text files were encrypted and stored on

devices and servers that required a password to get in.

FINDINGS

The Results from Student Web Blogs

The stories of the students were analyzed by putting the data into codes based on themes that kept coming up. The goal of coding is to "give descriptive or inferential information learned during a study a symbolic meaning" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 78). Also, coding can be defined as a "summarizing, prominent, or essence-capturing" word or short phrase found in "interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, documents, and images" used to gather qualitative data (Saldana 2013, cited in Miles et al., 2014, p. 78). Several codes were found at first, but that number was eventually cut down to seven groups or themes that kept coming up during the analysis of the data. There were five key areas of intercultural competence were identified. Table 2 below explains each one and gives examples.

Table 2
Components of Intercultural Competence

Categories	Definitions	Examples
A. Ability to acquire new knowledge of other cultural backgrounds.	To acquire new knowledge of other cultural backgrounds during the adjustment period and also to reflect on their ability to identify themselves with their own culture.	"As for my cultural background, I used to eat a lot of meat in Indonesia. Food like satay or roasted chicken was my favorite food in my country. However, in Durham, looking for such food was hardly unbearable. Besides, as a Muslim, I have to eat halal meat, which is not easy to find."
B. Flexible attitude, open-mindedness and respect for other cultures.	To respect cultural diversity by seeing things from other cultural perspectives.	"Later on, I found myself always in the middle of constant conflicts between each other over something that I would normally find okay; but to them, is actually offensive. From here, I learned that I really need to think carefully before saying something as it could actually offend someone. People can be very sensitive here."
C. Ability to develop the required skills through intercultural experience.	To observe, listen and understand other people's cultural backgrounds.	"After passing a few months, we are at home with other housemates sitting together to tell stories. This time, we no longer discuss cultural differences but we are comfortable to share our personal stories about families, parents, and so on. We meet at the guest table and listen to each other. I told him how I began to feel homesick, with my parents and twin brothers. Overall, while telling stories, we are getting closer and I am starting to understand their culture and now they are part of my small family in the UK."
D. Ability to resolve culture shock.	To handle culture shock successfully during the intercultural adjustment period.	"All communities in Nottingham are very helpful to me in dealing with all the problems that I have faced during my early few months living in this country, especially helping me to solve homesickness. Starting from my close friends in the class, and also the Indonesian community who also live in this city and they always help me with homesickness which is quite stressful the first time before meeting them."
E. Ability to become familiar with the Western formal higher education	To adjust to the difference between Western and Indonesian academic styles of learning.	"I am starting to learn how valuable writing skills are in the academic world. I learned the ability to write structured, and critical is the main basis for those who want a career in the academic world. Indirectly, the culture of writing this essay will also have an effect on our way of looking at problems in the world or the critical thinking way."

The findings indicate that the student blogs gave information on how to acquire intercultural competence throughout the period of intercultural adjustment. Five main themes and two minor motifs were discovered, for a total of seven kinds of themes. Using Nvivo 12, the following five major themes were identified: (1) acquiring new knowledge of other cultural backgrounds; (2) adaptability; being open-minded and respectful of other cultures; (3) self-development through intercultural experience; (4) the ability to overcome culture shock; and (5) becoming familiar with the Western academic style of learning. In addition, two secondary themes emerged that are crucial to how students build intercultural competencies: (1) the capacity to learn new knowledge of the British language, and (2) the disposition to successfully create contacts across cultures via the use of social media platforms.

An Active Attitude to Generate Positive Feelings About Their Arrival in The Host Country

Despite having limited experience with cross-cultural contacts before they arrived in the host nation, most participants in this study adapted well to their new surroundings. During the first several days of their stay, they generated pleasant emotions from interactions with people of other cultures. By far, the most often mentioned competency was an engaged mindset. The Indonesian students in this study thought that actively seeking out helpful information and cultural understanding contributed to the development of favorable feelings regarding their stay. Activeness and an open mind are necessary to adjust to a new environment and gain favorable experiences. The participants understood the significance of being proactive and receptive when searching for information that would facilitate their adaptation to their new surroundings. For instance, Ino actively participated in intercultural contacts in his new academic environment in order to make new acquaintances. His intercultural connections provided him with the knowledge he needed to adjust to his new environment. Consider the narrative below:

I immediately knew there was an event called fresher's week, where there were many new students from across the world and cultures, and as an international student, I was very interested in attending it. In the first week, I attended a fresher's event at Uni to immediately meet new friends from other cultures. So, I think this event, by making new friends, is significant in helping to adapt to new cultures. Like get new some useful information for me to get food, to spend time on weekends, and more information to help me to adjust to the cultural difference.

The above passage shows that Ino was mentally prepared to interact with people from other cultures as soon as he got to his host country. Ino seems eager and active about making friends with people from other cultures in his host country. So, when he got to the host country, he seemed to have an active attitude, and he quickly made new friends to help him adjust to the cultural differences and was active about making friends with people from other cultures in his host country. So, when he got to the host country, he seemed to have a good attitude, and he quickly made new friends to help him adjust to the cultural differences. This finding backs up what Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) said, which is that the more a person loves interacting with people from different cultures, the more they will think they are skilled at communicating across cultures and be perceived as such by others.

This finding is different from what other studies (such as Hua, 2014) have found, which shows that international students in multicultural classrooms often have trouble sitting still and doing nothing. Hua (2014) found that international students often feel anxious when they don't know enough about intercultural exchanges before coming to the host country. The current investigation, however, shows that this does not seem to be the case. The participants' engaged behavior (i.e., being active and having an open mind) was a key factor in making people like the host country. The results of this study are also different from Hua's (2014). She found that international students felt afraid, worried, and vulnerable when they first arrived in the host country because of the new environment and emotional and physical changes. Even though my participants' first thoughts and experiences of living in the UK were fine, during the next interview and observation session they started to notice cultural differences and problems in the host country. We call these difficult situations "intercultural encounters," which we will discuss in more depth in the next section.

Engaging in Intercultural Encounters

This study found that all of the participants had to spend time with people from other cultures, even though they liked their host country and had enjoyable experiences there. When a traveler goes to a different country, he or she has to figure out how to fit in culturally and socially. This is called the intercultural encounters period (Holmes & O'Neil, 2012, p. 709). Most of the individuals who participated were exposed to other cultures that were different from their own. Take a look at this part of my interview with Ino:

I never thought that my friends would invite me to parties and drink excessive alcoholic drinks that I have never seen before in my home culture. It seemed like I had joined the wrong group.

This excerpt demonstrates how out of the ordinary Ino found the behavior of those around him to be in regard to alcohol use. This research shows that a person's ability to bridge the cultural divide can be affected by factors such as their own culture, their life experiences, and the language(s) they speak (Deardorff, 2019).

Once the period of intercultural encounters was over, however, everyone started to gain the knowledge and skills they needed to create more effective coping strategies for dealing with the difficulties of expatriation. They acquired the knowledge and abilities required by exploring, observing, and analyzing their impressions of the host society. In order to successfully adjust to cultural differences when living abroad, the following section examines the necessary abilities that are involved in the development of intercultural competence, particularly after the intercultural encounter stage.

Developing the Necessary Skills

After a period of interacting with people from other cultures, the next step in developing intercultural competence was for the participants to start building their skills by gathering and analyzing new information about the host culture. Most of the participants were able to learn the skills they needed during this time, such as how to actively learn and listen to new parts of their host culture. The next part will discuss how most of the participants used their abilities to observe to learn more about the host culture.

The Skills Required to Acquire New Knowledge of Other Cultures

This research confirms that learning about different cultures has a significant impact on the ability to adapt to diversity in the host culture. As their abilities progressed, most participants became more involved in learning, discussing, and discovering new topics during intercultural interactions, which assisted them in adapting to cultural differences. As one student's blog indicates, the English language, particularly British English, was studied in more depth. Students were introduced to an unfamiliar language and the British accent, both of which they had to acquire and familiarize themselves with. Students gradually began to learn and employ British English in daily life. One participant stated in his blog that he greeted his friends with the phrase "Aye me duck," which translates to "How are you?"

Another participant in my ethnographic research, Via, was the subject of another example. Consider the following passage:

"I have started to try to be more open and active to learn other cultural values from my new international friends. Before knowing this, I was not that confident to speak English in a

public space. Nevertheless, I realized that they are quite open, so I am trying to open up to them as well, so just being myself and don't afraid to be judged, because, like me, some Indonesian girls are afraid to be judged. But they never judge you. Like here people are not easy to judge someone, so we can share everything with other people here as well, like talking with my families, their families, so they are quite open, and I could just be myself while not being afraid of being judged because they never judge you."

From what we can gather from the quotation above, Via learned that locals do not judge a person based on their level of linguistic proficiency since she took an interest in her friends' education. After learning more about the host culture, she was able to discard her preconceived notion that people in the West take pleasure in mocking visitors' linguistic skills. She also developed a key aspect of intercultural competency: the ability to accept alternative worldviews. Because of her own negligence, she had accepted an untruth. Jackson's previous research (2018), which followed international students on their trips, found similar patterns. During the adaptation period, a traveler to a country with a different culture from their own should not immediately assume the role of a cultural expert but instead keep an open mind, observe others carefully, and draw conclusions from their actions. Participants in the current study started to acquire a variety of crucial abilities while participating in intercultural exchanges, such as the ability to learn and listen to new knowledge based on their own processes and experiences. Having familiarity with local customs was also identified as an important skill for research participants, and this aspect will be unpacked in the next section.

The Skill of Observing the Norms of the Host Culture

The other intercultural skill uncovered in this research was the capacity to recognize and, more crucially, adapt to the cultural norms of the host culture. A norm is a vague concept. It is the collection of shared norms and ideas that serve as the foundation for determining what is (or is not) acceptable in a social context (Kádár, 2020). To encourage harmonious relationships, individuals should be aware of the norms that underlie them. When individuals communicate, they must understand unwritten social norms. Kádár (2020) defines a norm in this context as "an abstract entity for pragmatics since it includes the established norms and principles that serve as the basis for understanding what is (dis)approved of in an interactional scenario" (p. 20). Norms also relate to what is frequently practiced in a culture or society, as well as "what is often accepted or rejected" in the

context of intercultural contacts (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, p. 111). The current study reveals that the participants were able to establish peaceful intercultural interactions by utilizing the skills they had acquired, such as the capacity to notice local social norms. Consider the excerpt from my third meeting with Ino below:

"I have observed some behaviors that make me feel better when I interact in intercultural interactions. For example, holding the door seems very polite in a public place like a supermarket, a hospital, and a university. This is very different in Indonesia that they never do the same things. Another example was shaking hands; we always shake hands every time we meet, even though I feel that too much, but it made me comfortable during my involvement in intercultural interactions. Another thing is about privacy, people in the UK respect privacy, well I believe it is a really good thing in this country. Here people respect other privacy so much. As a result, by observing new norms or behaviors which are more familiar and nice here, I could maintain good communication here in intercultural interactions."

The above excerpt shows that, after his experience with intercultural interaction, Ino has started to follow the norms and behaviors that he thinks are more acceptable in the host culture. For example, he holds doors open, shakes hands, and respects the privacy of others.

In a similar way, Via started to figure out what would help her communicate with people from other cultures. She learned how to act in cross-cultural situations by watching how some people did things, like ask about the weather, use more informal ways to greet people (like "How are you?"), or call their friends "mate" or "buddy." The same results were found by Spencer-Oatey and Kádár in 2021. She says that by watching and thinking about how locals act most of the time, travelers can get a sense of what usually happens in a given situation and come to expect or feel that others should or shouldn't act in a certain way in cross-cultural interactions. After developing the two most important skills found in this study, the ability to learn and the ability to observe, as described above, the participant was able to develop the right attitude to deal with cultural differences in the host country.

Developing an Open Attitude

The results of this study show that individuals who adopted an open mindset were better able to converse across cultural boundaries and gain a deeper understanding of local customs and customary behavior. Participants generally adopted an inventive frame of mind, which called for an authentic openness to the behaviors of others and an

understanding that they may be more beneficial or suitable in the cultural milieu of the host nation. The goal is adaptation, not adoption. As an illustration, most people who took part in the study acknowledged the existence of other viewpoints and cultural differences and then modified their own beliefs and behaviors to reflect them. The following is an excerpt from the third interview session:

"At this time, I have decided to avoid negative relationships, like being drunk or things that are not useful. However, I keep maintaining a good relationship with my friends more positively, like having friends who are supporting my study here. Moreover, I need to be more aware of some cultural behaviors which are against my cultural identity, particularly some of them that could negatively affect my study."

The above passage demonstrates that Ino was able to maintain his welcoming attitude and establish friendships with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds despite his exposure to new people and cultures. Ino has evolved into a person who is more aware of the impact of his own culture on his academic success. This supports the finding that inventive or open thinkers were more likely to acknowledge that alternative perspectives may be more applicable in a different cultural setting. This fresh perspective demonstrates the superiority of learning to adapt to new ways of thinking over adopting completely new ones (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009).

The preceding quote reveals that Ino decided to switch from the poker club to the engineering club since the latter was more beneficial to his academic pursuits. Ino reasoned that if he took an unconventional approach (such as foregoing social events and instead joining a new student union), he would be better able to navigate the challenges posed by his international background and focus more intently on his coursework. It took some imaginative thinking on his part to figure out how to broaden his social circle to include people whose backgrounds would not clash with his own. This conclusion is consistent with the research conducted by Holmes and O'Neil (2012), which suggests that a foreigner, after enduring intercultural contacts, must simultaneously reconstruct his own culture and the new culture in order to feel at home in his new society. The next step was to learn how to appreciate and respect cultural differences.

Establishing an Attitude of Tolerance and Openness Towards the Beliefs and Actions of Cultural Difference

One of the skills that the participants had to show was that they could learn about social norms in the host country through exchanges with people from other cultures. As a result, they felt better about the

country they were staying in. Consider the following narrative taken from the interviews with Via:

"To have positive feelings in this country, mainly when involved in intercultural interactions, now I must accept some acceptable behaviors to the community here. The thing that I think is important to do is how to respect other people here. As I have learned and to be more open earlier, about getting in line and respecting others, wherever I am. In addition, as a result of what I have learned so far, I have to respect other people's privacy by not taking other people's photos without their permission and always lining up when getting on the bus, queuing at the supermarket and other places."

The previous passage demonstrates that despite Via's unusual behavior at the outset of her stay, she has begun to adopt the norms of the host culture (i.e., lining up and respecting privacy). This may have occurred because Via made an effort to broaden her perspective and understand how things are done in the host nation. To better understand the individuals she encountered from various cultures, Via made an effort to broaden her perspective. When she adjusted her perspective, she was able to relax and enjoy herself in the presence of people from different cultural backgrounds. This confirms the results of an earlier study suggesting that learning to appreciate cultural differences is essential for successful cross-cultural adaptation (Matsumoto et al., 2008).

These findings are most in line with those of Zhang and Zhou (2019), who argue that openness is the key to intercultural adjustment because it facilitates acceptance of cultural differences, among the many previous empirical studies on the experiences of international students studying abroad (e.g., Deardorff, 2009; Spencer-Oatey, 2009). The findings are consistent with those of Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), who showed that openness is a key component of intercultural competence that facilitates tolerance and acceptance of behaviors that are distinct from one's own cultural identity. The participants met more individuals from other cultures throughout their time abroad after acquiring the knowledge and mentality necessary to thrive in their new surroundings. In the following piece, we'll talk about when they finally got to mingle with locals of diverse cultural backgrounds in their host nation.

Re-experiencing Intercultural Encounters: The Development of Intercultural Competence as a Continuous Process

Even though they were prepared for the cultural differences they would encounter while studying in the UK, several of the participants nevertheless experienced intercultural encounters. So, Dibyo was

able to adapt to the first set of cultural differences he encountered, and then six months later, he was thrust into another multicultural circumstance in a completely new environment. Thus, he must keep exercising his abilities by observing how locals behave in the host nation each time he meets someone from a different culture. Not spending enough time with his friends may have contributed to Dibyo's negative impression of the host country. Sulis continued with a story about a time she met someone at a school event. Lecturers in the new system often emphasized the importance of students taking initiative. Since Sulis was experiencing difficulties with her essays, it was clear that she required further assistance with her writing.

This research indicates that maintaining and enhancing one's intercultural competency abilities is crucial to developing the appropriate frame of mind for succeeding in the host nation. Consequently, there is no ceiling on one's intercultural development. Findings like these are consistent with those of Deardorff's (2009) study, which found that acquiring intercultural competence takes time and effort. It is crucial to provide long-term travelers with ample opportunity for introspection on their own intercultural competency. Participants reported that their improved attitudes offered them the flexibility to adjust to the cultural environment of their new place of residence once they had put their newly acquired skills to use.

An Adaptable Attitude

After the participants learned the skills, they needed to be interculturally competent, they also showed that they were able to adapt to cultural differences in the way people behaved or talked in the host country. This was because they had learned about new cultures in the host country. For instance, look at the following passage:

"I feel more like getting more involved in intercultural interactions because I'm now more flexible in selecting phrases I use in conversations. Through the intercultural interactions I had before, I have learned and copied phrases that people often say. Like asking about the weather, weekend activities, and even family. Since I'm more flexible now than before, I can understand the phrases to start a conversation in intercultural interactions, and I enjoy this."

Evidenced by the above extract, Sulis has become more adaptable in her choice of words and phrases while establishing an effective discourse as a result of observing and learning from foreign connections. She also learned idiomatic phrases and applied them in conversation, which facilitated positive feelings during cross-cultural exchange. Through the lens of the intercultural abilities necessary to live in a new country, this study lends

credence to the idea that learning new behavioral and language patterns might help newcomers blend in and feel more at home (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009).

DISCUSSION

The following research questions were listed in the introduction, and this section highlights the important results of the study in relation to those topics:

How can students from Indonesia develop the intercultural skills they need during the process of acculturation?

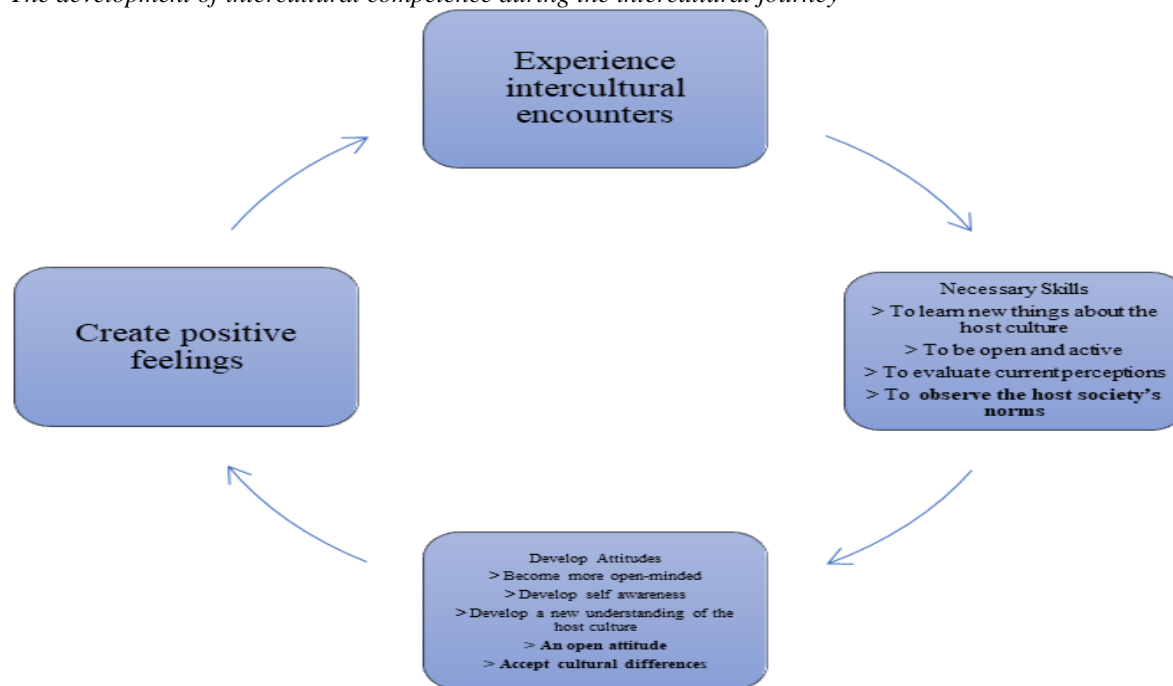
The findings of this study provide an answer to the research question by suggesting that the intercultural competence expected of Indonesian students in the UK may be divided into two categories: attitudes and skills. The former describes how individuals conduct themselves in accordance with their own personal principles. It requires initiative, inventive problem-solving, and sensitivity to cultural differences. The latter describes the set of acquired and utilized competencies acquired throughout the stay. It involves not just learning about the host culture but also learning to control oneself so as to fit in with its norms. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Deardorff's (2019) research, which found that one needs both attitudes and skills to succeed, since the former can help one maintain an approach that is friendly, open, and inquisitive, while the latter facilitates knowledge acquisition and evaluation.

Positive expectations regarding the host nation were found to have an effect on the acquisition of intercultural skills. Figure 5 shows, however, that most people operating at this level already had some exposure to intercultural interactions and had begun developing the necessary abilities and attitudes. After mastering the fundamentals, they seemed better able to accommodate cultural differences. Furthermore, this study discovered that all participants preferred to re-experience intercultural contacts, resulting in the continued development of skills needed to sustain meaningful partnerships, suggesting that creating intercultural competence is a lifelong process. This research also found that developing cultural competency is an ongoing procedure that takes place over the length of the trip (as seen in Figure 5).

Figure 5 illustrates how this research showed that developing cultural competence is not a one-and-done deal but rather a process that takes place over the duration of the experience abroad. An individual's ability to interact successfully and respectfully with others of diverse cultural identities requires an in-depth awareness of their own culture's values, communication norms, and worldviews, all of which are revealed via this study's findings. Participants' journey is mapped out in the suggested approach (see Figure 5), which begins with the cultivation of positive feelings during the initial months in the host country. These pleasant feelings occur as a result of a traveler's participation in intercultural interactions, the acquisition of necessary skills, openness, and a new perspective on the new culture.

Figure 5

The development of intercultural competence during the intercultural journey



CONCLUSION

This study shows that in order to interact effectively and respectfully with individuals of other cultural identities, one must first get a grasp of their own and others' cultural values, communication styles, and worldviews (Deardorff, 2009). Figure 5 displays the suggested approach, which begins with the induction of pleasant emotions during the first few months of participation in the study abroad program. Positive emotions emerge when travelers engage in cross-cultural interactions, gain practical knowledge and understanding, broaden their worldview, and gain a fresh perspective on the host culture.

All participants had difficulty adjusting to cultural differences during their formal schooling, the results showed. The significance of intercultural competence in this setting is stressed in the study. To fully understand how to achieve intercultural competence, it is necessary to examine both current practice and existing research.

The results of this study suggest that Indonesian students studying in the United Kingdom will need to make certain adjustments to British culture in order to develop positive attitudes towards studying and living in a foreign country. As a unique and intricate phenomenon that has received scant scholarly attention, intercultural competencies warrant further investigation. Due to time and budget restrictions, the largest ethnic group in Indonesia, the Javanese, made up the vast majority of the study's participants. Attendees hailed from far and wide, including the neighboring islands of Sumatra and Bali. Therefore, more studies should be conducted with international students studying in the United Kingdom as volunteers. The findings may have limited generalizability, as is the case with any qualitative research based on a small, non-representative sample. This study includes limitations that might be addressed by combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a larger-scale study undertaken by or in partnership with an organization like the Indonesian Student Association, which has access to a significant number of foreign students.

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