

CHAPTER II

DYNAMICS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS: THE EXPERIENCES OF INDONESIAN AND HUNGARIAN STUDENTS

Intercultural communication has become one of the most important competencies for an individual in a global world like today. This is because intercultural communication competency plays a significant role in connecting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. In the context of international education, for example, students not only spend their time studying in class, but they must also be able to overcome problems that arise every day due to differences in culture, language, and social norms. The University of Pécs, Hungary, provides a unique platform for Indonesian students to experience cross-cultural interactions through academic programs, social activities, and multicultural campus life. Due to these many differences, the process of intercultural communication of international students is often hampered.

This study focuses on the stages of intercultural communication and interaction patterns of Indonesian students with local Hungarian students at the University of Pécs. This chapter provides an overview of the research context, including the multicultural environment of the University of Pécs, cultural and communication differences between Indonesian and Hungarian students, and the challenges and dynamics of their interactions. This explanation serves as a foundation for a deeper understanding of the intercultural communication process in the following chapters.

2.1 Pécs University as a Multicultural Setting: Destination for Indonesian Students

As the oldest university in Hungary, the University of Pécs has a student population of more than 20,000, 4,500 of whom are international students from more than 80 countries (University of Pécs, 2024). This culturally friendly university has an academic environment designed to support its international students to be more comfortable interacting and adapting in the campus environment. Realizing that there are significant differences in terms of culture, norms, social, and language experienced by international students, the University of Pécs offers a multicultural and inclusive academic setting for its international students, including those

from Indonesia by offering many English-language programs, international-based student organizations, and social activities on and off campus to support its international students.

The application of multicultural education at the University of Pecs can be elucidated through Banks' theory (2019), which identifies five principal dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equitable pedagogy, and the cultivation of an empowering school culture. The University of Pecs exemplifies a multicultural environment with its diverse student body, which includes individuals from Indonesia and numerous academic disciplines worldwide, by their cooperation program with various countries in terms of scholarships and student mobility activities.

For Indonesian students at the University of Pécs, they come from two main pathways, namely scholarship program such as IISMA Vocational and Study Abroad programs. The total of 53 Indonesian students come from different universities across Indonesia, such as University of Indonesia, Brawijaya University, Diponegoro University, Surabaya Institute of Technology, Airlangga University, Sebelas Maret University, Malang State Polytechnic, Nahdatul Ulama University of Surabaya, Tonggak Equator Polytechnic, Bengkalis State Polytechnic, Padjajaran University, Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto, and Gadjah Mada University. These Indonesian students that came from both the IISMA Vocational program and Study Abroad comes from various kinds of major too, ranging from Law, Communication Studies, Architecture, Food Technology, Psychology, Hospital Administration, Occupational Health and Safety, English for Business Communication and Professional, English Language, Government Administration, Hotel Management, Health Information Management, Demography and Civil Administration, Medical Laboratory Technology, Applied English, Physiotherapy, Creative Business, Tourism Business Management, Management of Industrial Food and Nutritions Services.

IISMA Vocational Students came to study in the University of Pecs because they chose University of Pecs as one of their host universities during their application process, where they were then selected by the Indonesian government to elevate their vocational skills and have a better exposure to the international world. On the other hand, most of the Study Abroad students' studies in an international program or usually known as IUP (International Undergraduate Program) back in their home university. Being an IUP students, these students are required to spend at least a semester abroad, which then explains why students in the Study

Abroad program studied in University of Pecs. Other than the fact that the IUP students have to take a semester abroad, they also have another reason on why they choose to study in the University of Pecs, one of which is the consideration of the university itself that is known to be welcoming and friendly to its international students, proven by the number of the university's foreign students, with 4,500 students, and the wide variety of english-taught lessons.

1. **IISMA Vocational Program:** Students who are included in this scholarship program are not only required to study the materials in the classroom but also have the opportunity to take part in internship programs at several NGOs in Pécs. This internship opportunity not only provides these Indonesian students with exposure to the world of work but also gives them direct experience in interacting with locals.
2. **Study Abroad Program:** Slightly different from students from the IISMA Vocational program, students from the study abroad program do not have the opportunity to do internships at NGOs, but this program gives students flexibility in terms of dividing their time and choosing the courses they want to study. The University of Pécs has many choices of courses for Indonesian students who have study tour or sightseeing activities in their subjects. For example, the Intercultural Communication and Lifestyle in Contemporary Hungarian Society courses have study tour and volunteering programs for students who choose these courses. For the Intercultural Communication course, there are study tour activities to Tetye Park and the botanical garden. On the other hand, the Lifestyle in Contemporary Hungarian Society course offers a free volunteering activity to Budapest to visit the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (MET) and the Oltalom Charity Society. This activity certainly shows factual evidence of the University of Pécs' dedication in terms of supporting learning activities and interactions for its students, which is proven by the learning program that provides its students with the opportunity and direct experience to learn about local culture through direct experience.

The inclusion of Indonesian students in this multicultural academic setting aligns with the principles of equitable pedagogy and knowledge building as articulated in Banks' theory, which underscores the significance of multiple viewpoints in the educational process. Consequently, the academic experience of Indonesian students at the University of Pecs can enhance their

comprehension of the global landscape and contribute to a more vibrant multicultural educational ecology at the institution.

2.2 Dynamics of Hungarian Students and International Students

The dynamics between Hungarian and Indonesian students play a significant role in this study, as it is shaped by the differences of the two countries on its culture. The dynamics between the two countries are caused by the cultural differences that exist between Indonesia and Hungary, where Hungary is leaning towards individualism, as noted in recent cultural analyses (Cultural Atlas, n.d.), whereas Indonesia is prone to be more collective, according to (Irawan, 2017). This differences affects how Hungarians interact with Indonesian students in academic and social contexts. One factor that influences these interactions is the difference in communication styles and interaction patterns that are formed through learning together in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. Individual achievement and autonomy are important in countries with individualistic culture like Hungary, which then shapes student's interactions and academic approaches. For example, Hungarian students may be more accustomed to direct speech or open in academic situations (Rivermate, n.d.). The direct and explicit language used by Hungarian students is seen as effective in their culture, yet it can occasionally come off as blunt to Indonesian students.

On the other hand, in countries with a collectivist culture like Indonesia, group harmony, mutual support, and community are highly valued, which then shapes how Indonesian students behave in both academic and social settings (Yi, 2018). With that being said, Indonesian students emphasize social harmony through indirect communication. For instance, Indonesian students are prone to be more indirect with a softer approach (Cultural Atlas, n.d.), such as giving ideas or suggestions without directly rejecting the idea of someone. Hungarian and Indonesian students also differ in how they interact and form connections in addition to how they communicate. While Indonesian students place a higher value on emotional ties and a sense of community, Hungarian students frequently engage, and form relationships based on common interests.

In addition to the cultural distinctions between the two nations, religion has a significant impact on the formation of student identities and social dynamics. Religion is incredibly significant in society in collectivist nations like Indonesia. Islam, for instance. Its presence in society is crucial because it is the religion with the largest number of followers in Indonesia.

Religious activities are open and incorporated into social and intellectual conduct in the daily lives of Indonesians (Cortina et al., 2017). However, religion is far more private and intimate for its people in nations with individualistic cultures (Cortina et al., 2017). For instance, in Hungary, where Islam is a minority religion and Christianity is highly prevalent, the two religions have differing effects on societal behavior (Cortina et al., 2017). There are notable distinctions between Indonesian and Hungarian socioeconomic classes in addition to their diverse religious beliefs, social identities, and cultural aspects. For example, the educational system. Access to resources is impacted by a certain level inequality in Indonesia's educational system. On the other hand, Hungary's educational backdrop shapes its educational system. Indonesian and Hungarian students have different experiences, opportunities, and ways of socializing because of the disparities in social classes between the two countries (Alshahrani, 2017). The wider influence of national cultural norms on student behavior, identity development, and social interactions is highlighted by these cultural elements.

2.3 Cultural Adaptation Experiences of Indonesian Students at the University of Pécs

Every person who interacts with others in a multicultural setting will undoubtedly encounter challenges throughout the adaptation process, including University of Pécs Indonesian students. As members of the global community, Indonesian students meet a variety of cultural stressors when they must adapt to the language, customs, and way of life in Hungary, which differ greatly from Indonesia. This process is known as intercultural adaptation, which involves changes in the way they think, act, and interact in a different environment. These significant distinctions affect both their everyday life and intellectual pursuits. The process of adjusting to Hungarian culture is one of the difficulties Indonesian students at the University of Pecs face. Two interrelated internal and external elements impact the adaption process that Indonesian students at the University of Pecs go through.

These outside influences include variations in language and cultural aspects. Since Hungarian (Magyar) is a member of the Finno-Ugric family and has no connection to the dominant Indo-European languages of Europe (PoliLingua, 2024), the linguistic distinctions between Indonesian and Hungarian (Magyar) significantly affect the adaption process for Indonesian Students. Because they are accustomed to English or other Indo-European

languages, Indonesian students find it challenging to interact and communicate with other Indonesian students.

Furthermore, despite the fact that English is the academic language of the lessons taught at the University of Pecs, Indonesian students still faces challenges in their everyday lives because Hungarian students prefer and feel more comfortable speaking Hungarian instead of English. Another barrier to communication and interaction for Indonesian students is the obvious variations in grammar, pronunciation, and linguistic structure. This experience forced Indonesian students to learn some basic Hungarian words to improve their communication skills. According to a study by Yerken et al., (2022), linguistic disparities can influence social isolation and academic challenges, which can influence how well international students adjust.

Apart from linguistic distinctions, notable cultural distinctions between Indonesia and Hungary also significantly impact Indonesian students' adaption dynamics. According to current cultural dimensions, for instance, Hungary is inclined toward individualism (Cultural Atlas, n.d.), but Indonesia tends to be more collective (Irawan, 2017). Cultural shock, which typically happens during social contact and learning methods, is a result of these cultural variances for Indonesian students. Research that examines the experiences of international students in different nations also supports this, demonstrating that significant cultural differences might impact the process of adaption and raise stress levels in students (Yerken et al., 2022).

On the other hand, internal characteristics that can affect Indonesian students' adaptation at the University of Pecs in Hungary include personal motivation to be able to adapt to a new environment, mature readiness in coping with differences, and also good communication skills. According to Li et al. (2023), students who possess high levels of motivation, learning attitudes, and language competency will be better equipped to handle challenges that arise in a foreign educational system. Additionally, Wang & Mallinckrodt (2006) clarified that overcoming the difficulties of acculturation requires a strong sense of emotional resilience, attachment, and psychological adjustment. Tang, L., & Zhang, C. (2023) contend that psychological adaptability and coping mechanisms are essential for effective stress management and the process of adjusting to a cross-cultural setting. According to their research, pupils will succeed in the process of cultural adaptation more quickly if they are able to effectively manage stress and deal with cultural differences.

2.4 Interaction Patterns between Indonesian and Hungarian Students at the University of Pécs

The interaction patterns between Indonesian students and other international students, especially in the context of cultural exchange and communication, are a key aspect of this study.

The interaction patterns formed during the study abroad experience can reflect differences in intercultural adaptation influenced by factors such as language, social norms, and study habits. The theory of intercultural communication offers a sociological explanation for this phenomena. How people from various cultural backgrounds connect and get beyond cultural barriers in daily communication is described in the notion of intercultural communication (Liliweri, 2014). This theory also describes how cultural differences present chances for people to improve their communication and adaption abilities in addition to posing difficulties.

Additionally, Dyagilev and Laamarti (2021) stress that each person's communication abilities and cultural sensitivity determine how well they adapt to intercultural communication. This is seen in how Indonesian students at the University of Pecs in Hungary adapt to new academic standards, which place a greater emphasis on presenting clear arguments and engaging in critical thinking. This is undoubtedly different from Indonesian academic norms, which place a higher value on hierarchy. Additionally, Indonesian students must comprehend the social habits of Hungarian students, who are far more self-reliant and do not always rely on group interactions to form social bonds.

By comprehending the theory of intercultural communication, the interaction patterns of Indonesian students at the University of Pecs in Hungary can be divided into two primary categories—formal and informal interactions;

- A. **Formal Interactions:** Formal interactions take place in group projects, schools, and other educational settings. In this regard, Hungarian students's straightforwardness frequently confront Indonesian students. Indonesian students are more concerned with the peaceful communication process among group members, whereas Hungarian students are more focused on finishing assignments. For instance, Indonesian students could find it challenging to explicitly critique Hungarian students' opinions during a group discussion, whereas Hungarian students are more used to an open debate style that ignores emotional

considerations. In this case, Indonesian students must get used to and adapt to the differences that exist in this formal interaction.

B. Informal Interaction: For Indonesian students, social events like Cultural Night, International Picnic, and study tour to Tetye are crucial chances to connect with local students. In addition to offering a forum for cultural exchange, such events aid Indonesian students in comprehending regional social mores. For instance, Indonesian students frequently showcase their traditional dances and other cultural practices to international students. In addition to exhibiting their artwork, Indonesian students also provide a range of traditional Indonesian dishes, like rendang, which consistently draws interest from other international students. By hosting these events, Indonesian students get the chance to engage with Hungarian students face-to-face while learning about the local history and culture on the study tour to Tetye, resulting in a memorable cross-cultural encounter. Indonesian students' participation in social events and hosting a cultural night is one of Indonesian student's interaction strategies for adjusting to the differences between Indonesian and Hungarian students, because it facilitates the process of adjusting to the cultural differences in social settings.