A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO AN INTERNATIONAL EFL STUDENT'S EXPERIENCES OF CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION IN INDONESIA

Muhammad Zainush Sholihin[1], Nuse Aliyah Rahmati[2], Ika Hidayanti[3]

[123] *program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Islam Malang*

Email: [1]mzainushsholihin@gmail.com, [2]nuserahmati@unisma.ac.id, [3]ikahidayanti@unisma.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research uses Narrative Inquiry, using this research design researcher can cover the experiences of existing international student, so that appropriate qualitative data is collected and analyzed over several weeks through in-depth interviews with 1 international student, as well as through field observation notes. and narratives written by student about their adaptation regarding experience. The findings show that students are challenged by social interactions, cultural changes, religious beliefs, and habits towards a new life of international students. To manage student problems using behavior that can facilitate socio-cultural-religious adaptation, and habits. Facilitative behavior includes coping strategies, using supportive people, observation and imitation, and reflectionThe researcher suggests that future researchers conduct similar research by adding a new variable, namely the strategy of quickly adapting to a foreign country, considering that adaptation is an important aspect of living life to meet the expectations of international student.

Keywords: international EFL student's, classroom participation, experience.

INTRODUCTION

With the trend of the globalization era, studying abroad for students has become a common phenomenon in terms of convenient transportation and advanced information technology. Students who go abroad (called international students) can learn all kinds of knowledge with various cultures and educational training approaches to improve their abilities (Paige, 1990). Moreover, countries around the world have implemented attractive policies to increase their number of international students. Although many international students wish to study in a particular country, international students will bring their ideas and thoughts to inspire people in that country resulting in a unique value, the study of English as a foreign language (EFL) builds student identity and class participation in English (Sudarwati et al., 2022). In essence, international students play an important and special role in a country.

According to Pinete and Ralarala (2013), it is stated that the number of international students enrolled in all university faculties was 3,026 during the 2013 academic year. In recent years, Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) has become a pole of attraction for international students. The enrolment for the 2014 academic year totalled 2.940 (CPUT Management Information System (MIS) Statistics), Of these international students, the majority come from Francophone countries African students, particularly from Francophone countries, notably account for a significant number of the international students who participated in the present study.

Although institutions of higher learning in South Africa embrace the notion of internationalisation, as evidenced by, among others, a significant proportion of the total number of enrolments being those of international students (Bartram 2008; Sheridan 2011), related literature suggests that most institutions (locally and internationally) are underprepared to provide a holistic educational experience for these international students.

In the context of CPUT, the problem is particularly acute for three reasons: a) A significant number of international students that enrol in both undergraduate and post-graduate programmes have English as a Second Language (L2), and, in some cases, as a Third Language (L3); b) CPUT is recognised as an English-speaking university, and this is apparent in all its academic offerings; and c) The university does not have an established policy or system that enforces the screening of international students in order to determine their English language proficiency prior to admission (i.e., it lacks an International English Language Testing System – IELTS). Although this brief introduction might be considered too brief to give credit to other critical issues related to the issue of institutions being underprepared for international students, it also provides a glimpse into the complexity of the situation.

The previous study was that international students experienced anxiety because they had to get used to a new lifestyle and acquire new habits, and some of them feel that they are not open-minded enough to deal with unfamiliar situations. There was considerable heterogeneity within the interviewees and FGD participants and many international students were of mixed ethnicity, multilingual and well-travelled, which can be considered a feature of globalisation of higher education in the twenty-first century (Byrne, et.al, 2019). Probably some of the questioned students are less sociable and they would feel isolated in any social group (Valieva, et.al, 2020).

International students experience anxiety as they have to get used to a new lifestyle and acquire new habits, and some of them feel that they are not open-minded enough to deal with unfamiliar situations. Adds to the current literature by conceptualizing and quantifying host country connectedness as a complex and multi-faceted construct. Study results are effective for use as a reference among teachers when designing suitable educational strategies and among education providers and program coordinators to formulate program improvement guidelines and supporting resources (Lee, et.al 2020). Both objective aspects (such as number of host national friends and frequency of interactions with host country citizens) and subjective aspects (such as feelings of belonging and social support) should be included in an assessment of host national connectedness to fully capture its complexity (Bethel, et.al 2020).

Described in the research conducted by Ubaidillah and Utami (2021) entitled "Identity Construction and Classroom Participation of An Indonesian Graduate Student in An Australian University" describes a gradual and complex identity construction mediated by the participation of participating class agents. This study used 1 student as a sample. It was also found that participants' identities developed over time. by moving from peripheral to full participation. This study informs that L2 learning depends on social, emotional, cultural, and religious practices. While the interview test was used to find out how students' vocabulary and fluency in speaking English. This research found that there is a positive and significant correlation related to international students from Indonesia who are currently studying in Australia.

The number of international students has grown markedly in the UK since the turn of the century this is because it is what gives students a strong identity and reputation, attracted by the strong reputation British higher education enjoys. (Buster, 2022).Realizing that international students are necessary and useful for a country or a school to establish appropriate educational policies, however, the main problem for international student is their ability to adapt in an unfamiliar environment. When international students study in a strange learning environment, they have to learn the communication and problem solving skills through facing difficulties in their life and studying.

The findings from this research are expected to produce important things, namely the social-cultural-religious-habit aspects that are always carried by students which affect the learning process of international students or students in Indonesian class participation. With the need to use dynamic and constructive experiences between different students in the 4 points above (social-cultural-religious-habits) The study also highlights that these 4 aspects are very important when in class, because humans always bring their habits so the need to respect each of these things and become a permanent solution for international students and even students who are studying in different areas (within their countries).

METHOD

This study used Narrative Inquiry and data were analyzed using six procedures adapted from Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, such as (1) identifying recorded data (2) copying data (3) reading interview transcripts (4) marking important data found (5) create potential themes (6) and conclude the final theme.

The reason for using this research design is because this research covers the experience of existing international students, so using case study research is very suitable to find out more detailed and in-depth processes. In the research process, researcher used interviews with one of the participants. The researcher gave another name to the participant, namely Hikmah, a student at the University of Malang majoring in English Education who has studied in Indonesia starting in 2019 and has been domiciled in the city of Malang for approximately three years. The participant themselves came from Thailand which is still an Asian country.

Before the researcher collects the data, the researcher informs the participant about the purpose of the research and how the interview process will take place. the researcher informed the participant that their participation was completely voluntary and their statements would be treated confidentially. In addition, they reserve the right not to answer interview questions or discontinue their participation in the research at any time.

The researcher used in-depth interviews as a primary data collection tool. Participant underwent interviews by being given a questionnaire with 4 aspects (social-cultural-religion-habits) at the end of their studies at the University in Malang. For several weeks the researcher used various ways to improve participants' memory, either by interviewing or visiting certain places such as classes and universities with the initial incident of coming to study in Indonesia, with the aim of remembering events related to predetermined aspects. To ensure the believability of the research, the researcher asked the participants in the study to review and comment on the interview data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participants in this study expressed their experiences, after analyzing data and interviews with international EFL students, back-and-forth storylines, narratives were analyzed with 1 sample of students by following interaction-related, and situational stories regarding class and identity construction. Before studying in Indonesia, Hikmah said that Indonesia is a country with an advanced system and culture, which tempts international students, especially in the Asian region, to visit and even settle down so they can study in Indonesia. Hikmah also believes that Indonesian is easy to understand for learning English.

These principles are ingrained in Hikmah. Hikmah's belief in learning Indonesian in participatory classes has changed. From the portrait identified 4 aspects of the problems that arise: social, cultural, religious, and habits. In addition, these problems show that this problem always arises for every international student. From the statement above it is known that a lot of information was received from outside when studying in a Thai language class before participating in class participation in Indonesia. This finding can be seen when she spoke about this, it was found that from her point of view the Indonesian language was easy to understand because of his habit of meeting students from various universities who collaborated with his school to teach classes.

However, in another view, Hikmah encounters several aspects of problems that are always inherent in humans. The results are about the feelings experienced by students regarding the social-cultural-religious-habits inherent in classroom life.

Problems and Solutions in Social Interaction

In her first year of study, Hikmah encountered several problems related to herself in socializing and this affected self-competence. This makes it difficult for her to fully participate in class activities. she shared that her classmates spoke very fast and they were local students so she got embarrassed and couldn't understand what they were saying. This was emphasized in an interview with Hikmah:

Excerpt 1
At first I was confident with the language I had learned, my friends were very kind but at that time they often used their regional language and their vocabulary was very fast so I had difficulty understanding their meanings. I feel and think there are boundaries with them because they are in the social process affecting learning so I close myself off and maybe people call them introverts because I am afraid of being a burden on them in class participation.

Such perceived social problems occur consistently in class and cause peripheral participation by Hikmah during class. Even so, Hikmah has always struggled to compete academically and demonstrate academic excellence. Her efforts to achieve positionality in class activities show her moving into full participation and pursuing the achievements of other participating class students. This is shown by Tasnim story in the interview.

Excerpt 2
Indonesian students were very friendly, even though at first I was hesitant, I started to take the courage to do social interaction and while I was studying in Indonesia, at first I was embarrassed to say I wanted to join them, but for the sake of my learning process it was easier and it turned out that they were very happy because they had study friends especially those who are international students.

Apart from starting to interact with all the local students, in her studies, Hikmah also questioned her competence. she experienced insecurity when talking with his classmates, especially in the learning process while in the participating class, because of that Hikmah consciously started quickly and prepared things he needed to prepare, such as studying at any time.

Excerpt 3
In terms of social issues my friends really enjoy class participation and are open-minded but I always feel that I will be a burden for their class participation. So I always prepare and study before the next class meeting to be able to compete and make me more confident to study with them.

The identity competition as an international student in his first year of study can be seen from the different positions he described by Hikmah. This identification results in shyness and social fear, which leads to the peripheral participation of Hikmah during class. Nonetheless, Hikmah realized that she had the same opportunities as other international students in her class to participate fully and demonstrate her academic achievements. Her desire to become part of a membership and community of practice was gradually achieved, as indicated by interviews with Hikmah. Interestingly, she can quickly solve the problem by daring to start socializing with friends

participating in other classes. This can be seen from her struggle to study and prepare his study needs before meeting other students in class.

Problems and Solutions Adjusting to the New Cultural Environment

Even though Hikmah has succeeded in dealing with social problems, in the participation class there are also many different cultures. Culture tends to be a disease caused by people moving abroad. Like most diseases, it has its own symptoms, causes and cure. Some never recover, and live in a constant state of shock but many recover beautifully. The quote below reveals how Hikmah found the culture in class participation so strange:

Excerpt 4
At that time I was confused about the culture in the class because there were so many assignments given by the teacher and I had a lot of trouble completing them. Especially when friends are always busy using local languages and unique behavior and of course I don't understand. In fact, sometimes there are also those who smoke in class so that I become even more stressed and dizzy in facing my class.

Centered on a culture that is different from various things, Hikmah admits that he is very confused when listening to class presentations. Often, Hikmah misunderstands friends' explanations. Likewise, she found ways such as confirming several times to understand the presentation. This affirmation allows for the construction of initial knowledge between Hikmah and students in class participation. Besides that, Hikmah admits that she is in a different culture even though it makes her a little uncomfortable. She is also happy about it because sometimes it can also help him relieve her stress thanks to his friends who are friendly and never disturb her. However, Tasnim also said that the students were very orderly and even very neat when class time or the lecturer arrived in class.
Hikmah shared in the interview :

Excerpt 5
When classes haven't started it's very lively but this is also fun for me sometimes. I can learn new things from them which makes me even more enthusiastic and have fun every day in class. And what makes me even more surprised is when the lecturers arrive in the classroom they become very neat and orderly.

Hikmah thinking is increasingly open because in dealing with this situation it also changes the construction in thinking so that what starts as a problem becomes a solution to calm down. This is also the case where the Hikmah discovers habits that she has never found in his home country.

Problems and Solutions Religious Views In Class Participation

In her studies, Hikmah encountered several problems related to herself being a Muslim. This made it difficult for him to fully participate in class activities which at that time was in the KKN (Community Service Pasticipant) class. At the beginning of his class, Hikmah told that when she was praying, she felt as if she was always being watched and made her depressed and uncomfortable, then after that she left the prayer room and was cleaned by the guards because of Hikmah different teachings. This was emphasized in the interview with Hikmah:

Excerpt 6
The thing that always makes me remember the most is when I took part in the Community Service (KKN) class. At that time I was praying and I always felt that someone was watching me. This made me uncomfortable and after finishing the place where I was praying was cleaned and from there my friend explained that they had different religious beliefs and that disturbed me and my friend.

Indonesia has many religions and there are no restrictions on adherents. This became a guideline for Hikmah to strengthen her sense of tolerance for discrimination which she felt was used as a lesson. However, in fact, in the interview, Hikmah also said that in fact, almost all of our religious habits are the same, but the only difference is when other students meet, there are no restrictions on shaking hands when girls and boys meet. However, it is also a basic thing that Indonesia is a country that is strong in tolerance and this made Hikmah accustomed to and more able to adjust to the habits of other students in participating classes.
This was quoted by Hikmah in an interview:

Excerpt 7
What distinguishes the way of religion in class participation in Indonesia is shaking hands when meeting between boys and girls. At first this bothered me, but over time I understood because it has become a habit for students to get closer and understand each other and this made me even more interested when I was in class with their understanding of religion.

Tolerance is the foundation or basis of the country occupied by Hikmah so that in this case the beginning of the Hikmah had difficulties in adapting because in the previous country it strictly followed existing religious norms. However, by developing mindsets and adapting, Hikmah makes her very understanding of the situation and makes the adaptation process easier.

Problems and Solutions Habits of Students in Class Participation
The results reveal that habits greatly influence learning in class participation, learning strategies cannot be equated. EFL students say that habitual adaptation is important to maximize in studies. Habits are everything that we do automatically, we even do it without thinking as a result of carrying out an activity that is carried out continuously so that it becomes part of us.

Excerpt 8
In the Indonesian class there were too many assignments given to students whereas previously in the Thai class I only received a few assignments and the teacher explained them very long so that sometimes time was up just for explanations and assignments were very rarely given. And it's even more difficult. When there were a lot of assignments in Indonesia, I also had difficulties with the language because there were several lessons that fully used Indonesian.

Giving many assignments to students greatly affects the habits of a student, this is evident from the interviews that have been conducted by Hikmah. During the interval, Hikmah also said that the task collection system also bothered her because it was very difficult. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Hikmah:

Excerpt 9
Sometimes my friends and I complain about collecting assignments that have to be uploaded to the internet, this makes me even more confused because this is new to me. Especially during the Covid 19 period, all assignments were collected online, which had to be in accordance with the University system.

Over time, Hikmah began to get used to his habit of attending classes in Indonesia. Hikmah also said that the good Indonesian Learning System confused him because it was not like his country. but with this system she said that the teacher was very clear and easy to understand in

conveying the material so that in the process there were no difficulties in implementing it all. This was conveyed in the interview session:

> Excerpt 10
> The teacher in the participation class is very clear in explaining the lesson and if I don't understand I can go directly to him personally to ask for a re-explanation so that I can learn better and not experience misunderstandings or don't understand in his presentation. The teachers here are very kind even to be asked to meet one student they want to set aside time in the midst of their busy lives. This is what I love most and wish I could be like them.

The quote shows that the role of a teacher in teaching is very important for his students. Something new appears in Hikmah mindset in the learning system that exists in the country where Hikmah studies, namely Indonesia is very different from their home country so that things appear that make Hikmah identity shaken. However, as time went on and collaboration with local students made Hikmah accustomed to it so that the problem of habits or learning systems was no longer a problem for Hikmah.

In conclusion, from the 4 aspects that have been discussed (social, culture, religion, habits) all of them can be overcomed by adaptation and over time students must have tolerance, especially for international students who are studying in other countries, communicating with friends in class participation is very important, helping solve problems in solving the 4 aspects of the problem is not a difficult thing to do from the results of the interviews above it is also stated that the uniqueness of social, culture, reliance, habits in students the solution is prepared and tolerant.

DISCUSSION

The discussion focus mainly on 4 aspects (social, culture, religion, and habits), revealing that Hikmah experienced a gradual and complex identity formation before entering the Indonesian participation class. Language and communication are the main keys in solving these 4 aspects of the problem. According to Cushner (2009), it will take longer to build the trust and cultural understanding necessary for discussion of sensitive topics in a multi-language environment. This is a challenge for Hikmah to continue to adapt and face problems as an international student when studying in a foreign country.communication is one of the important aspects of mutual understanding and communication especially for international students and students must understand so that social relations with other students can be achieved and this has always been an important aspect in class participation, according to the narrative according to Daranee (2014) foreign language learning can divided into four categories. The use of a foreign language for communication, including reading, writing, speaking and listening. The development of the nation's mindset and education is actually focused on training, education, and experience, this is usually referred to as identity.

Ou and Gu (2018) looked at language socialization and identity in intercultural communication experienced by a group of Chinese students when they interacted with international students. Then previous research also said according to (Sung, 2017) As a result of understanding investment, students will be able to assess their social identity referring to an increase in their cultural capital, and therefore investment includes an integral relationship with identity as an investment in L2 Learning and as a bridge to cultivation of one's identity.

According to Buster (2022), recognizing that international students are necessary and useful for a country or school to establish appropriate education policies, however, the main problem for international students is their ability to adapt in a foreign environment. When international students study in an unfamiliar learning environment, they must learn communication and problem-solving skills through facing adversity in life and study.

In accordance with the results of the previous analysis according to (Ubaidillah & Widiati, 2021) Participants experience a gradual and complex identity formation formed by sociocultural factors in L2 learning and continue to negotiate their identity and English competence in the practice community. Identity construction is mediated by the interactions of participating classes, activities, and agencies that are created to achieve full participation in the class.

In class participation, of course, there is always interaction with these aspects, therefore Hikmah is always looking for solutions to solve them with joy and enthusiasm that continues to be improved. Nicholls and Apiwattanakorn (2015) and Gilliland (2015), the cultural element that influences the classroom environment is "sanuk" which means cheerful and happy. Some very important things to emphasize are related to religion, religion is very influential in students' lives. According to Chai and Ulrich (2011) Asian students are more likely to use religious coping strategies than European students, the use of religious coping by Asian students is effective in improving the quality of psychological and social life.

In the interview, important points of problems and solutions for international students in adapting were presented, which of course are always related to 4 aspects, namely social, culture, religion, and habits that these 4 aspects are different in every country. Previous studies revealed that such interactions in English-speaking universities fall within the ELF communication framework that considers acceptance and social factors among speakers (Lee & Kim, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research investigates an international student during a participating class in Indonesia to build his identity and share his various experiences through participating in a class at a university in Indonesia with an English Department. according to the results in the previous chapter the participants experienced a gradual and complex identity formation. It can be seen in the previous chapter that participants experience various problems which are summarized by 4 aspects (social, cultural, religious, & habits).

The problems experienced were social interaction with local students, a new culture that made changes in understanding, belief in religion even though the religion they adhered to was the same but there were many differences in it, and different study habits or learning systems made significant changes to the Participant. However, participant found solutions to overcome this, namely by being open-minded, wanting to initiate or establishing social interaction with other students, increasing tolerance, and finally motivating themselves. So, it can be concluded that if international students are open-minded and start interacting early on and understand each other's culture with an attitude of adaptation tolerance in class participation is much easier and more fun and can change mindsets and strengthen student identity.

This study recruited one participant and was limited from generalization, the findings opened up to understanding the power of storytelling in presenting diverse, subjective and situational learning experiences. found namely social-culture-religion-habits. Therefore the researcher provides suggestions to several related parties.

For international students, One effort for good adaptation is having knowledge of the places to be visited as well as the existing culture and habits to maintain attitudes and foster a sense of tolerance. Therefore, students are advised to often seek information and learning in determining future prospects so that what is desired can be as expected.

Students in class participation, class life is the most important thing for students because it is an object where they carry out their daily activities, therefore the researcher suggests that differences in ethnicity and habits are unique things that must be given tolerance and make it a new science so that classroom life is conducive and nationally based. well achievable
For future research, the researcher suggests that future researchers conduct similar research by adding new variables, namely quick strategies for adapting to foreign countries, seeing that

adaptation is an important aspect of carrying out student life in class participation experience alone may be lacking in achieving the expectations of international students.

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Advisor I,

Nuse Aliyah Rahmati, S.Pd. M.A
NPP. 120103198332263