

**CULTURE SHOCK EXPERIENCED BY FILIPINO INTERNSHIP  
STUDENTS IN INDONESIA**

**THESIS**

**By**  
**Meria Billah Ittaqi**  
**372021022**



**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM**  
**FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION**  
**UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH PALEMBANG**  
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**CULTURE SHOCK EXPERIENCED BY FILIPINO INTERNSHIP  
STUDENTS IN INDONESIA**

**THESIS**

**Present to  
Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang  
In partial fulfilment of the requirements  
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**By  
Meria Billah Ittaqi  
NIM 372021022**

**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM  
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH PALEMBANG  
April 2025**

This is written by Meria Billah Ittaqi and has been certified to be examined.

Palembang, 30 April 2025

Advisor I,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Indawan Syahri', written in a cursive style.

Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd

Palembang, 30 April 2025

Advisor II,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rini Susanti', written in a cursive style.

Rini Susanti, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.

This is to certify that the Sarjana thesis of Meria Billah Ittaqi has been approved by the Board of examiners as the requirement for the Sarjana Degree in English Language Education.



**Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd. (Chairperson)**



**Rini Susanti, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D. (Member)**



**Asti Gumartifa, S.Pd., M.Pd. (Member)**

**Acknowledged by  
The Head of  
English Education Study Programs**

**Approved by  
The Dean of FKIP UMP**



**Asti Gumartifa, S.Pd., M.Pd**



**Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd**

## SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN KARYA

Saya yang bertanda tangan dibawah ini:

Nama : Meria Billah Ittaqi  
NIM : 372021022  
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
Telp/Hp : 081367769647

Menyatakan bahwa skripsi berjudul:

**“Culture Shock Experienced by Filipino Internship Students in Indonesia)”**

Beserta seluruh isinya adalah benar merupakan hasil karya sendiri dan saya tidak melakukan penjiplakan atau pengutipan dengan cara-cara yang tidak sesuai dengan etika keilmuan dalam masyarakat ilmiah.

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Palembang, April 2025

Mahasiswa,



Meria Billah Ittaqi

NIM. 372021022

**Motto : *“Put Allah first and you will never be the last”***

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## ABSTRACT

**Ittaqi, M.B. 2025.** *Culture Shock Experienced by Filipino Internship Students in Indonesia*. Thesis, English Education Study Program, Sarjana Degree (S1), Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. Advisor (1) Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd. (2) Rini Susanti, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.

**Keywords:** *Culture Shock, International Students, SEA Teacher, Cross-Cultural Adjustment*

This study explores the culture shock experienced by Filipino internship students participating in the SEA Teacher program in Indonesia. As a short-term international exchange initiative, the program immerses students in culturally distinct educational environments, where they are required to adapt quickly to new social, academic, and linguistic expectations. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through open-ended questionnaires from four Filipino interns and analyzed using thematic analysis. The results revealed five major sources of culture shock: language barriers, Cultural Adjustments (Social Norms and Religious Expectations), food and environmental adaptation, academic and professional challenges, and personal growth through adaptation with their own strategies. Among these, language barriers emerged as the most significant challenge, affecting classroom instruction, daily communication, and emotional well-being. Participants also encountered unfamiliar religious norms, unexpected etiquette practices, and physical discomfort due to food, weather, and transportation differences. Moreover, they faced role ambiguity in teaching assignments, which required them to be flexible and improvise in unfamiliar academic settings. Despite these challenges, interns demonstrated resilience by employing a range of adaptation strategies such as cultural research, respectful engagement, self-awareness, and help-seeking from locals. These experiences contributed to their personal and professional development by enhancing their cross-cultural competence, critical thinking, and adaptability. The findings suggest that culture shock, while difficult, can be a powerful catalyst for growth. As a forward-looking recommendation, internship programs may consider offering pre-departure cultural orientation, clear role expectations, reflection spaces, and student buddy systems to better support participants.



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The Researcher,

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter consists of (1) Background of the Study, (2) Formulation of the problem, (3) Objective of the Study, and (4) Significances of the Study

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Every place in the world has a unique cultural richness that reflects the identity of its local community. Culture shock is a widely recognized phenomenon that affects individuals adapting to new cultural environments. Oberg (1960) first introduced the concept of culture shock, describing it as a psychological response to adjusting to unfamiliar customs and norms. This process is not only emotional but also cognitive and behavioral, influencing communication styles, self-identity, and adaptation strategies (Zhou et al., 2008). According to Shieh (2014), culture shock occurs when individuals transition from a familiar culture to an unfamiliar one, which often leads to emotional challenges. This is commonly experienced by those working, living, or studying abroad. The emotional turmoil arises from encountering new surroundings, unfamiliar faces, and adjusting to different customs. Additionally, discomfort can stem from leaving behind important people, such as family and friends. Therefore, cultural adaptation is vital for foreign workers, travelers, and students to effectively adjust and thrive in a new country.

Culture shock is a common challenge for students studying abroad, as they encounter significant differences in language, social norms, and daily practices. Mulyadi et al. (2024) explain that culture shock involves feelings of confusion, worry, and stress caused by exposure to new cultural

customs, language barriers, and unfamiliar social behaviors. Students must be adequately prepared before studying abroad to mitigate the cultural shock and adapt to new environments successfully. Research by Smith (2021), highlights that the success and retention of international students depend on how well they fit within the institutional and socio-cultural environment of the host country. Adapting to cultural differences involves more than academic skills, it requires emotional resilience and cultural sensitivity. Without sufficient preparation, students may struggle with homesickness, isolation, and academic performance, which could adversely affect their overall well-being and ability to thrive in a foreign country.

International internships are increasingly popular, providing students with valuable practical experience and cultural immersion opportunities. International students and interns often experience culture shock, particularly in short-term programs like the SEA Teacher initiative facilitated by SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization), which facilitates student exchanges across Southeast Asia, this program has been running since 2014 (Sunardi, 2024). Programs such as SEA Teacher provide invaluable opportunities for cultural immersion and professional growth. While programs like SEA Teacher offer enriching experiences, they also require participants to adapt quickly to unfamiliar environments. However, the transition to a foreign culture can pose significant challenges, including language barriers, unfamiliar social norms, and differences in daily routines (Nurazizah et al., 2021). These challenges can disrupt students' ability to adapt and negatively impact their academic and professional outcomes. Despite previous research on culture shock among international students, studies focusing specifically on short-term internships, such as those involving Filipino students in Indonesia, remain limited.

These cultural differences, might cause significant culture shock for Filipino students during their internship in Indonesia. The need to adapt to a new social and professional environment might make them feel uncomfortable and isolated. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in analyzing the culture shock experienced by Filipino interns in Indonesia, focusing on the cultural challenges they face during their short internship. Therefore, the researcher chose the title for this study: *"Culture Shock Experienced by Filipino Internship Students in Indonesia."*

## **B. Formulation of the Problem**

According to the problems above, the purpose of this study:

1. What are the primary reasons of culture shock for Filipino interns in Indonesia?
2. In what manner do these interns navigate culture shock, and how do their experiences contribute to their personal and professional development?

## **C. Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study is to identify and analyze the main sources of culture shock experienced by Filipino students in Indonesia. It aims to explore the cultural, social, and environmental factors contributing to their challenges in adapting to the host country. By understanding these sources, the study seeks to provide insights into the specific aspects of Indonesian culture that impact Filipino students and propose strategies to mitigate these challenges in future international exchange and internship.

By identifying the challenges that students face, educational institutions and program coordinators can create more effective support



in the future. Research shows that students who receive sufficient support during the transition period are more likely to experience positive outcomes in their internship programs. Because the success and retention of international students depends largely on how well students adapt to their institution and the socio-cultural context they are in (Smith, 2021, p. 225).

#### **D. Significance of the Study**

This research examines how Filipino students experience cultural differences in Southeast Asian countries, particularly in Indonesia. This focus provides useful insights for potential SEA TEACHER participants and others interested in similar programs in the region. By understanding the cultural challenges unique to short-term internships, students can better prepare themselves to make the necessary adjustments while serving an internship abroad. This research can help the researcher learn more about culture shock and how It can also provide a good base for future studies on this topic.

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