

**EXPLORING CHALLENGES FACED BY INDONESIAN INTERNSHIP STUDENTS IN
YALA, THAILAND**

THESIS

By

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**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
FACULTY OF TEACHERS TRAINING AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH PALEMBANG**

2026

**EXPLORING CHALLENGES FACED BY INDONESIAN INTERNSHIP STUDENTS IN
YALA, THAILAND**

THESIS

**Present to
Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Bachelor Degree in English Education**

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**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
FACULTY OF TEACHERS TRAINING AND EDUCATION
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**Acknowledge By
The Head of English Education
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“Exploring Challenges Faced by Indonesian Internship Students in Yala, Thailand”

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

Atas perntaan ini , saya siap menerima segala sanksi yang berlaku atau yang ditetapkan untuk itu, apabila dikemudian ternyata pernyataan saya tidak benar atau ada klaim dari pihak lain terhadap skripsi saya.

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Mahasiswa,



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Motto : “Do good things but don’t expect anything in return”

Special Thanks To :

1. First of all, I would like to thank Allah SWT for always strengthening me and giving me unexpected blessings throughout my journey.
2. My deepest gratitude goes to my beloved parents, my mother Sofralizna Marsalena and my father Kanova Suta Agung, for raising me to be a strong, independent, and resilient person.
3. I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors, Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd. and Miss Dian Septarini, S.Pd., M.Pd. for their guidance, patience, and support during the completion of this thesis.
4. My sincere thanks go to all English lecturers at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang: Prof. Indawan, Sir Sulaiman, Miss Dita, Miss Rini, Miss Nadya, Miss Finza, Miss Mella, Miss Asti, Miss Tri, Miss Rara, Miss Dian, Miss Sri Yuliani, Miss Sri Hartati, and Miss Kurnia, for all the knowledge and experiences shared.
5. I would also like to thank the team of the Bureau of Cooperation and International Affairs (BKUI) Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang: Prof. Ir. Erna Yuliwati, M.T., Ph.D., IPU, ASEAN-Eng., Dr. Dita Adawiyah, M.Pd., Tanti Nur Annisa, S.Pd., M.Pd., and Citra Damayanti, S.T., for their support and motivation.
6. Lastly, thank you to my closest friends, my “since day one” (Romy, Ari, and Rei) for always being there through ups and downs. I hope we all achieve our dreams and succeed in our own paths.

ABSTRACT

Alfaeza, M.D.G. 2026. *Exploring Challenges Faced by Indonesian Internship Students in Yala, Thailand.* Thesis, English Education Study Program, Bachelor Degree (S1), Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. Advisors: (1) Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd. (2) Dian Septarini, S.Pd., M.Pd.

This study aims to explore in depth the challenges faced by Indonesian internship students during their participation in the Yala PESAO 1's Internship Program – English in Yala, Thailand. The research employed a qualitative descriptive design with a case study approach to capture participants' real experiences in a cross-cultural teaching context. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires involving eight participants who had directly engaged in the program. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key themes. The findings revealed five major themes: language barriers, classroom management and teaching adjustment, cultural and social adjustment, professional development, and coping strategies with personal growth. Among these, language barriers emerged as the most significant challenge, as participants struggled with students' limited English proficiency and the use of Thai and Pattani Malay in classroom interactions. This condition affected communication effectiveness and required participants to modify their teaching strategies. In addition, participants experienced difficulties in managing classroom dynamics, particularly when dealing with active students and unfamiliar teaching contexts. Cultural and social differences also played a crucial role in shaping participants' experiences. Variations in social norms, communication styles, and local lifestyles required participants to develop cultural awareness and adaptability. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience by applying various adaptation strategies, such as simplifying instructional language, using visual and interactive teaching methods, learning basic local language expressions, and seeking support from mentor teachers and peers. Furthermore, the internship experience contributed significantly to participants' professional development. They reported improvements in teaching skills, classroom management, confidence, and problem-solving abilities. At the same time, the experience enhanced their cross-cultural competence, enabling them to better understand and respond to diverse educational contexts. On a personal level, participants also experienced growth in independence, emotional resilience, and responsibility. In conclusion, this study highlights that the challenges encountered in international teaching internships, particularly in linguistically and culturally diverse settings, can serve as meaningful learning opportunities. These experiences not only shape participants' pedagogical competence but also prepare them to become more adaptive and globally aware educators. Therefore, it is recommended that future internship programs provide more comprehensive pre-departure training, including language preparation, cultural orientation, and continuous mentoring support to better equip students for cross-cultural teaching environments.

Keywords: *International Teaching Internship, Language Barriers, Cultural Adjustment, Classroom Management, Adaptation Strategies*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"In the name of Allah The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful."

First and foremost, the researcher would like to express his deepest gratitude to Allah SWT, The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful, for His endless blessings and guidance, which enabled him to complete this thesis. This thesis was written to fulfill one of the requirements for the Bachelor Degree (S1) at the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, *Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang*. This research explores the challenges faced by Indonesian internship students in Yala, Thailand. Furthermore, the researcher would like to express his sincere gratitude to his advisors, Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd., and Dian Septarini, S.Pd., M.Pd., for their valuable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the completion of this thesis.

Additionally, the researcher would like to express his best thanks to Prof. Dr. Abid Djazuli, S.E., M.M. as the Rector of Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. The researcher also would like to express his best thanks to the Dean of Faculty Teacher Training and Education Prof. Dr. Indawan Syahri, M.Pd. The Head of English Education Study Program Hj. Asti Gumartifa, S.Pd., M.Pd. and all staff members (Academic and Administrative) at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, *Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang*, who provided support and facilities in completing this thesis.

Palembang, 21 April 2026



The Researcher,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	I
APPROVAL	II
LETTER OF RESPONSIBILITY	IV
ABSTRACT	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	VII
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VIII
LIST OF TABLES	IX
LIST OF APPENDICES	X
CHAPTER I	1
INTRODUCTION	1
A. Background of the Research	1
B. Formulation of the Problem	3
C. Objectives of the Research	4
D. Significance of the Research	4
CHAPTER II	6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
A. Teaching Internship Program	6
B. English Language Teaching	8
C. Teaching English as a Foreign Language	10
D. Challenges in International Teaching Practicum	12
E. Cross-Cultural Understanding	14
F. Intercultural Communicative Competence	16
G. Previous Study	18
CHAPTER III	21
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	21
A. Research Method	21
B. Subjects of the Research	21
C. Sources of Data	23
D. Data Collection Technique	24
E. Validity and Trustworthiness of the Data	25
F. Data Analysis Technique	26
CHAPTER IV	28
FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS	28
A. Findings	28
1. Theme 1. Language Barriers (Most Significance Challenge)	30
2. Theme 2. Classroom Management and Teaching Adjustment	33
3. Theme 3. Cultural and Social Adjustment	36
4. Theme 4. Professional Development	38
5. Theme 5. Coping Strategies and Personal Growth	41
B. Interpretations	45
CHAPTER V	47
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS	47
A. Conclusions	47
B. Suggestions of the research	48
REFERENCES	49
APPENDICES	53

LIST OF TABLES

Table	
3.1 Demographic Profile of Participants.....	22
4.1 Core Themes, Subthemes, and initial codes.....	29

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Questionnaires
2. Usulan Judul Skripsi
3. Surat Tugas Pembimbing Proposal
4. Surat Undangan Ujian Seminar Proposal
5. Daftar Hadir Dosen Penguji Seminar Proposal
6. Daftar Hadir Simulasi Proposal Mahasiswa
7. Surat Keputusan (SK) Penguji Seminar Proposal
8. Lembar Persetujuan Perbaikan Seminar Proposal Skripsi
9. Surat Keputusan (SK) Dosen Pembimbing
10. Kartu Laporan Kemajuan Bimbingan Skripsi
11. Surat Permohonan Ujian Skripsi
12. Surat Persetujuan Skripsi
13. Surat Undangan Ujian Skripsi
14. Daftar Hadir Dosen Penguji skripsi
15. Bukti Perbaikan Hasil Skripsi
16. Curriculum Vitae

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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

A. Background of the Research

In recent years, international teaching internship programs have become an important platform for internship student to gain cross-cultural exposure and develop their pedagogical competence in global teaching environments. These programs allow student teachers to teach English in foreign settings, enhancing their intercultural awareness and professional growth. However, participating in an international practicum also presents various challenges related to language, cultural norms, teaching practices, and school systems (Kabilan et al., 2020). Teaching in a multicultural environment requires not only linguistic ability but also adaptability to different classroom behaviors, educational expectations, and community values.

Studies have shown that foreign teaching placements often trigger cultural adjustment issues. According to Sulaiman and Saputri (2019), foreign students undertaking academic activities in Indonesia experienced significant cultural shock, including language differences, new communication patterns, social expectations, and adjustments to institutional norms. This indicates that cross-national teaching programs demand psychological resilience and cultural adaptability. Their finding supports the notion that international teaching experiences may bring anxiety and confusion in the early stages of transition but can also foster cultural learning and stronger intercultural competence.

Similarly, a research conducted by Syahri, Susanti, and Dwiana (2025) revealed that international teaching experiences significantly contribute to student teachers' identity formation and professional development. During their practicum abroad, participants not only learned new teaching methodologies but also negotiated their roles as emerging educators in a foreign environment. Their research showed that interactions with different pedagogical systems, religious differences, and diverse school cultures shaped participants' confidence, teaching beliefs, and readiness to work in multicultural classrooms.

Several additional studies have explored the challenges experienced by Indonesian Intership student in Southeast Asian contexts, especially in Thailand. Turbinita, Safriyani, and Safriani (2023) identified language barriers as one of the most significant obstacles, as Indonesian interns often face difficulties communicating effectively with Thai students and school staff. Similarly, Asfihana and Putri (2025) found that large class sizes and students' limited English proficiency further complicate lesson delivery and classroom management. Despite these challenges, many interns demonstrated resilience by using multimedia tools, visual aids, and collaborative learning methods to overcome communication gaps. Additionally, Rustandi et al. (2025) highlighted that intercultural sensitivity and openness to new cultural experiences are essential for successful adaptation during an international teaching practicum.

Other research conducted by Kabilan et al. (2020) in Malaysia also revealed four recurring challenges in international teaching programs: curriculum differences, lesson planning, limited language proficiency, and cultural adjustment. These findings align with studies conducted in Thailand, where interns must navigate multilingual classrooms and cultural expectations that influence teaching and learning. Furthermore, Pathomchaiwat and Thongrin (2025) emphasized the importance of integrating local culture into English teaching, particularly in Southern Thailand.

Based on the researcher's observation during the Yala PESAO 1's Internship Program-English, both the researcher and other participants encountered various challenges involving language, culture, food, school routines, and social expectations. After reviewing previous studies, the researcher found that although many studies discuss Indonesian interns in Thailand, very limited research focuses specifically on Yala, particularly in Islamic educational settings, which have unique linguistic and cultural characteristics. Cruz (2021) also argued that insufficient preparation and unclear guidelines before teaching abroad may negatively impact teacher performance and learning outcomes.

Considering the lack of studies that focus on the challenges experienced by Indonesian internship students in Yala, Thailand, this research aims to explore those challenges in depth and provide insights for future internship student. Therefore, the researcher chose the title:

"Exploring Challenges Faced by Indonesian Internship Students in Yala, Thailand."

B. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, several challenges have been identified in international teaching contexts, particularly in Thailand. However, little is known about how these challenges occur specifically in Yala, a province with unique linguistic, cultural, and religious characteristics. Therefore, the research problems were formulated as follows:

1. What kinds of challenges did Indonesian internship students face during their teaching internship inside and outside the classroom in Yala, Thailand?
2. How did these Indonesian internship students adapt to overcome those challenges?
3. What insights could be drawn from their experiences to help future participants prepare for internships in Yala, Thailand?

C. Objectives of the Research

In accordance with the formulation of the problem, this research aimed to:

1. Identify and describe the challenges encountered by Indonesian internship students in Yala, Thailand.
2. Explore the adaptation strategies used by the participants to overcome those challenges.
3. Provide insights and recommendations that may serve as guidelines for future Indonesian internship student who will participate in teaching internships, particularly in Yala or similar multicultural educational contexts.

D. Significance of the Research

1. For the Researcher

As both the researcher and a participant in the Yala PESAO 1'S Internship Program – English, this research supports personal and professional growth. Through examining the challenges faced during the internship, the researcher gains deeper insight into real classroom situations, intercultural communication, and adaptation processes in a foreign teaching environment. This reflection helps strengthen the researcher's pedagogical skills, cultural sensitivity, and readiness to teach in diverse settings.

2. For Future Participants

This research provides valuable information for Indonesian internship student who plan to join international teaching programs, especially in Thailand. The findings highlight common challenges such as language barriers, cultural adjustment, and pedagogical differences, as well as effective strategies used by previous interns. With this knowledge, future participants can better prepare themselves mentally, linguistically, and professionally before teaching in Yala or other multicultural contexts.

3. For Researchers and Teacher Educators

This research contributes to the literature on international teaching practicums, intercultural competence, and internship students' professional development. As the researcher participated directly in the program, the findings provide an authentic, experience-based perspective on teaching in cross-cultural and Islamic school contexts. The results may serve as a reference for future studies on international internship programs.

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