

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT WHILE JOINING STUDY IN INDONESIA: NARRATIVE INQUIRY IN MAGISTER STUDY LEVEL

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: April 2024 Revised: June 2024 Published: July 2024	<i>International students choose Indonesia as a destination for their studies for various reasons, and they face unique challenges while studying abroad in the country. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of master's students who participate in study abroad programs in Indonesia. By understanding these experiences, the study aims to provide insights that can enhance the support and structure of such programs. To achieve this, the researchers employed a narrative inquiry methodology, focusing on the stories of two international participants in the program. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the participants' personal experiences and the meaning they derive from them. Through the analysis of their narratives, the study highlights the value of studying overseas for a student's overall development. The findings emphasize that studying abroad in Indonesia offers significant benefits, contributing to the students' personal and academic growth. The experiences shared by the participants reveal how they navigated the cultural, social, and academic challenges encountered during their time in Indonesia. These challenges, while initially daunting, ultimately contributed to their resilience and adaptability. In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of international study programs in fostering global understanding and cooperation. By sharing the narratives of the international participants, the research highlights both the challenges and the profound benefits of studying abroad. These insights are crucial for universities aiming to provide enriching and supportive study abroad experiences that contribute to the personal and professional development of their students.</i>
Keywords International learning experiences; Identity development; Narrative Analysis; Narrative Inquiry; Study Abroad;	
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INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad is considered a significant milestone in the education of countless individuals across the globe (Costello, 2019). Students can greatly benefit from acquiring the ability to communicate in the language spoken by their neighbors (Miranda & Wahyudin, 2023). Not only will this enhance their academic knowledge, but it will also foster a sense of belonging and integration within society. Studying abroad involves incorporating an intercultural element into one's coursework, contributing to a broader international perspective (Lai & Kan, 2020). However, it has been observed by researchers that studying abroad can be expensive (Sobkowiak, 2019). This experience is influenced by various environmental factors, both temporary and long-lasting, which interact with individual characteristics like psychological, social, and demographic factors (Woolard, 2020).

The field of higher education has undergone substantial transformation due to the impact of globalization, resulting in a rise in students' movement across international boundaries in pursuit of academic endeavors (Melia, et al., 2022). Thanks to its diverse cultural landscape and

strategic location in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has emerged as a sought-after destination for international students looking to enrich their educational experiences (Yuwita, 2020). The learning of English language skills is a crucial component of this educational exchange, contributing significantly to the academic success and overall integration of these students (Elaish, et al., 2019). Still, further research is needed to look at international students' experiences in non-English speaking nations like Indonesia, especially in relation to study abroad programs that require students to acquire English language proficiency (Hibatullah, 2019).

Traditionally, students seeking study abroad programs have predominantly chosen English-speaking countries as their destination (Kim & Zhang, 2022). Students have been increasingly inclined to opt for unconventional study locations, like Indonesia, to further their education (K. Situmorang, et al., 2021). This transition poses distinct challenges and possibilities for acquiring language skills and forming personal identity in a setting where English is used as a common language rather than the mother tongue (Martiningsih Evi, 2021). English is now used as the official language of teaching in Indonesian universities to promote internationalization and attract a wider range of international students (Bolton, et al., 2023).

Prior studies have primarily concentrated on the encounters of international students in English-speaking nations (Zvereva, 2021), resulting in a need for more comprehension regarding how these encounters manifest in a non-native English environment (Min, et al., 2019). Research has delved into different facets of language acquisition overseas, such as forming one's identity (Abrar, 2019), speaking encounters, and the instructional methods used in teaching English (Namaziandost et al., 2019). However, there is a unique aspect to exploring the development of Creating Personas in Language Acquisition in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Setting, where students from different backgrounds come together and communicate in English (K. Situmorang et al., 2021). Furthermore, the significance of narrative inquiry in comprehending these experiences offers a profound, qualitative understanding of international students' personal narratives and identity changes (Ramadhani et al., 2021; Sudarwati et al., 2022).

This manuscript article presents a fresh approach by examining the narrative experiences of international students in an Indonesian Magister Program. In this program, Although it is not the native tongue, English is utilized as the medium of instruction. The aim is to explore how these students navigate the intricacies of language learning, construct their identity, and integrate into academic life within this distinctive linguistic environment. This study adds to the current knowledge by emphasizing the importance of the Indonesian ELF context in shaping international students' language learning experiences and identity development (Samanhudi, 2021; Simek & Stewart, 2024; K. Situmorang et al., 2021).

This research was done to answer two questions I had about the topic that I chose to use in this paper: (1) What are their experiences as master's degree candidates at the State University of Yogyakarta?. (2) How can they pick the State University of Yogyakarta as their preferred institution?. Researchers are inspired to carry out this study after coming across an article titled "Unveiling Emotions in Poetry Writing in Second Languages: Japanese EFL Students' Experiences with Language Learning are poetically explored." Iida and Chamcharatsri (2022) conducted a study on emotional engagement by means of a collective data collection of poetry. This narrative inquiry was authored by one of the researchers, who recounts the tale of his research while immersing himself in the role of a teacher in China (Poole, 2021).

This study aims to add to the corpus of information about the topic and offer fresh perspectives on the experiences of international students learning English in countries where English is not their first language. This article will be achieved through the use of a narrative inquiry approach. This review aims to contribute to the academic discussion surrounding study

abroad programs. Additionally, it offers practical insights that can benefit educators, policymakers, and students interested in or currently involved in these programs.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study utilizes a qualitative approach, specifically narrative inquiry, to capture in-depth and comprehensive accounts of the experiences of international students (Busetto et al., 2023). Narrative inquiry is selected for its ability to comprehend the intricacies of human experiences within specific contexts (Jamshed, 2019), making it well-suited for examining the nuanced experiences of international students in Indonesia (Clandinin, 2022). The research method was conducted using Narrative Inquiry, focusing on capturing the experiences of two participants studying overseas.

Research Instruments

The research instruments utilized in this study primarily comprised interview guidelines. These guidelines were meticulously designed to facilitate conversational interviews, allowing for a rich and detailed collection of data. The conversational nature of the interviews was intentional, aiming to create a comfortable and open atmosphere in which participants could freely share their experiences. The design of the interviews focused on capturing the intricacies of the students' experiences, including the challenges they faced and the adaptations they made in their new cultural and academic environment. By engaging in a dialogue rather than a strict question-and-answer format, the researchers were able to explore deeper insights into the students' personal journeys. This approach ensured that the data collected was not only comprehensive but also reflective of the true nature of the participants' experiences. Through these conversational interviews, the researchers aimed to understand how the students navigated their new surroundings, dealt with cultural differences, and overcame academic challenges. This method allowed participants to express their thoughts and feelings in a more nuanced and detailed manner, providing a richer understanding of their study abroad experiences.

Research Participants

The study examines international students who are currently enrolled in magister programs in Indonesia, with a specific focus on *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta*. Researchers purposefully select participants to ensure a diverse representation of disciplines, nationalities, and Indonesian universities. The International students are chosen under this criteria: (1) Enrolled in a master's program at an *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta* during the study. (2) After completing at least one semester of their program, students are encouraged to share their valuable experiences. (3) Participants' willingness to engage in the study and provide detailed accounts of their experiences. Researchers recruit around two participants (33 years old male and 26 years old Female) to balance the depth of individual experiences and the breadth of perspectives. These two individuals are my classmates Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta's English Language Education department is well regarded for its excellent teachers and curriculum.

Data Collection

Open-ended interviews are well-suited for this type of narrative inquiry as they allow for exploring the nuanced and complex nature of studying abroad without constraining the participants to predefined responses (Lichtman, 2023). The methodology employed in this study entailed conducting a 60-minute interview session with participants, during which they were prompted to discuss their experiences and insights regarding their graduate-level studies in Indonesia. The duration was carefully planned to consider the participants' time while ensuring that the narratives collected were thorough and detailed. The interview guide was meticulously designed with open-ended inquiries to encourage people to talk candidly about

their experiences, including their motivations, encounters, and the overall impact of their study abroad experience in Indonesia. This approach aligns with the qualitative research methodology, which emphasizes comprehending participants' experiences from their perspectives. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to create a comprehensive narrative that captures the real-life experiences of international students in Indonesia's higher education system.

Data Analysis

Researchers conduct open-ended interviews with the participants to align the overall validity of their experiences with their reflection from the interview. According to Downey et al., (2019), the data was subjected to narrative analysis in order to comprehend the participant's experience story. Three main components of this analytical technique were considered: the practical, emotional, and cognitive elements. Herman et al., (2019) first introduced the idea of narrative analysis in 1997: (1) Abstract (a overview of the story): The researcher highlights the central idea and provides a summary of the important details. (2) Orientation (giving the reader a context): The researcher annotated the story's key features, like location, time, and characters, to better suit the reader's needs. (3) Complicating action (plot, skeleton, or an incident that leads to a challenge): The investigator described the issue that emerged in the story. (4) Evaluation (comments on events, reasons for reporting them, or the interpretation the teller provides): The investigator annotated the narrative's evaluative response to the incident. (5) Resolution outcome (resolution of the conflict and the story): The investigator formulated the outcome of the issue resolution from the narrative. (6) Coda, which returns the audience or the storyteller to the present: The researcher presented the current circumstance as a comparison between the past and the current occurrence.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study employs the narrative analysis method created by Herman et al., (2019) to investigate the unique experiences of international students in Indonesia. The spoken narratives exchanged by the two overseas students are the particular focus of this qualitative investigation: a 33-year-old male from Yemen and a 26-year-old female from Colombia. Their stories provide insight into the cultural, educational, and personal challenges and opportunities encountered while studying abroad in Indonesia.

Table 1
International students Identity

Gender	Age	Status
<i>Female</i>	26	4 th Semester in The English Language Education Magister Program
<i>Male</i>	33	4th Semester in The English Language Education Magister Program

This study explores the personal experiences of an international student from Colombia (female), who pursued post-graduate studies in English language education in Indonesia. Utilizing the narrative analysis framework designed by Herman et al., (2019), this research delves into the complexities of studying abroad, including motivations, preparations, challenges, and the impact of such an experience on personal and professional development. The narrative is constructed based on an in-depth interview, providing insights into the student's journey from her initial decision to study abroad to the skills and knowledge she gained through her experiences in Indonesia.

 A Female Responses

After completing my undergraduate program in international business, I worked for different companies in my home country, but while working the pandemic of Covid 19 started and I had to stop working. Since English was my major during my undergraduate studies and at work, I was already familiar with the language. However, because of the pandemic, I had the opportunity to witness firsthand through informal teaching how many people did not know the language and how beneficial it can be. I understood that obtaining a master's degree in English would have a big influence on my profession and my personal education, so I did it for these reasons.

The narrator (male), a 33-year-old from Yemen, embarked on a postgraduate journey in Indonesia after receiving a scholarship from UNY University. The decision was influenced by Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and the academic opportunities it presented. Prior to this, the narrator worked as a teacher in Yemen, a profession that equipped them with valuable communication skills.

 A Male Responses

The motivation behind choosing Indonesia as my study destination was influenced by the country's rich cultural heritage, and the opportunity to experience a different cultural setting.

Orientation Providing

She is a 26-year-old professional in international business with a specialty in marketing, embarked on her post-graduate journey in English language education at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Her background includes working in various companies in Colombia, with roles in the export and import area, sales, and informal English teaching. The decision to study abroad was influenced by her interest in Asian countries and the opportunity provided by the *Kemitraan Negara Berkembang* (KNB) scholarship, which covered all expenses.

 A Female Responses

I've always had interest in Asian countries since I was younger, and because of that I wanted to continue my studies in a country in the region. Due the shortage of funds I needed to apply for scholarships that covered all around the expenses, while searching in internet I found the KNB scholarship which is provided for the Indonesian government, I decided to join the scholarship in Indonesia since it covered all the expenses, it was in a country in my region of interest and also it was a country that will be a challenge for me due to the cultural differences.

He is a 33-year-old from Yemen, who embarked on a postgraduate journey in Indonesia after receiving a scholarship from UNY University. The decision was influenced by Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and the academic opportunities it presented. Before this, the narrator worked as a teacher in Yemen, a profession that equipped them with valuable communication skills.

 A Male responses

Actually, To prepare myself for studying abroad in Indonesia, I engaged in thorough research about the country's culture, educational system, and academic opportunities. I applied for the scholarship offered by the UNY University and was fortunate enough to be selected as a recipient. The scholarship covers my tuition fees and provides me with partial financial support for my living expenses during my study abroad.

Complicating Actions

Upon deciding to study in Indonesia, a female participants faced several challenges, including adjusting to cultural differences, navigating the academic environment, and dealing with the informal and often unpredictable nature of formal events in Indonesia. These challenges were compounded by the restrictions of her scholarship, which prohibited employment during her studies, limiting her ability to engage in work-life balance.

A Female Responses

I would say that the biggest challenge is adjusting to the rhythm of life, in my country when something is in the academic or work sphere, things have to be done quickly and formally, but here is not quite alike here in Indonesia. One thing I can highlight is that there is not beforehand information, it's common that here, even in formal events, the time, date, or venue of meetings change abruptly not allowing to organized other events priorly.

Upon arrival in Indonesia, The male encountered several challenges, including adapting to a new cultural environment, overcoming language barriers, and adjusting to a different academic system. These challenges were compounded by the initial difficulty in making friends and establishing a support network due to communication barriers.

A Male Responses

Like any student who studies abroad, I faced certain challenges upon arriving in Indonesia. Adapting to a new cultural environment, language barriers which is the challenging up to now, and adjusting to a different academic system were some of the challenges I encountered.

Evaluation

The female's experience in Indonesia was marked by significant learning and adaptation. She learned to be more flexible, especially regarding time and formality, and My understanding of the importance of patience and its worth has become deeper willingness of Indonesian people to assist foreigners. Despite the challenges, she viewed her experiences positively, emphasizing the benefits of seeing challenges from a positive perspective and the importance of adapting to new environments.

A Female Responses

I consider that finding ourselves is a matter of the everyday, every hour, every task. So as events happens, I analyze what just occurred and learn from it. Also, seeing the challenges from a positive point of view helps in the overcome of those challenges.

Despite these challenges, The male side engaged in various strategies to overcome them. These included participating in extracurricular activities, engaging in group projects, and building relationships with lecturers and professors. The narrator's persistence and determination were key in navigating these challenges. The support from faculty and fellow students played a crucial role in the adaptation process, highlighting the importance of community and support networks in overcoming obstacles.

A Male Responses

However, with time, struggling and fighting, and support from faculty and fellow students, you are one of them who did and still doing his best with me to overcome these challenges.

Resolution

Through her experiences in Indonesia, the participant developed skills and knowledge that she believes will impact her future academic and career goals positively. She highlighted the importance of flexibility, patience, and the ability to adapt to new cultures and environments. These skills, coupled with her academic achievements, are expected to open multiple doors in the education sector and provide opportunities for teaching English worldwide.

A Female Responses

I would say that I have learned to be a bit more flexible, especially when it comes to time and formality. If I have to give some advice to other students coming to Indonesia it will be “take your time, not need to hurry” or “don’t worry, someone will help you”, Indonesian people are kind to foreigners and are willing to help you when you are having difficulties.

The male side has quite a different resolution. Through persistent effort and engagement with the academic and social environment, he was able to overcome the initial challenges. This led to significant personal and professional growth, including an enhanced understanding of Indonesian culture, the advancement of intercultural dialogue skills, and the acquisition of critical thinking and research skills.

A Male Responses

Studying in Indonesia provided me with valuable skills and knowledge areas. I gained understanding of Indonesian culture, developed cross-cultural communication skills. Additionally, Indonesia’s academic rigor and research opportunities allowed me to hone research, problem-solving, and critical thinking abilities. My advice to other students considering studying abroad in Indonesia would be to embrace cultural diversity, be open to new experiences, actively engage in academic and social activities, and make the most of the available resources and opportunities.

Coda

Reflecting on her journey, the participant acknowledges the growth and independence she has gained from her study abroad experience. She believes that her time in Indonesia has prepared her for future challenges and opportunities in her academic and professional life, emphasizing the transformative power of studying abroad on personal and professional development.

A Female Responses

I wouldn’t say that there is a big difference, only that at the very beginning I was more afraid to do things compared to now. I’ve learned to be more independent as I’m getting more familiar with the Indonesian lifestyle.

Reflecting on the male participant’s experience, he acknowledges the profound impact of studying abroad in Indonesia on their future academic and career goals. The international exposure, cross-cultural competence, and academic growth gained during this period are seen as invaluable assets that will contribute to the narrator's future endeavors.

A Male Responses

Since arriving in Indonesia and completing my post-graduate program, I have witnessed significant differences in my personal and professional life. The experience has broadened my perspectives, enhanced my academic knowledge and research skills, and provided me with a global network.

Discussion

The narratives provided by international students from Yemen and Colombia studying in Indonesia offer diverse experiences that shed light on the multifaceted nature of studying abroad. The observations from these findings align with existing literature on international education, language learning identities, and cultural adaptation. The journey of the Colombian student exemplifies the themes in learning identities within the English language setting (K. M. Situmorang & Simanjuntak, 2023). Her international business experience and commitment to enhancing her English language proficiency highlight the practical implications of language acquisition and its influence on career advancement. This narrative is consistent with findings from Abrar (2019), who emphasizes the importance of recounting language learning experiences to promote personal and professional growth. The Colombian student's story underscores how mastering English can open doors to global business opportunities and elevate one's professional trajectory. Her dedication to language learning reflects a strategic move to secure better career prospects and demonstrates the tangible benefits of language proficiency in an increasingly interconnected world.

The narrative of the Yemeni student reflects a deep cultural heritage and a commitment to academic excellence. This aligns with the insights shared by Lai and Kan (2020) regarding the pedagogical and practical dimensions of international short-term study courses. His experiences exemplify the intricacies of cultural and academic adjustment, mirroring the challenges and strategies discussed in the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) listening education in Indonesia (Namaziandost et al., 2019). The Yemeni student's account highlights the importance of cultural resilience and the ability to integrate into new academic environments. It also reflects the broader themes of navigating cultural diversity and overcoming language barriers, essential for international students striving for academic success in a foreign land.

These narratives also shed light on the emotional aspects of studying abroad (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2022). The students' experiences of adjusting to unfamiliar cultural and academic settings highlight the emotional effort required to navigate foreign spaces, a topic central to narrative investigations into the experiences of international students (Downey, 2019; Brewster, 2022; Poole, 2021). The emotional journey of these students underscores the importance of mental and emotional support systems. It reveals how critical it is for educational institutions to provide adequate resources to help international students cope with homesickness, cultural shock, and the pressures of adapting to a new academic environment.

Additionally, the students' reflections on their academic and personal growth highlight the significant influence of studying abroad on their academic paths and self-perception (Ramadhani et al., 2021; Samanhudi, 2021). Their narratives provide valuable insights into the relational dynamics and support systems crucial for international students' success (Simek & Stewart, 2024). The Colombian and Yemeni students' experiences illustrate how studying abroad can lead to profound personal transformation, fostering greater self-awareness, confidence, and a broader worldview. These reflections emphasize the role of supportive relationships, both peer and institutional, in helping students navigate their academic and personal journeys.

International students in Indonesia encounter a variety of opportunities and obstacles. The Colombian student's narrative highlights the value of setting academic goals and achieving language proficiency, reflecting the global trend of seeking language skills to enhance career opportunities. Her experiences emphasize the importance of adaptability and patience when navigating Indonesia's academic and cultural environments, skills that are crucial for international students everywhere. The ability to adapt to new educational systems and cultural norms is essential for succeeding in a foreign academic setting.

Conversely, the experiences of the Yemeni student underscore the need for cultural and academic adjustments when studying abroad. His story highlights the significant impact of support networks and involvement in extracurricular activities in overcoming obstacles. This narrative emphasizes the value of community and institutional support in facilitating a smooth transition and successful academic experience for international students. The Yemeni student's journey demonstrates how cultural heritage and educational opportunities shape the academic experiences of international students, reinforcing the importance of inclusive and supportive environments in higher education institutions.

Both narratives underscore the transformative power of studying abroad, illustrating substantial growth in personal and professional aspects. They highlight the importance of developing cross-cultural communication skills, adaptability, and a comprehensive understanding of global interconnectivity. These qualities are invaluable in our increasingly globalized society, where the ability to navigate and appreciate cultural differences is crucial. The experiences of the Colombian and Yemeni students reflect the broader educational goals of fostering global citizenship and intercultural competence. In conclusion, this study illuminates the complex and dynamic facets of the experiences of international students in Indonesia, contributing to the expanding body of knowledge on international education and cross-cultural communication. These narratives offer insightful perspectives that enhance our understanding of the academic and personal experiences of overseas students. They highlight the support systems and adaptive strategies required for their success in foreign academic settings. By examining these detailed personal accounts, the study provides valuable insights for universities and programs aiming to improve the study abroad experience and support international students effectively.

CONCLUSION

Both parties showed that they had different backgrounds before coming to Indonesia. One man is an English teacher in Yemen, and one woman is an entrepreneur in the export and import sector. However, both parties have the same interest in pursuing postgraduate studies in Indonesia. They are interested in the diversity of Indonesian culture and the beauty of the environment in Indonesia. Problems have arisen since they arrived in Indonesia. They experienced culture shock, meaning they saw the cultural differences that exist in Indonesia (especially in the language they acquired in Indonesia). In problem solving, they have other ways to end their problems. The men's side networks with many local and international students. He also tries to establish good relationships with lecturers and professors in solving academic challenges. The female side only tries to think positively, and just assumes that every problem she faces must end by itself. He also did not try to establish good relationships with lecturers and professors because his cultural background was different from Indonesia. The coda shown in the findings shows no significant differences since their arrival to the current situation. They both stated that the only way to make them feel comfortable facing postgraduate level was with help from Indonesian students, which helped them to be able to enjoy the phase as international students in Indonesia.

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