

Adaptation of Cross-Cultural Communication of Indonesian Students in Dealing with Culture Shock in Egypt

Lailatuz Zahro*¹, Nabila Yuni Listyana²

¹UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah, Indonesia

²Al-Azhar University Cairo, Egypt

*Correspondence Author: laailatuz96@gmail.com

Received: 2025-11-30; **Revised:** 2025-12-15; **Accepted:** 2025-12-24; **Published:** 2026-01-03

How to cite: Zahro, L., Listyana, N.Y. (2026). Adaptation of Cross-Cultural Communication of Indonesian Students in Dealing With Culture Shock in Egypt. *IJISED: Integrated Journal of Islamic studies and Education*, 01(1). DOI: [10.70376/ijised](https://doi.org/10.70376/ijised)

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#)

Abstract: *Indonesian students who continue their higher education at Al-Azhar University in Cairo face the challenge of complex cultural adaptation, primarily due to differences in language, social norms, and the Egyptian bureaucratic system. These problems give rise to the phenomenon of culture shock that affects the comfort, mental health, and academic adjustment process of students. This study aims to identify the stages of culture shock that Indonesian students experience and analyze the communication and self-adjustment strategies they employ to navigate this phase of culture shock. The research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, conducted for three months through virtual interviews. The object of this research is the phenomenon of culture shock, while the subjects are Indonesian students in the 1st, third, and fifth semesters at Al-Azhar. This study collected data through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, assessed data validity using source and method triangulation, and analyzed the data through reduction, thematic categorization, and meaning interpretation. The results of the study indicate that students undergo four phases of culture shock: honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment, with varying intensities, influenced by language skills, social support, and the dynamics of the Masisir community. The study's implications emphasize the importance of language training, cultural debriefing, and pre-departure programs in enhancing the adaptation readiness of Indonesian students in Egypt.*

Keywords: Culture Shock, Cross-Cultural Communication, Indonesian Students in Egypt (*Masisir*), Cultural Adaptation

Introduction

According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of Indonesian students studying in Egypt is approximately 13,000 to 15,000 ([Kusumajati, 2024](#)). This figure illustrates the significant interest of Indonesian students in studying in Egypt, particularly at Al-Azhar University, which is the primary destination ([Siregar & Salmiwati, 2022](#)). Although many scholars have examined Indonesian students studying abroad, only a limited number of studies have specifically focused on Masisir, namely Indonesian students in Egypt. Most previous research has focused more on academic adaptation, while the phenomenon of *Culture Shock* experienced by Masisir has not been studied in depth using a four-phase framework, as proposed by Oberg's Culture Shock model,

namely, *honeymoon*, *crisis*, *recovery*, and *adjustment* (Oberg, 1960). In addition, the influence of the Egyptian bureaucracy, the 'amiyah dialect, and the dynamics of the Masisir community as a process of cultural adaptation are also rarely systematically studied (Syafii & Azhari, 2025).

Most cross-cultural studies focus on Western countries, thereby overlooking the distinct cultural characteristics of the Middle East. Indonesian students experience a more complex adaptation experience because Egypt has different social structures, communication patterns, and cultural values (Awad et al., 2024). The interaction dynamics of the Middle East remain insufficiently examined, creating a need for more focused research on the experiences of Indonesian students (Islami & Erasiah, 2025). Although the compulsory one-year *Amiyah* language program plays a central role in students' adaptation processes, existing studies have largely overlooked this aspect (Subhan et al., 2023). The limitations of the study on language classes have highlighted the need for new research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the adaptation of Indonesian students in Egypt (Trentman, 2013).

Oberg's *Theory of Culture Shock* offers a crucial conceptual framework for understanding how Indonesian students adapt to significant cultural changes during their studies in Egypt. The stages described by Oberg help explain the emotional dynamics of students as they attempt to adjust their speaking style to the local communication context (Oberg, 1960). This communication adaptation is closely related to the need to understand the *Amiyah* dialect, which is the basis of daily social interaction of Egyptian society (Hasanah & Sari, 2021). The process of adjusting one's speaking style reveals that language skills influence the level of comfort students face when encountering various new cultural demands (Hardisty et al., 2021). Thus, Oberg's theory is relevant to explain the relationship between emotional changes in linguistic ability and the success of students' cultural adaptations (Furnham, 1984).

The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand the challenges of cross-cultural adaptation of Indonesian students in Egypt, as one of the largest populations abroad. This research contributes to the strengthening of the theory of *Culture Shock* and cross-cultural communication in the Middle East, which remains a minimally studied area. The findings of this study provide an empirical basis for developing a pre-departure training program designed to enhance students' cultural readiness before participating in international study programs. The findings in this study are also relevant for the formulation of foreign education policies and the development of more systematic and applicable cultural adaptation modules. This topic is important because cultural adaptation affects the mental health, academic performance, and study success of Indonesian students in the long term (Fitra et al., 2024).

Oberg's *Theory of Culture Shock* provides a conceptual framework of four phases that are relevant to understanding the adaptation experience of Indonesian students in Egypt. The theory examines the emotional, social, and psychological changes that occur during the process of adjustment to a new cultural environment (Siswanto & Ngadri, 2022). The relevance of this theory is even stronger as students face complex interaction dynamics as well as changes in their daily routines. Oberg also emphasizes the importance of language, social norms, and cultural systems as the main elements that shape the experience of individual adaptation across cultures (Oberg, 1960). These three aspects are in harmony with the conditions of Egypt, making Oberg's theory the right basis for analyzing the phenomena of *Culture Shock Among* Indonesian students in Egypt (*Masisir*).

The focus of this research is to identify and describe the stages of *the culture shock* phenomenon experienced by Indonesian students during the initial adaptation process at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The research also focuses on the strategies students use to navigate each phase, including communication patterns, social support, and behavioral adjustments within Egyptian culture. Overall, this study examines the dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation among students to understand the factors that affect their successful integration. The formulation of the problem in this study departs from two main focuses. *First*, this study seeks to identify and explain the stages of *the culture shock phenomenon* experienced by Indonesian students during the initial adaptation process at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, starting from the initial euphoria phase to the adjustment phase. *Second*, this study examines the strategies employed by Indonesian students to overcome *culture shock*, including the communication patterns they establish, the forms of social support they receive, and various self-adjustment efforts undertaken in the context of Egyptian culture.

The results of this study contribute to strengthening the theoretical understanding of the dynamics of *Culture Shock* in Indonesian students in Egypt by showing how each phase of *Culture Shock*, as Oberg described, occurs. These findings offer new perspectives on the role of the Egyptian bureaucracy, the obligations of Amiyah language classes, as well as the *Masisir* community, which have not been widely discussed in previous studies ([Prayoga & Faturahman, 2023](#)). Practically, this research provides an important basis for student sending institutions, governments, and universities to design more structured cultural debriefing programs, language training, and adaptation support so that students are better prepared to face cross-cultural challenges.

Method

This research employs a qualitative approach because it aims to understand the subjective experiences of Indonesian students in depth when dealing with the phenomenon of *Culture Shock* in Egypt. The approach used is phenomenology, which focuses on exploring the meaning of students' life experiences as they are experienced directly ([Aldi et al., 2024](#)). Through this approach, the researcher seeks to identify the essence of each phase of *Culture Shock* based on the stories, perceptions, and personal reflections of the informants. This study employed a phenomenological approach because it effectively captures the emotional, social, and linguistic dynamics that emerge throughout the cross-cultural adaptation process. Thus, this research provides a broad space for interpreting individual and contextual experiences.

This research was conducted over a period of three months using a virtual interview method with Indonesian students studying at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. This study employed virtual interviews to accommodate time flexibility and access constraints, as the informant is located abroad and engaged in an intensive academic schedule ([Harum et al., 2024](#)). The research process is carried out in stages, beginning with the determination of participants, scheduling interviews, and collecting additional data in the form of narratives and supporting documents ([Appleton, 1995](#)). During those three months, researchers conducted repeated interactions to ensure that the data collected was truly in-depth. With a structured process, this research can capture the dynamics of student adaptation in a more comprehensive and detailed manner.

The object of this research is the phenomenon of *Culture Shock* experienced by Indonesian students during the early years of study in Egypt. Meanwhile, the

research subjects consist of Indonesian students in semesters 1 and 3, and two individuals in semester 5, at Al-Azhar University, Cairo. The selection of this subject aims to capture the variation in adaptation experiences based on differences in the duration of stay and the level of academic maturity. Early-semester students tend to undergo more intense culture shock, while senior students adopt more diverse and adaptive coping strategies (Arsyad Ihsanulhaq & Muttaqin, 2024). With a combination of diverse subjects, the research can provide a more complete picture of the dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation in the context of Masisir's life.

The data collection techniques in this study include in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. This study employed in-depth interviews to explore students' personal experiences in detail across each phase of culture shock (Chand, 2025). The researchers conducted observations by examining informants' behaviors, expressions, and habits during virtual interactions, as well as through recordings of their activities within the Egyptian environment. In addition, the study used documentation as a complementary data source, including personal notes, photographs of activities, conversations, and administrative documents relevant to the adaptation process. The integration of these three techniques enabled the researchers to obtain rich, diverse, and mutually reinforcing data (Paulson, 2008), thereby enhancing the credibility and contextual depth of the research findings.

This study maintained data validity through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking, with source triangulation implemented by comparing data across informants to assess the consistency of experiences and findings (Hardian et al., 2025). The triangulation method involves combining interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure that the research results do not depend on any single technique. Additionally, member checking is conducted by asking informants to review the interview transcript results to ensure the accuracy of their meanings and statements (Dewi, 2022). This process plays a critical role in minimizing researcher bias during data interpretation (Masuwai et al., 2025). With a strict validity mechanism, this research produces more valid and accountable data.

This study employed a phenomenological analysis model, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The reduction stage focused on selecting significant statements that described participants' experiences of culture shock. The data are then organized into main themes according to the phases of *Culture Shock, as described by* Oberg, and the adaptation strategies of Indonesian students in Egypt. The next stage is the interpretation of meaning, which involves understanding the essence of an experience based on patterns, similarities, and differences between informants. The analysis process is repeated until a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied is achieved (Musdalifa et al., 2024). With this systematic step, the researcher can describe the dynamics of student cultural adaptation in depth and structure.

Result and Discussion

Results

Based on interview data on four Indonesian students who are studying at Al-Azhar University, Cairo. All results were presented objectively without interpretation, including patterns that emerged from respondents' answers regarding the stages of *culture shock* and the cross-cultural communication strategies they used during the adaptation process.

Based on interviews conducted with several Indonesian students at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, it was found that all respondents experienced *the culture shock* process through four distinct phases that occurred dynamically. During the *honeymoon phase*, the students reported that their arrival in Egypt was marked by euphoria and high enthusiasm. The new environment, the atmosphere of the Al-Azhar campus, and the experience of living in a country with a long history give a strong positive impression. They are amazed by new cultures, excited to explore new places, learn about the local culture, and interact with Egyptian people, which at the beginning seems intriguing and unique.

"When I first arrived, it felt like a dream. I was amazed to see the culture, language, and way the Egyptians interacted. There is a sense of pride in being able to study in a place that I have only heard about from my teachers' stories. In the first few weeks, I felt more excitement than difficulty."

However, when the initial phase passed, the respondents entered the *crisis phase*, marked by the appearance of various forms of discomfort. The barrier to the Amiyah language is the main problem they face, followed by the Egyptian communication style, which is more formal and direct than the custom in Indonesia. Differences in food, extreme weather, and the local community's lifestyle also contribute to the psychological pressure. During this phase, some respondents expressed frustration, confusion, and feelings of homesickness. Some of them even felt unable to survive or wanted to return to Indonesia due to the intensity of the challenges they faced.

"At first, I felt like I could adjust, but over time, everything felt heavy. The local community and lecturers often misunderstand the Amiyah language due to its complexity. The Egyptian's firm and straightforward style confused me, plus the weather was extreme, and the food was different. All of that makes me stressed, frustrated, and homesick. I even thought about going back to Indonesia."

As time passed, respondents began to exhibit changes in their attitudes that marked the recovery phase. They began to understand the local socio-cultural context and develop a more targeted adaptation strategy. Efforts to learn the Amiyah language, observe the interaction patterns of the local community, and be involved in the Masisir community are important steps in the recovery process. The support from local friends, seniors, and Indonesian student organizations in Egypt also has a significant influence on their ability to overcome emotional barriers. In this phase, respondents acknowledged that they were better equipped to manage stress, accept cultural differences, and view experiences as opportunities for learning.

"Now I am starting to understand Egyptian culture, learn the Amiyah language, and being active in the student community. Peer support helped me calm down, manage stress, and see this experience as a learning experience."

In the end, all respondents reached the adjustment phase, which is the stage when they begin to feel stable and more comfortable carrying out daily activities in Egypt. They have become accustomed to the rhythm of Cairo society, understand local social norms and communication styles, and can interact more effectively in the Amiyah language. Behavioral adjustments, emotional regulation, and the ability to read social situations become more mature. Respondents stated that during this phase, they felt more confident and independent, and began to enjoy life as a student in a new environment. The previously challenging adaptation process was

then understood as an important part of their personal development and academic experience in Egypt.

"I am used to the rhythm of life in Cairo, understanding the social norms and way of communicating with Egyptians. Now I can interact fluently, regulate my emotions, and start enjoying life here. The environment feels comfortable, even like your own home."

Table 1. Culture Shock Phase of Indonesian Students in Egypt

Indicators/Phases	Findings Keywords	Summary of Interview Data
Honeymoon Phase	Enthusiasm, awe, initial euphoria	Students show a keen interest in the Egyptian environment, the religious atmosphere, and the pride of studying at Al-Azhar
Crisis Phase	Difficult language, weather, bureaucracy	Students are under pressure due to the limitations of the amiyah language, extreme weather, and campus administrative procedures
Recovery Phase	Language learning, social support	Students begin to develop adaptation strategies through language learning and the support of the <i>Masisir</i> community
Adjustment Phase	Stable, comfortable, at home	Students feel more emotionally stable and able to go through social and academic routines comfortably

Based on the results of the interviews, the process by which Indonesian students overcome *culture shock* at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, involved various strategies that developed gradually. Starting from the preparation of students before departure to Egypt, which is generally still limited. Some students stated that they were only looking for basic information related to departure, administration, and an overview of life in Egypt, obtained from seniors or social media. Language preparation is carried out minimally and in an unstructured manner, resulting in a limited understanding of the Amiyah dialect used in daily interactions. Additionally, cultural debriefing and cross-cultural communication have not been systematically conducted before departure. This condition causes students to enter a new environment with diverse mental and cultural readiness in the early phase of adaptation.

"After experiencing living in Egypt myself, I felt that learning the Amiyah language before leaving was very important. If you already have a basic understanding of the language from the beginning, communication will be easier and less stressful. In addition, mental readiness is also necessary because cultural differences are quite noticeable and sometimes shocking at the beginning."

All respondents emphasized that language skills play an important role in the adjustment process. They explained that before entering the formal academic year, Indonesian students are required to take the Amiyah language classes for one year as part of academic preparation and social adaptation. This program helps them understand the basic vocabulary, interaction patterns, and communication styles of Egyptian society that are known to be more assertive. While not eliminating communication barriers, such intensive learning experiences accelerate their ability to interact more effectively in daily life.

"When I took an Amiyah language class one year before college, I learned a lot about basic vocabulary and how Egyptians interact. Although it was difficult to understand their assertive communication style at first, this program really helped me communicate more smoothly in my daily life."

Informants demonstrate various ways to maintain emotional balance amid the pressure of cultural adaptation through effective coping strategies. Some students participated in Masisir community activities, attended classes, cooked Indonesian food, and formed language learning groups to support one another. Positive routines like these help them reduce stress and maintain mental health. They also establish a more regular daily schedule to avoid feeling overwhelmed by a new environment whose rhythm differs from that in Indonesia.

In the social support indicator, students said that the role of regional friends, seniors, the PPMI community, various assisted houses, and dormitory groups had a significant impact in helping them through difficult times. Seniors offer practical guidance on daily life in Egypt, from using transportation to proper communication patterns, to tips on negotiating in the market. Meanwhile, family support from home through messages and video calls provides emotional stability that is very meaningful, especially in the early stages of adaptation.

The last indicator, behavioral adaptation and emotional regulation, is evident in changes in students' attitudes toward Egyptian cultural dynamics. They began to adjust their activity patterns, become more patient when facing differences, and learn to manage emotions when receiving public responses that were considered harsh by Indonesian communication standards. The respondents revealed that the 1-year process of learning the Amiyah language also helped them build mental readiness to face more intense interactions during the lecture period. With a better understanding of culture, they will eventually be able to live their academic and social lives with more confidence.

"I participated in Masisir community activities, attended studies, cooked Indonesian food, and joined the group of assisted houses. These activities made me not feel alone. The support of local friends, seniors, and the PPMI community was also invaluable, especially when they provided practical guidance on life in Egypt. The family at home also does a lot of video calls, which is very soothing in the early days of the adaptation."

Overall, the results of the interviews showed that the combination of one year of Amiyah language education, improved communication skills, healthy coping strategies, strong social support, and gradual behavioral adjustment was the main factor that helped Indonesian students successfully overcome *culture shock*. This process not only supports academic success, but also forms a more mature personal resilience during the stay in Egypt.

Table 2. Student Strategies in Overcoming Culture Shock

Strategy Indicators	Findings Keywords	Summary of Interview Data
Preparation Before Departure	Initial information, mental readiness, basic language	Students make limited preparations before departure, especially looking for general information, but it is not optimal in cultural debriefing
Communication Strategy	Mixed language, accommodation, courtesy	Students adjust their speaking styles and choose adaptive communication strategies to reduce cross-cultural barriers
Social Support	Massive Community, Seniors, Mentors	Support from the community and seniors plays a role in helping students manage stress and understand the academic and social environment
Cultural Habituation	Local norms, routines, flexibility	Students adjust daily habits such as diet and social interaction according to Egyptian culture
Amiyah Language Class	Compulsory one year, dialect, interaction	Amiyah language classes improve dialect understanding and facilitate students' social communication

Discussion

The findings on the honeymoon phase demonstrate strong consistency with Oberg's theory, which emphasizes the initial euphoria that individuals experience as they enter a new cultural environment (Prayoga & Faturahman, 2023). The attractiveness of Egypt's environment is evident in its rich religious atmosphere, unique architecture, and social dynamics, which give a positive impression to Indonesian students. The unique academic and cultural motivations make Indonesian students feel euphoric and enthusiastic (Awad et al., 2024). Comparisons with studies on Indonesian students in Egypt show a similar pattern, although variations appear in the duration and intensity of each student's initial experience. However, the potential for early perception bias still needs to be examined, as overenthusiasm often masks the various cultural challenges that arise in the next phase (Li, 2024).

The crisis phase typically emerges when language difficulties become the primary factor inhibiting social interaction, triggering significant adaptation stress (Pramesti et al., 2022). The extreme weather and the rhythm of life in Egyptian society serve as cross-cultural stressors that exacerbate the emotional vulnerability of new students there. Tier difference *Culture Shock*. It then becomes clear that each respondent has previous international experience that significantly influences the initial adjustment pattern. The Egyptian bureaucracy, particularly in the academic environment of Al-Azhar, often causes frustration due to its convoluted and time-consuming administrative procedures (Hewehy, 2022). The duration of the crisis phase also varied among respondents, highlighting unique adaptation dynamics that underscore the importance of considering individual differences in background. This condition supports Oberg's view that the inability to understand cultural symbols, particularly language and social norms, is the primary trigger for the emergence of culture shock. The variation in the intensity of the crisis phase among

students shows that the adaptation experience is dynamic and influenced by individual readiness ([Handrianto et al., 2024](#)).

The recovery phase becomes effective when language learning strategies, including compulsory participation in language classes, help students understand the context of daily communication ([Ahmad, 2022](#)). Social support from the Masisir community then became a source of cross-cultural strength, facilitating emotional stabilization after a period of severe crisis. The cultural observation process also plays a crucial role as a form of cultural learning, allowing students to reassess local customs more objectively. Recovery occurs more quickly in students who actively seek help, as this initiative strengthens their ability to adapt to a new environment. These recovery dynamics show that a combination of linguistic strategies, social support, and willingness to learn determines the success of the cultural adaptation process ([Deng, 2025](#)).

In the adjustment phase, students begin to exhibit emotional and social stability that is formed after navigating various pressures during the crisis phase. The process of adjusting to local values and norms occurs more naturally when daily interactions provide a deeper understanding of Egyptian cultural practices. The level of language fluency then affects the comfort of communicating, so that more fluent students feel more confident in various situations. Long-term adaptation begins to be evident from the emergence of a sense of environmental attachment, which makes them feel more comfortable and relatively at home. This overall dynamic confirms that the success of cultural adjustment depends on personal experience, linguistic ability, and an openness to accepting differences. This process supports Oberg's theory, which emphasizes that culture shock is temporary and can be passed through a gradual process of learning and adjustment ([Oberg, 1960](#)).

According to Giles, students use accommodation strategies to adapt their communication styles to interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds in the Egyptian context. Adaptation of speech styles is seen through the use of mixed language and forms of politeness adapted to local cultural norms in initial interactions ([Du, 2025](#)). Preparation before departure plays a crucial role in determining the quality of students' initial adaptation in Egypt. Language readiness, cultural understanding, and a realistic picture of social and academic life help students reduce the intensity of culture shock in the early phases. Without adequate preparation, students are more likely to experience confusion, emotional distress, and greater communication barriers ([Michael et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, pre-departure preparations are not only administrative, but also include language briefing and cross-cultural communication. This is a crucial factor in building students' mental and cultural readiness before entering a new environment ([Syed Qaiser Hussain et al., 2025](#)).

The difference in strategy between semesters arises because the longer experience enables senior students to understand cultural variations and local communication contexts more effectively ([Jaiswal et al., 2024](#)). The limitation of language skills in the early stages makes it difficult for some students to explain their intentions, so cross-cultural communication often experiences significant obstacles. The role of intercultural communication is important because the adaptation process facilitates effective interaction, helping students better understand local norms ([Wilczewski & Alon, 2023](#)).

The existence of social support from both families and fellow students in the region proves that cross-cultural adaptation becomes more stable when individuals

receive emotional and instrumental support from the environment (Rochman Hadi Mustofa & Agnes Defiana, 2024). The Masisir community plays a crucial role in reducing stress by providing a safe space for sharing experiences and helping students understand the dynamics of daily local life. Seniors often act as cultural brokers, bridging new students with practical information about Egypt's academic and social norms. Reliance on senior support sometimes slows down independent adaptation while still helping students navigate the initial challenges of communication and daily cultural adjustment. Typical findings indicate that Al-Azhar's academic mentor role provides structural direction, strengthening students' long-term adaptation to the dynamics of daily lectures (Virna et al., 2025).

After social support helped alleviate the initial pressure of adaptation, the process of cultural habituation began to gain strength with the students' experiences (Pacheco, 2020). The adjustment phase is evident when students begin to adapt their daily habits to the demands of Egyptian culture that they encounter consistently. Adaptation practices include dietary changes, adjustments to extreme weather conditions, and understanding local interaction norms that require high flexibility in the early stages. A comparison of habituation patterns among respondents revealed variations in adaptation, as previous experiences had helped shape their sensitivity to cultural differences. Personality factors, such as openness, emotional resilience, and coping skills, also influence the rate at which each student habituates. Ultimately, this process of cultural habituation strengthens the stability of the adjustment phase, as the consistency of new behaviors fosters comfort and increases the effectiveness of long-term adaptation (OECD, 2021).

The one-year Amiyah language class serves as the foundation for early adaptation, as language is the primary key to students' success in understanding the Egyptian cultural context (Fahira et al., 2025). This program serves as a systematic institutional support system, enabling students to acquire basic linguistic skills before entering the Al-Azhar academic environment (Akbar & Abidin, 2025). The findings are consistent with international student adaptation studies, which affirm the importance of language competence in minimizing significant cross-cultural communication barriers. Enhancing the ability to understand dialects facilitates social interaction, enabling students to be more confident in forming new relationships in their daily lives. The study's implications suggest that language classes are a worthy recommendation for government policy to enhance the adaptation readiness of Indonesian students (Ghufron et al., 2023).

This research contributes to strengthening Kalvero Oberg's *theory of culture shock* by demonstrating how Indonesian students experience complex dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation (Oberg, 1960). The study's findings reveal the character of Egypt's bureaucracy as well as the dynamics of the Masisir community, which formed a unique experience during the process of adjusting to student culture. The academic implications of the research emphasize the importance of adaptation preparation programs before departure, ensuring that students have adequate cultural and mental readiness. Practical implications suggest the need for language training and increased cultural awareness to minimize communication barriers in cross-cultural social interactions. The combination of these contributions resulted in more structured student adaptation policy recommendations, leading to a significant increase in cultural readiness (Liu et al., 2025).

A variety of findings suggest that the length of a student's stay directly affects the adaptation process because cultural exposure determines their comfort level (Pantow et al., 2025). Individual character differences, such as openness of experience and emotional stability, influenced their response to new cultural

challenges during the early days. The intensity of involvement in the *Masisir* community also contributes differently because social support determines the extent to which students can adapt (Snape, 2025). The difference in personal communication strategies becomes significant when students adopt different approaches to address language barriers and local interaction norms. All of these variations illustrate that cultural adaptation is not uniform but is influenced by individual, social, and situational factors (Sylwia et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The results of the study show that Indonesian students at Al-Azhar University in Cairo experience culture shock in four phases, as described by Kalvero Oberg, namely honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. Each phase occurs sequentially with varying intensity, influenced by language ability, social environment, and personal readiness of the students. These findings reinforce the validity of Oberg's culture shock theory in the context of the Middle East, which is still relatively understudied. Practically speaking, this study emphasizes the urgency of language and cultural preparation before departure. The limitations of this study lie in the number of informants and the qualitative approach, so further research using a longitudinal design and a broader subject scope is recommended.

Findings related to adaptation strategies show that Indonesian students developed cross-cultural communication through accommodative strategies, utilization of social support from the *Masisir* community, familiarization with local norms, and participation in Amiyah language classes for one year. These strategies played an important role in accelerating the transition from the crisis phase to the recovery and adjustment phase. The practical contribution of this study lies in its recommendation to strengthen structured and sustainable pre-departure preparation programs. The limitations of this study include the lack of exploration of the role of digital media in the adaptation process. Therefore, further research can explore technology based communication strategies in supporting the adaptation of international students.

References

- Ahmad, S. (2022). Language Learning Strategies: An Overview Classification in the Context and Effectiveness. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 6(II). [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2022\(6-II\)59](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2022(6-II)59)
- Akbar, D. W. A., & Abidin, Z. (2025). Egyptian Ammiyah Speaking Training in the Muhammadiyah Darul Arqom Islamic Boarding School, Depok. *ABDIMAS: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 6(2), 3882–3888. <https://doi.org/10.35568/abdimas.v6i2.3309>
- Aldi, A., Suhardiman, S., & Nurul Ihsan, A. (2024). Culture Shock and Adaptation of Phenomenological Studies in Participants of the Batch 3 Independent Student Exchange Program at Ganesha Education University. *Journal on Education*, 6(4), 19381–19391. <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v6i4.5954>
- Appleton, J. V. (1995). Analysing qualitative interview data: Addressing issues of validity and reliability. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22(5), 993–997. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.1995.tb02653.x>
- Arsyad Ihsanulhaq, P., & Muttaqin, M. I. (2024). Al-Azhar University's Indonesian Student Alumni Strategic Role Analysis in Influencing the Politics of Indonesia-Egypt Foreign Policy. *Journal of World Science*, 3(10), 1351–1361. <https://doi.org/10.58344/jws.v3i10.1191>

- Awad, S. R., Nuraryo, I., & Idrus, M. H. (2024). The Exploration of the Cultural Shock Experience of Indonesian Students in Egypt. *Journal of Communication and Business*, 12(2), 305–328. <https://doi.org/10.46806/jkb.v12i2.1259>
- Chand, S. P. (2025). Methods of Data Collection in Qualitative Research: Interviews, Focus Groups, Observations, and Document Analysis. *Advances in Educational Research and Evaluation*, 6(1), 303–317. <https://doi.org/10.25082/AERE.2025.01.001>
- Deng, Z. (2025). Cultural identity and psychological adaptation among international students learning Chinese: A mixed-methods study. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.59429/esp.v10i3.3385>
- Dewi, I. G. A. A. O. (2022). Understanding Data Collection Methods in Qualitative Research: The Perspective of Interpretive Accounting Research. *Journal of Tourism Economics and Policy*, 1(1), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.38142/jtep.v1i1.105>
- Du, Y. (2025). Linguistic accommodation and identity negotiation in cross-cultural communication: A multimodal analysis of English as a contact language. *Region - Educational Research and Reviews*, 7(3), 27. <https://doi.org/10.32629/rerr.v7i3.3736>
- Fahira, P. A. F., Setiyawan, A., Bastari, M. B., Alhanun, Z. Z., & Padilah, Y. M. (2025). Psycho-Sociolinguistic Barriers to Acquiring ‘Ammiyah Language for New Indonesian Students in Egypt. *Al-Lisan*, 10(1), 72–84. <https://doi.org/10.30603/al.v10i1.5953>
- Fitra, Muh. A. F., Dollah, S., & Baa, S. (2024). Culture shock among the native Minangkabau people in Makassar. *AL MA'ARIEF : Journal of Social and Cultural Education*, 6(2), 84–98. <https://doi.org/10.35905/almaarief.v6i2.11513>
- Furnham, A. (1984). Tourism and culture shock. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 11(1), 41–57. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(84\)90095-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(84)90095-1)
- Ghufron, Z., Anwar, E. S., Alawiyah, A., & Mufrodi, M. (2023). Arabic Teaching and Learning in Matriculation Program for Al-Azhar Student's Candidate. *Arabiyat : Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 10(1), 106–120. <https://doi.org/10.15408/a.v10i1.31869>
- Hardian, D. E., Ningsih, N., Amalia, N., & Suyati, S. (2025). Implementation of Academic Supervision by School Principals to Improve Teachers' Pedagogical Competence (A Narrative Qualitative Study at Primary Schools in the Border Area of East Kalimantan). *JiIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 8(9), 10939–10944. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v8i9.9345>
- Handrianto, C., Solfema, S., & Jusoh, A. J. (2024). Cultural Adaptation and Academic Success: Exploring the Experiences of Indonesian Students in Malaysian Universities. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 12(3), 251–280. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/2496>
- Hardisty, A., Addink, W., Glöckler, F., Güntsch, A., Islam, S., & Weiland, C. (2021). A choice of persistent identifier schemes for the Distributed System of Scientific Collections (DiSSCo). *Research Ideas and Outcomes*, 7, e67379. <https://doi.org/10.3897/rio.7.e67379>
- Harum, A. C., Rachmiate, A., & Triwardhani, I. J. (2024). Cultural Adaptation of Indonesian Muslim Women Students in Europe. *TALK: Scientific Journal of Communication Sciences*, 67–76. <https://doi.org/10.32509/wacana.v23i1.3437>

Hasanah, M., & Sari, R. R. (2021). *Acquiring Indonesian Pragmatic and Cultural Competencies Towards Indonesian Language Learners by Arabic Speakers at Al-Azhar University Cairo: Anthropolinguistic Perspective*. International Conference on Engineering, Technology and Social Science (ICONETOS 2020), Malang, East Java, Indonesia. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210421.072>

Hewehy, M. A. G. A. (2022). Proposed Procedures for Developing Managerial Performance of the Faculties of Al-Azhar University in The Light of Strategic Flexibility Approach. *Dirasat: Educational Sciences*, 49(4), 286–307. <https://doi.org/10.35516/edu.v49i4.3341>

Islami, I. R. & Erasiah. (2025). Beyond Borders: The Role of the Indonesian Student Diaspora in Egypt in the Pursuit of Independence. *Journal of Islamic History*, 5(1), 63–72. <https://doi.org/10.53088/jih.v5i1.1455>

Jaiswal, A., Sapkota, M., & Acheson, K. (2024). Bridging borders: Assessing the impact of semester-long study abroad programs on intercultural competence development in undergraduate engineering students. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 11(1), 24. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-024-00483-6>

Kusumajati, C. (2024). Comparative Analysis of Educational Policies and Systems: A Case Study of Egyptian and Indonesian Higher Educations. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(2), 103–112. <https://doi.org/10.38073/jpi.v14i2.1748>

Li, J. (2024). Adaptation Process and Challenges in Intercultural Communication among Chinese University Students in German: Based on Culture Shock Theory. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 42, 786–792. <https://doi.org/10.54097/zh3ax004>

Liu, X., Xu, Z., & Wang, H. (2025). Examining the Association Between Cultural Intelligence and Linguistic Confidence: The Mediating Roles of Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Interpersonal Communication Competence in International Students in China. *SAGE Open*, 15(2), 21582440251336507. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251336507>

Masuwai, A., Zulkifli, H., & Hamzah, M. I. (2025). Self-assessment of secondary school Islamic education teacher: Validity and reliability of qualitative study. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 14(2), 961. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v14i2.29438>

Michael, T., Chapin, L. A., & Quitariano, C. D. (2025). Paramedicine students' experiences on placement: Preparedness for the emotional impacts of witnessing trauma. *BMC Medical Education*, 25(1), 951. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-025-07277-6>

Musdalifa, M., Nasrah, N., & Anisa, A. (2024). Analysis of Students' Environmental Care Attitudes Through the Adiwiyata Program at UPT SD Inpres Bisara. *Journal on Education*, 6(4), 20795–20805. <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v6i4.6197>

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Practical Anthropology*, 7(4), 177–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182966000700405>

OECD. (2021). *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

Pacheco, E.-M. (2020). Culture learning theory and globalization: Reconceptualizing culture shock for modern cross-cultural sojourners. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 58, 100801. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2020.100801>

- Pantow, V., Wagiu, D. D., Mandang, S. R. I., Longdong, W. M. J., & Wollah, M. (2025). Relationship Between Cultural Readiness and Social Adaptation of Manado State Polytechnic Students Abroad. *Jurnal Locus Penelitian Dan Pengabdian*, 4(10). <https://doi.org/10.58344/locus.v4i10.4942>
- Paulson, D. S. (2008). Qualitative Data Analysis. In *Biostatistics and Microbiology: A Survival Manual* (pp. 101–120). Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-77282-0_6
- Pramesti, W., Nurhaeni, N., & Imansari, N. (2022). Investigating Causes Of Culture Shock Experienced By International Students. *LET: Linguistics, Literature and English Teaching Journal*, 12(1), 174. <https://doi.org/10.18592/let.v12i1.6335>
- Prayoga, I., & Faturahman, M. F. (2023). Culture Shock of Indonesian Students from Banten in Process Adaptation in Egypt. *Proceeding of International Conference on Business, Economics, Social Sciences, and Humanities*, 6, 1195–1199. <https://doi.org/10.34010/icobest.v4i.498>
- Rochman Hadi Mustofa & Agnes Defiana. (2024). Culture Shock Akademik Mahasiswa Asing di Indonesia (Studi Kasus di Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta). *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan*, 13(2), 1641–1654. <https://doi.org/10.58230/27454312.667>
- Siregar, I. B. & Salmiwati. (2022). Egyptian Islamic Education and Its Influence on Indonesian Islamic Education. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 13(1), 36–44. <https://doi.org/10.22236/jpi.v13i1.8088>
- Siswanto, S., & Ngadri, N. (2022). Al-Azhar and Moderate: Exploring the Role of Alumni Al-Azhar of Egypt in Strengthening Ummah Unity in Indonesia Through the Concept of ‘Wasathiyah’. *Religio Education*, 2(2), 116–132. <https://doi.org/10.17509/re.v2i2.52054>
- Snape, P. (2025). A Systematic Review of Cross-Cultural Workplace Communication Challenges in Thailand. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, 10(09), 3646–3669. <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2025.v10i09.001>
- Subhan, Ghuftron, Z., Indriana, D., Alawiyyah, A., & Mufrodi. (2023). Arabic Learning Strategies in an Effort to Prepare Prospective New Students to the Middle East (Case Study on El-Darosah Banten). *Mantiqu Tayr: Journal of Arabic Language*, 4(1), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiqu tayr.v4i1.4027>
- Syafii, H., & Azhari, H. (2025). Psychological Analysis of Students’ Self-Efficacy in Learning: A Comparative Study between Indonesian and Egyptian High School Students. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Educational Review*, 2(1), 8–18. <https://doi.org/10.58230/ijier.v2i1.301>
- Syed Qaiser Hussain, Prof. Dr. Farida Panhwar, & Prof. Dr. Sanaullah Ansari. (2025). The Multifactorial Nature of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: A Comprehensive Review Of Contributing Factors In Efl. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT)*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.63878/jalt1216>
- Sylwia, P., Barzykowski, K., Tracz-Krupa, K., Cassar, V., & Said, E. (2024). Developing cross-cultural competence of students through short-term international mobility programme. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 28(2), 169–188. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijtd.12315>
- Trentman, E. (2013). Imagined Communities and Language Learning During Study Abroad: Arabic Learners in Egypt. *Foreign Language Annals*, 46(4), 545–564. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12054>

Virna, L., Murdiati, E., & Hamandia, M. (2025). Analisis Culture Shock Yang Dihadapi Mahasiswa Internasional di Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang. *Jurnal Bisnis Dan Komunikasi Digital*, 2(2), 11. <https://doi.org/10.47134/jbk.v2i2.3814>

Wilczewski, M., & Alon, I. (2023). Language and communication in international students' adaptation: A bibliometric and content analysis review. *Higher Education*, 85(6), 1235–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00888-8>