

**EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES IN LITERACY,  
LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE NAVIGATIONS OF AN  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FROM TAJIKISTAN  
STUDYING IN INDONESIA**

**A THESIS**

**by**

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**Student Number: 06012682327003**

***Magister Program in Language Education***



***MAGISTER PROGRAM IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION***

**FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND**

**EDUCATION**

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**PALEMBANG**

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned,

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Hereby certify that the thesis entitled **“Exploring The Lived Experiences in Literacy, Language, and Culture Navigations of an International Student from Tajikistan Studying in Indonesia”** is my work, and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethics and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The Undersigned,



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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved family, whose unwavering love, support, and sacrifices have been the cornerstone of my journey; to my parents, for their endless encouragement and belief in my potential. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my advisors, whose patience, wisdom, and guidance in shaping this work. To my friends and peers, thank you for your companionship, encouragement, and shared moments that lightened the challenges along the way. Lastly, I dedicate this work to God Almighty, whose boundless grace and blessings have given me strength and direction throughout this journey.

## **MOTTO**

“Talk less, do more”

Dream big, work hard, stay focused, and surround yourself with  
good people!



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Palembang, December 24<sup>th</sup>,  
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**ABSTRACT**

This study explored the lived experiences of a Tajikistani international student navigating literacy, language, and cultural integration while studying in Indonesia, employing a qualitative narrative approach. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and documentation. The study examined the challenges and opportunities faced in adapting to a new educational setting. Key findings revealed the participant's evolution in literacy practices, beginning with no proficiency in Indonesian and progressing through informal learning and daily interactions. Language proficiency significantly influenced academic success and social integration, with the shift from anticipated English instruction to Indonesian presenting unforeseen challenges. Cultural navigation emerged as another critical dimension, requiring adjustments to Indonesia's diverse norms, values, and academic practices. The study highlighted the interplay of resilience, cultural intelligence, and social networks in fostering adaptation and building a sense of belonging. However, institutional gaps, such as limited language preparation and unclear communication about academic requirements, posed additional barriers. This research underscored the complexities of international student mobility in Indonesian contexts, offering practical recommendations for educational institutions. Comprehensive support systems, including tailored language programs, cultural orientation, and enhanced academic resources, were identified as vital for addressing the unique needs of international students. By fostering inclusivity and cross-cultural engagement, institutions could enrich the experiences of international students and contribute to a more interconnected global education landscape. This study provided valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and institutions aiming to improve the integration and support of international students in diverse cultural and academic environments.

*Keywords: International Student, Literacy, Language, Culture navigations*


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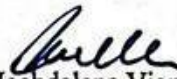
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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses: (1) background of study, (2) problem of study, (3) objective of study, and (4) significance of study

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In the era of globalization, the international mobility of student has increased significantly, providing individuals from various countries with the opportunity to explore educational experiences in different cultural settings. The increase in student mobility has been pivotal in cultivating a sense of global citizenship among student, enabling them to navigate and appreciate diverse cultural landscapes (Ghosh & Jing, 2020). Education globalization fosters interconnectedness and offers opportunities for student to engage with diverse cultures, thereby enriching their educational experiences (Jin, 2023). In conclusion, globalization has significantly increased student mobility, allowing more individuals to seek diverse educational and cultural experiences abroad. This trend highlights the growing interest in gaining academic knowledge while exploring different cultures.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the global mobility of student has grown, with individuals seeking educational opportunities that transcend national borders. Global mobility contributes to the academic and professional development of student, further supporting the notion of seeking educational opportunities across borders (Horta et al., 2021). The student migrations are often viewed as long-term investments in education and future opportunities, further emphasizing the significance of cross-border educational experiences (Garvik, 2023). This phenomenon has led to a diverse array of cultural exchanges and the cross-pollination of ideas, as student from different parts of the world immerse themselves in new educational environments. International mobility programs significantly enhance cultural competence and awareness



among student through educational exchanges fosters a deeper understanding of cultural dynamics, which is essential for effective communication and collaboration in a globalized world Gradellini et al. (2021). Multicultural education promotes tolerance and respect for differences, facilitating interactions among student from diverse backgrounds (Umar & Tumiwa, 2020). In summary, the global mobility of student not only enriches their academic and professional trajectories but also fosters intercultural understanding, tolerance, and collaboration, making it a cornerstone of global education in the 21st century.

However, among the myriad groups participating in this global exchange are student from Tajikistan, a Central Asian nation with a rich cultural heritage rooted in Persian traditions, who have chosen Indonesia, a country renowned for its own vibrant and diverse cultural mosaic, as their study destination. Tajikistan, a landlocked country in Central Asia, is a former Soviet Union colony bordered by China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. The majority of its population are Tajiks who share linguistic, cultural, and historical ties with Afghanistan and Iran. After being part of the Samanid Empire, Tajikistan became a Soviet Socialist Republic in the 20th century and gained independence following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991(Turistiati et al., 2024).

Furthermore, choosing Indonesia as the study destination choice reflects a unique intersection of two distinct cultural and linguistic spheres. Tajikistan, known for its historical contributions to Persian literature, art, and philosophy, brings a heritage deeply influenced by ancient empires and Islamic traditions. the interplay between Tajik, Persian, and other languages, which reflects the region's rich linguistic tapestry influenced by historical empires (Bahry, 2023). In contrast, Indonesia, with its vast archipelago, hosts a multifaceted cultural identity shaped by centuries of trade, migration, and religious diversity. religious pluralism contributes to social harmony and cultural vibrancy in Indonesian society (Hutabarat, 2023). The coexistence of various religious traditions has not only influenced Indonesia's cultural practices but has also fostered a unique

social fabric characterized by tolerance and mutual respect. For Tajik student, Indonesia offers an opportunity to engage with a Southeast Asian perspective, explore new academic paradigms, and immerse themselves in a multicultural environment unlike their own. At the same time, this student contributes to Indonesia's educational landscape by sharing their perspectives, fostering cross-cultural dialogue, and enriching the globalized fabric of higher education. The interaction between these two cultural spheres highlights the broader significance of global mobility in bridging distant regions and promoting mutual understanding in an increasingly interconnected world.

The decision by Tajikistani student to pursue higher education in Indonesia is a reflection of their ambition to gain quality education while embracing the challenges and rewards of living in a foreign culture. The significant aspect of this phenomenon is the increasing trend of international student migration, which is highlighted by Golomidova (2021), who discusses the factors influencing international student migration from Tajikistan to various countries, including Indonesia. The study emphasizes that student seek quality education and cultural experiences that can enhance their personal and professional development Golomidova (2021). In addition, the research by Nur highlights the role of international educational programs, such as the Program of *Darmasiswa*, which offers opportunities for foreign student to study Indonesian language, art, and culture. This program exemplifies the ambition of international student, including those from Tajikistan, to engage deeply with the local culture while pursuing their educational goals (Nur et al., 2021). In brief, this choice also highlights the growing appeal of Indonesia as an educational hub in the region. Despite the geographical and cultural distances between Tajikistan and Indonesia, these students embark on their academic journeys with the hope of not only achieving academic success but also broadening their worldviews through cultural exchange.

However, the journey of these international student is fraught with unique challenges that extend beyond the typical academic hurdles. One of the most

significant challenges is the adaptation to a new language and linguistic environment. Language barriers not only intensify academic stress but also create social divisions among international student, leading to a phenomenon known as "social homophily," where student gravitate towards those who share similar linguistic backgrounds (Parray et al., 2020). Language challenges significantly affect the overall adaptation process, leading some student to abandon their studies due to overwhelming difficulties (Gebu & Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, 2020). Indonesia, with its diverse languages and dialects, presents a linguistic landscape that is vastly different from that of Tajikistan, where Tajik, a variety of Persian, is the official language. For Tajikistani student, mastering the Indonesian language and its associated academic literacy is essential for their success. This process of linguistic adaptation is often accompanied by a complex interplay of cultural factors that influence how student learn, communicate, and engage with their peers and instructors.

Cultural navigation is another critical aspect of the international student experience. According to Rana et al. (2020) the critical aspect of cultural navigation is the role of cultural intelligence, which has been shown to positively impact the psychological adaptation of international student which is crucial for international student to successfully adapt to their new environments, thereby facilitating their cultural navigation processes. Language proficiency and interpersonal skills significantly affect the socio-cultural adaptability of international student, underscoring the importance of cultural navigation in their overall adaptation process (Zhou & Zeng, 2021). The cultural differences between Tajikistan and Indonesia are pronounced, encompassing social norms, values, religious practices, and everyday behaviours. For Tajikistani student, adjusting to these new cultural realities can be both challenging and enriching. The process of cultural adaptation is not only about learning new customs but also about negotiating one's identity in a new context. This negotiation can lead to both personal growth and the development of a more nuanced understanding of global cultural dynamics.

The reviewed papers provide insight into the literacy, language, and cultural navigation experiences of international student from various origins studying in Indonesia. Safi et al. (2022) found that cultural differences, notably in language, costume, and food culture, had a major impact on student' learning experiences. Many international students experience culture shock, which might impede their academic success. This research emphasizes the necessity of good communication tactics in bridging cultural gaps and fostering meaningful connections among student from diverse cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Pratama et al. (2024) investigate the obstacles experienced by Thai international student studying Indonesian. The study focuses on their difficulties with language and cultural adaptation, demonstrating that poor language competency hampered effective communication and comprehension of crucial academic topics. These linguistic issues had a significant impact on their classroom involvement and overall academic progress. These studies, taken together, provide useful insights into overseas student' literacy, language, and cultural experiences. They give insight on the problems and possibilities that these student face, as well as practical tips for increasing their sense of belonging in the host nation.

Despite the growing body of research on international student mobility. There is limited attention given to student from Central Asia, especially Tajikistan, a region with a unique cultural and linguistic heritage rooted in Persian traditions. Additionally, the experiences of international student in non-Western countries like Indonesia remain underexplored, leaving a significant gap in understanding how Tajikistani student adapt to Indonesia's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. The challenges these student face, such as adapting to a new language, mastering academic literacy, and navigating cultural differences, are crucial yet not sufficiently studied in the context of Tajikistan-Indonesia academic exchanges.

The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of Tajikistani student' experiences in Indonesia, a non-Western educational context, which provides a

fresh perspective on cross-cultural adaptation. By examining how the student navigates language, literacy, and cultural integration. This study also investigates the role of cultural intelligence and socio-cultural adaptability in student' academic and personal growth. This study aims to explore the literacy practices, linguistic challenges, and cultural influences shaping the academic and social adaptation of international student, particularly from Tajikistan, during their studies in Indonesia.

## **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

The problems in this study, include:

1. How do the literacy practices of an international student from Tajikistan studying in Indonesia evolve over time, and what role do language proficiency and cultural context play in shaping the literacy development during their academic journey?
2. What linguistic challenges and opportunities do international student from Tajikistan encounter while studying in Indonesia, and how do these language dynamics influence the academic performance, social interactions, and overall adaptation to the new educational environment?
3. To what extent do cultural navigations impact the lived experiences of an international student from Tajikistan in Indonesia, specifically examining the ways in negotiate cultural differences, form social connections, and engage with academic and extracurricular activities to enhance their sense of belonging in the host country?

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

The aim in this study, include:

1. Find out the literacy practices of an international student in evolving over time, the role of language proficiency, and cultural context play in shaping the literacy development during academic journey.
2. Find out the linguistic challenges and opportunities of an international



student from Tajikistan encounter while studying in Indonesia, and how language dynamics influence the academic performance, social interactions, and overall adaptation to the new educational environment.

3. Find out the cultural navigations impact the lived experiences of an international student from Tajikistan in Indonesia, specifically examining the ways in negotiate cultural differences, form social connections, and engage with academic and extracurricular activities to enhance the sense of belonging in the host country.

#### **1.4 The Significance of the Study**

The study examining the experiences of an international student in Indonesia is of considerable importance on several levels. It examines the worldwide higher education scene, offering essential insights into the problems and possibilities faced by student pursuing academics abroad. The research explores the complexities of individual experiences, enhancing comprehension of the varied cultural, social, and academic aspects involved, so promoting more cross-cultural appreciation and empathy.

This study has consequences for educational institutions and governments, providing essential information on improving support systems and resources for overseas student. The research enables stakeholders to recognise challenges and areas for enhancement, facilitating the implementation of focused interventions to cultivate a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This, thus, enhances the quality of education and internationalisation initiatives inside Indonesian higher education institutions.

Moreover, the study provides a catalyst for promoting international cooperation and collaboration in education. By enhancing the perspectives and experiences of foreign student, it fosters conversation and interaction across distinct cultural groups, enhancing mutual understanding and collaboration on a global level. By collaborating, educational institutions may utilise diverse viewpoints and experiences to create a more meaningful and transforming

learning environment for all student.

The study of international student' experiences in Indonesia goes beyond academic investigation; it represents a dedication to promoting inclusion, diversity, and educational quality. This research highlights the problems and successes of foreign student, enhancing our comprehension of the global higher education scene and facilitating significant change inside educational institutions and beyond.

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