

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC
NAVIGATIONS ON BECOMING EFL TEACHERS IN A
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM**

A THESIS

by

Tri Puja Lestari

Student Number: 06012682327005

Magister Program in Language Education



MAGISTER PROGRAM IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY
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2024

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Student Number: 06012682327005

Magister Program in Language Education

Approved by:

Adviser 1,



**Sary Silvhiany, M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 197708112002122003**

Adviser 2,



**Dr. Rita Inderawati, M.Pd
NIP. 196704261991032002**

Certified by:

Head of Magister Program of Language Education

Sriwijaya University



**Sary Silvhiany, M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 197708112002122003**

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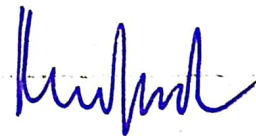
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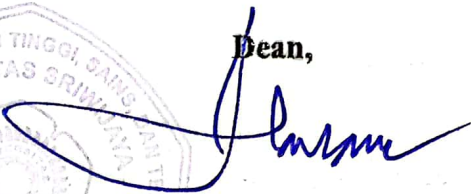
**Sary Silvhiany, M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 197708112002122003**

Advisor 2,



**Dr. Rita Inderawati, M.Pd
NIP. 196704261991032002**

Dean,

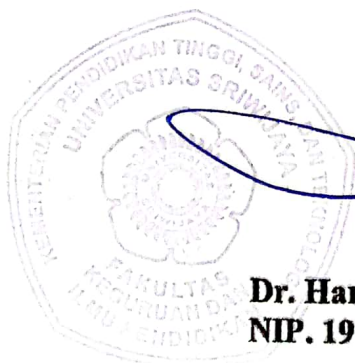


**Dr. Hartono, M.A.
NIP. 196710171993011001**

**Head of Magister Program
Language Education,**



**Sary Silvhiany, M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 19770811200212**



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A THESIS

by:

Tri Puja Lestari

06012682327005

Magister Program of Language Education

Had been examined and passed on:

Day : Monday

Date : December 16, 2024

EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Chairperson | : Sary Silvhiany, M.A., Ph.D. |
| 2. Secretary | : Dr. Rita Inderawati, M.Pd |
| 3. Member | : Prof. Soni Mirizon, M.A., Ed.D. |
| 4. Member | : Eryansyah, M.A., Ph.D. |

Palembang, December 31st, 2024

**Approved by,
Head of Magister Program of Language Education**



**Sary Silvhiany, M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 197708112002122003**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned,

Name : Tri Puja Lestari

Student's Number : 06012682327005

Study Program : Magister Program in Language Education

Certify that the thesis entitled "International Students' Cultural and Academic Navigations on Becoming EFL Teachers in a Teacher Education Program" 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, 2024

The Undersigned,



Tri Puja Lestari

NIM. 06012682327005

DEDICATION

This dedicated to my dear parents, Jamingan and Rohana, for their unwavering support and constant presence throughout my academic journey. They had been a reliable source of comfort and had accompanied me through the challenges of administering this thesis. Their prayers, advices, and comfort words had been instrumental in my thesis success.

MOTTO

“You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page.”

Jodi Picoult

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, the greatest praise and gratitude to Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, the most Generous and the most Merciful, the Almighty, the Ruler of all creation, for bestowing upon the writer the ability to fulfil her educational responsibilities. The writer also presents greetings upon the Prophet Muhammad SAW, may be peace and blessings upon him.

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Last, the perfection only belongs to Allah. Criticisms, comments and suggestions are really appreciated to improve the thesis.

Palembang, December 24 2023

The writer

Tri Puja Lestari

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC NAVIGATIONS ON BECOMING EFL TEACHERS IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

ABSTRACT


The present study explores the experiences of international students who aim to become EFL teachers, focusing on the complex decision-making processes they encounter while considering a master's degree in Indonesia, a nation where English is not the dominant language. The discussions also explored the cultural and scholarly pathways within the teacher education program, acknowledging that international students possess varied undergraduate experiences. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and documentation, engaging three participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. The process of decision-making encompasses important motivations that led to the initial choice of Indonesia, acting as crucial factors in their journey. The research underscored the significance of educational quality at universities, the aspirations of students, and the cultural and geographical allure of Indonesia in influencing the choices made by international students. Thematic and content analysis further indicated that international students lacking teaching credentials from their undergraduate studies encountered numerous challenges in adapting to a new environment and learning to integrate into the community, which emerged as a crucial component of the teacher education program. The process encompassed active cultural immersion, fostering intercultural sensitivity, engaging in peer interactions, participating in community involvement, and making adjustments in classroom dynamics. It also involved the development of research skills, access to academic resources and faculty support, along with professional networking to enhance academic integration. Future research may explore the experiences of international students in diverse cultural and educational contexts while studying in Indonesia, as well as their influence on employability outcomes.

Keywords: English as Foreign Language, international students, Teacher Education Program

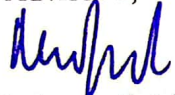
A thesis by Magister Program in Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University

Name : Tri Puja Lestari
Student Number : 06012682327005

Advisor 1,


Sary Silvhiany, M.Pd., M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 197708112002122003

Advisor 2,


Dr. Rita Inderawati, M.Pd
NIP. 196704261991032002

The Head of Magister Program in Language Education,



Sary Silvhiany, M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 197708112002122003

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background, the research questions, the objectives, and the significance of the study

1. 1 Background of the Study

Pursuing further education is a logical step for students who have completed their undergraduate studies. The desire to attain a specific job position or the aspiration to become a university professor can have a significant impact on students' motivation to pursue further education. According to Waruwu (2017), the motivation for pursuing further education can be categorized into two distinct types. The first type is intrinsic motivation, which stems from personal desires, aspirations, and interests. The second type is extrinsic motivation, which comes from external factors, such as family encouragement that push students to pursue a master's degree. Fajčíková and Urbancová (2019) add quality of instruction, social standing, competency growth, and education-employment connections motivate students to pursue higher education.

Oftentimes, graduates choose to continue their education in a new environment. As Ivashova et al. (2020) found, graduates in environmental studies frequently pursue enhanced employment prospects and career opportunities beyond their local area. As students decide to pursue education in a different country, students adopt a new identity as international students. Individuals from various socio-cultural backgrounds move to study in a foreign country to achieve their educational objectives. Alharbi and Smith (2018) agree that individuals originating from one country who pursue undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in another country are referred to as international students. Global Population of international students surpassed 4.3 million enrolled in educational institution in OECD countries,

majoring (19%) United States, (14%) United Kingdom, (9%) Australia and (9%) Germany (OECD, 2023)

When selecting educational destination, international students have numerous factors to take into account. The United States (US), for instance, is a well-known country that attracts a significant number of international students. United States is a highly sought-after destination for furthering one's education. It is evident that in the 2022/23 academic year, U.S. colleges and universities experienced a 12% increase in the total number of international students, reaching a total of 1,057,188 students (Institute of International Education, 2023). Nicholls (2018) provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing international students' choice of US as their preferred destination for further studies. Among these factors, the most prominent one is the anticipated high standard of education in the US. Cruz (2021) also found that many international students opt to study in the US due to the numerous advantages and opportunities it offers, including the high quality of its higher education institutions and research facilities, the esteemed value of US credentials in the global job market, and the promising employment prospects available to graduates. Nicholls (2018) continues that several other factors contribute to this initial reason, including the cost-effectiveness of studying in the USA, the high level of safety and security, and the prevalent languages spoken in the country. Another potential consideration is the sense of ease students find in opting for an English-speaking nation. Notably, the linguistic landscape of the United States, classified as belonging to the inner circle of English usage, likely plays a significant role in this decision-making process. According to Kachru (1985, 1988, 1992), world English explores the expansion of the English language and the innermost circle represents the nations where the majority of the population consists of native English speakers. Two clear and specific examples of this circle tend to be seen in the UK and the USA.

English-speaking nations, alongside with their established educational excellence, represent destinations of considerable academic value. However, the

exclusion of certain countries from the inner circle does not imply poor quality. There is an increasing trend among international students to select countries where English is not the primary language. Wu et al. (2021) did a study that showed that foreign students chose to go to China. This is mostly due to the students' natural desire to learn, explore, and take on new tasks. Instead, the most convincing reason for them to move to China is their hope for a bright future there. In other hand, Rhein and Phillips (2022)'s research found that international students often choose Thailand as their study abroad location. Furthermore, South Korea is not part of the inner circle of countries with English as the daily language, yet its education quality is globally acknowledged. Seoul National University (SNU) is renowned as a top university worldwide, attracting numerous students from both domestic and international backgrounds. Between 2000 and 2012, South Korea saw an extraordinary surge in its appeal to international students for higher education, skyrocketing from 3,963 to 86,878, an astonishing increase of approximately 43 times within just over a decade (Lee, 2017). According to Seoul National University (2020), Seoul National University, Korea's premier national institution, boasts 15 colleges, a graduate school, and 11 professional graduate schools. As of April 2019, it accommodated totaling 27,784 individuals, comprising 16,556 undergraduates and 11,228 graduate students, with 203 enrolled as international exchange students.

Notably, there also has been a notable increase in the number of international students opting to continue their education in Indonesia, indicating the growing recognition of its academic offerings and unique attractions. One notable study is a survey conducted by Indah and Suyanto (2019), which highlights opportunities such as scholarships and geographical advantages as key reasons. Unusual study destinations like Indonesia are being increasingly selected by students to enrich their educational opportunities (Situmorang et al., 2021). Furthermore, numerous universities in Indonesia actively welcome foreign students for educational pursuits. Topping the list is the Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology, hosting 1,793

foreign students, succeeded by the University of Surabaya with 1,161 foreign students. Following closely are Telkom University, Airlangga University, and finally, the Indonesian Islamic University (Kompas.com, 2022). It is noteworthy that Indonesian universities are competitive counterparts to their foreign counterparts, offering a diverse array of study programs tailored to the varied interests and requirements of enrolled students. This presents foreign students with an opportunity to select study programs aligned with their academic pursuits and preferences.

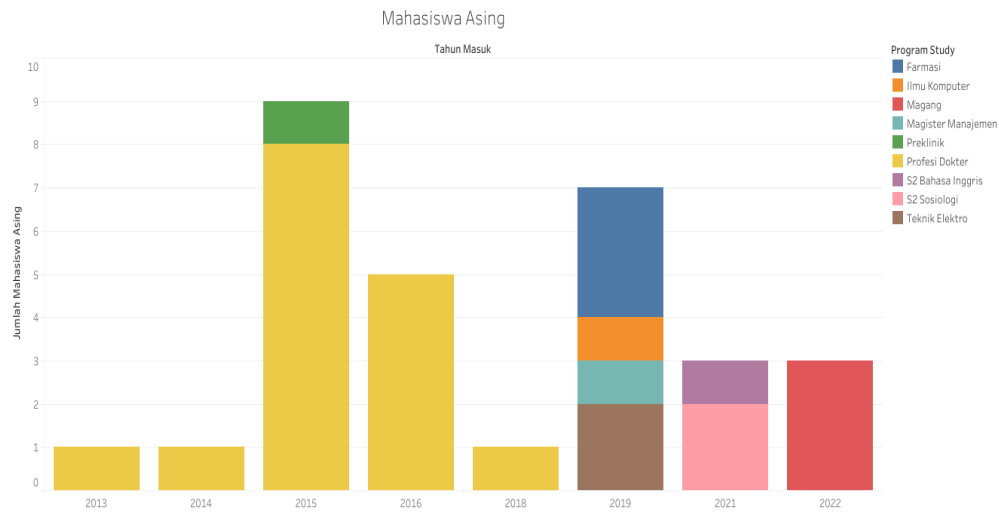


Figure 1 Foreign Students of Universitas Sriwijaya (2022)

Source: <https://dashboard.unsri.ac.id/mahasiswa-asing>

The presence of international students in Indonesian universities contributes to the enhancement of program quality. This aligns with Smith (2020), international students play a crucial role in promoting campus internationalization, inclusivity, and diversity. They significantly contribute to enhancing international understanding and cross-cultural awareness within the local community. The university community benefits from increased cultural awareness and understanding thanks to their presence (Safi et al., 2022). Hence, this diversity fosters an environment conducive to meeting international standards, positioning Indonesian institutions to compete on a global

scale. Subsequently, Universitas Sriwijaya has been following this trend, attracting international students to help build cross-cultural programs and raise the university's quality to meet global standards (See Figure 1).

An integral part of Sriwijaya University's Postgraduate Program, the Language Education Department trains future teachers to inspire the next generation to think critically and creatively. Indonesian and English language education are the two main areas of study in this department. The enrollment figures clearly show that the Magister Program in English Education has attracted the attention of international students. Three students from different countries enrolled in the English language education programs in 2021 (See Figure 1). Following on from the previous year's enrollment diagram, there has been an influx of overseas students in subsequent years. The current research describes the circumstances in which EFL teachers are recruited from among overseas students who have enrolled in a master's degree program in language education. Their decision to earn a master's degree in English language education in Indonesia, a nation where English is not widely spoken, makes their situation unique.

While significant research has been conducted on international students' decisions to study in English-speaking nations for example Australia (Dos Santos, 2021; Sidhu et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020), the UK and Germany (Abbas et al., 2021; Jaksztat et al., 2021; Ploner & Nada, 2020) the US (Bound et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2018; King & Bailey, 2021), little emphasis has been paid to their pursuit of English teaching qualifications in non-English-speaking situations such as Indonesia. This study fills the space by investigating the factors that influence international students to choose Indonesia for their English education, offering a new viewpoint on international education paths.

When it comes to transition into new setting environment international students often face challenges. The challenges are getting the right information, understanding the admissions process, and getting the visa paperwork in order are all things to take care of before leaving (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). Academic difficulties,

such as communicating with teachers and peers, social isolation, and cultural adjustment are among the issues that students face upon arrival (Wu et al., 2015). Gong (2021) added that international students faced language-based, lifestyle, and academic challenges as well as sociocultural and psychological. Understanding the difficulties faced by international students and the strategies they employ to navigate these challenges is essential. There are previous studies that are related to this present study, the experiences of international students in Indonesia, a study investigated both international students' academic and socio-cultural adjustment in Indonesia (Hapsari & Hamamah, 2019), a case study of Thai students studying at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang (Sulaiman & Saputri, 2019), acculturative stress among international students at Universitas Airlangga (Ali et al., 2020), the adjustment challenges faced by international students in Indonesia (Emehinola et al., 2020), academic completion of international students in Indonesia (Ermiati et al., 2021), a systematic review International Students' Experience of Studying at Indonesian Universities (Widiasih et al., 2020), cross-cultural interaction between Indonesian and International students at Universitas Padjadjaran (Safi et al., 2022), the cultural identity and culture shock experiences of Indian Malaysian Sriwijaya University medical faculty students (Zinaida & Lexianingrum, 2022).

While previous research has examined international students' challenges while studying abroad, their experiences, their study or academic experiences or culture experiences. The most findings showed that international students struggle to survive in other country. The challenges that they found while in host countries are vary, started from the language barriers, cultural differences, limited attention has been given to how the international students navigate academic and cultural challenges in a program where their prior educational backgrounds differ significantly in teacher education programs. This study addresses this gap by exploring the experiences of postgraduate international students enrolled in a Master's Program in Language Education, a particularly noteworthy phenomenon given that

many of these students come from undergraduate fields outside the domains of education and language.

Hence, in order to gain a deeper comprehension to this topic, this study seeks to systematically explore the determinants influencing international student' decisions to pursue careers as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators in a country where English is not the primary language of daily communication and to study how international students perceive cultural and academic context in teacher education program

1. 2 The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study, problems of this study are as follows:

1. What factors play a role in the decision-making process of international students as they choose Indonesia, a non-English speaking country, for their teacher education program to become an EFL teacher?
2. How do international students, without a prior undergraduate education in teaching, navigate both the cultural and academic challenges within a teacher education program aimed at preparing them to become English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to find out:

1. To study what factors that influence international students choosing country that is not primary using English for daily basis to become EFL teacher
2. To study how international students perceive cultural and academic context in teacher education program

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The results of this study possess significant benefits to the progress of society, especially in the context of the worldwide expansion of education, which has led to more students choosing to study abroad. International students who are enrolled in

English language education programs might greatly benefit from these programs as they adjust to the cultural and academic challenges they may face in educational settings where their previous educational experiences differ from the field of education. Additionally, educators can utilize customized methods to more effectively support the education of international students, utilizing knowledge of their diverse educational histories and geographic origins to improve student involvement and academic achievement in the classroom. This analysis has also provided useful insights for researchers on the complex factors that influence the choice of study programs in non-English speaking countries, especially for international students with diverse educational backgrounds. Thus, these results constitute a significant advance, shedding light on distinct possibilities and factors that enrich the scholarly terrain in this field.

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