

**EFL LEARNERS' CULTURE SHOCK IN TEACHING
PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM**

THESIS

Submitted by:

M. MACHDUM CHAIRUL ALAM
NIM. 210203092

Student of *Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*
Department of English language Education



**FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN
AR-RANIRY STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY BANDA ACEH
2025 M / 1446 H**

**EFL LEARNERS' CULTURE SHOCK IN TEACHING
PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM**

THESIS

Has Been Approved and Submitted to the Thesis Munaqasyah Defense

as One the Requirements to Obtain a Bachelor's Degree

in the field of English Language Education

by:

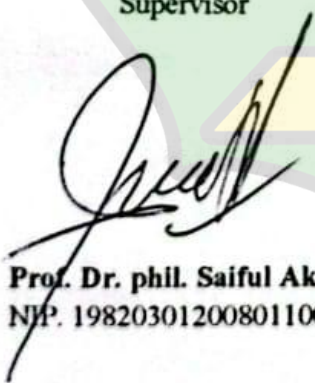
M. MACHDUM CHAIRUL ALAM
NIM. 210203092

Student of English Language Education
Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Ar-Raniry State Islamic University
Banda Aceh

Approved by

Supervisor

Head of Department


Prof. Dr. phil. Saiful Akmal, M.A
NIP. 198203012008011006


Syarifah Dahliana, M.Ed., Ph.D
NIP. 197504162000032001

**EFL LEARNERS' CULTURE SHOCK IN TEACHING
PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM**

THESIS

It has been defended in *Sidang Munaqasyah* in front of the board of the Examination for the working paper and has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor Degree of Education in English Language Teaching

On:

August 25th, 2025

Monday,

1st Rabi' al-Awwal 1446 H

In Darussalam, Banda Aceh
Board of Examiners,

Chairperson,

Prof. Dr. phil. Saiful Akmal, M.A
NIP. 198203012008011006

Secretary,

Nur Akmaliah, M.A
NIP. 198207292025212019

Member,

Prof. Habiburrahim, M. Com, MS., Ph.D
NIP. 1972080620031002

Member,

Rahmi, S.Pd.I., M. TESOL, Ph.D
NIP. 198402052006042002

Certified by,



The Dean of Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh

Prof. Safrul Muluk, S.Ag., M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D
NIP. 197301021997031003

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF SCIENTIFIC THESIS

I, the undersigned below :

Name : M. Machdum Chairul Alam
Student ID : 210203092
Student Program : English Education Department
Faculty : Education
Thesis Title : EFL Learners' Culture Shock in Teaching
Practice: A Case Study on International Community
Service Program

Herby declare that in writing this thesis, I:

1. Did not use the ideas of others without being able to develop and be
2. accountable for them;
3. Did not plagiarize the work of others;
4. Did not use others' works without proper citation or permission;
5. Did not manipulate or falsity data;
6. Completed this work independently and i'm fully responsible for it.

If at any point in the future, a party raises a legitime concern and proves that I have violated this declaration, I am willing to accept the sanction in accordance with the prevailing regulations of the Faculty of Tarbiyah an Teacher Training, Ar raniry State Islamic University Banda Aceh.

This statement is made truthfully and without coercion from any party.



ceh, 14 August 2025

at,

M. Machdum Chairul Alam
210203092

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All praises and gratitude are due to Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and Most Merciful, for bestowing upon me the strength, patience, and perseverance to complete this thesis. Shalawat and salam are sincerely extended to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, whose noble teachings continue to illuminate the path of those who seek knowledge.

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. phil. Saiful Akmal, M.A., for his insightful guidance, invaluable feedback, and unwavering patience throughout the process of this research. His profound knowledge and consistent encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this study, and I am profoundly grateful for his mentorship. My sincere thanks are also directed to all lecturers of the English Education Study Program whose guidance has significantly enriched my academic journey.

My most heartfelt gratitude is reserved for my beloved family. To my mother, Fitri Noviana Dewi S.E, your endless love, prayers, and steadfast encouragement have been the most profound source of strength and inspiration. This work is a testament to your sacrifices and unwavering support. To my entire family, thank you for your constant belief in me. I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to Arrayyan Najla Achza, S.Si., for her unwavering support, patience, and belief in me, which have been a constant source of motivation.

Furthermore, I am profoundly grateful to my closest friends, M. Fadhil Ikhsan and M. Johar Ar-raziq, for their steadfast support, invaluable companionship, and thoughtful discussions that have accompanied me throughout this academic endeavor. Your friendship has made this journey immeasurably more meaningful. I also wish to thank all my colleagues from the English Education Study Program Class of 2021 for their camaraderie and support during our time together.

Lastly, I extend my sincere gratitude to all the participants of this research. Your willingness to contribute your time and insights was essential to the successful completion of this study. Your contributions, whether direct or indirect, have played a significant role in this work.

This thesis represents the result of continuous effort, reflection, and learning. I welcome any constructive feedback and hope that this work may serve as a meaningful contribution to the field of education.

Banda Aceh, August 25th, 2025
Author,

M. Machdum Chairul Alam

ABSTRACT

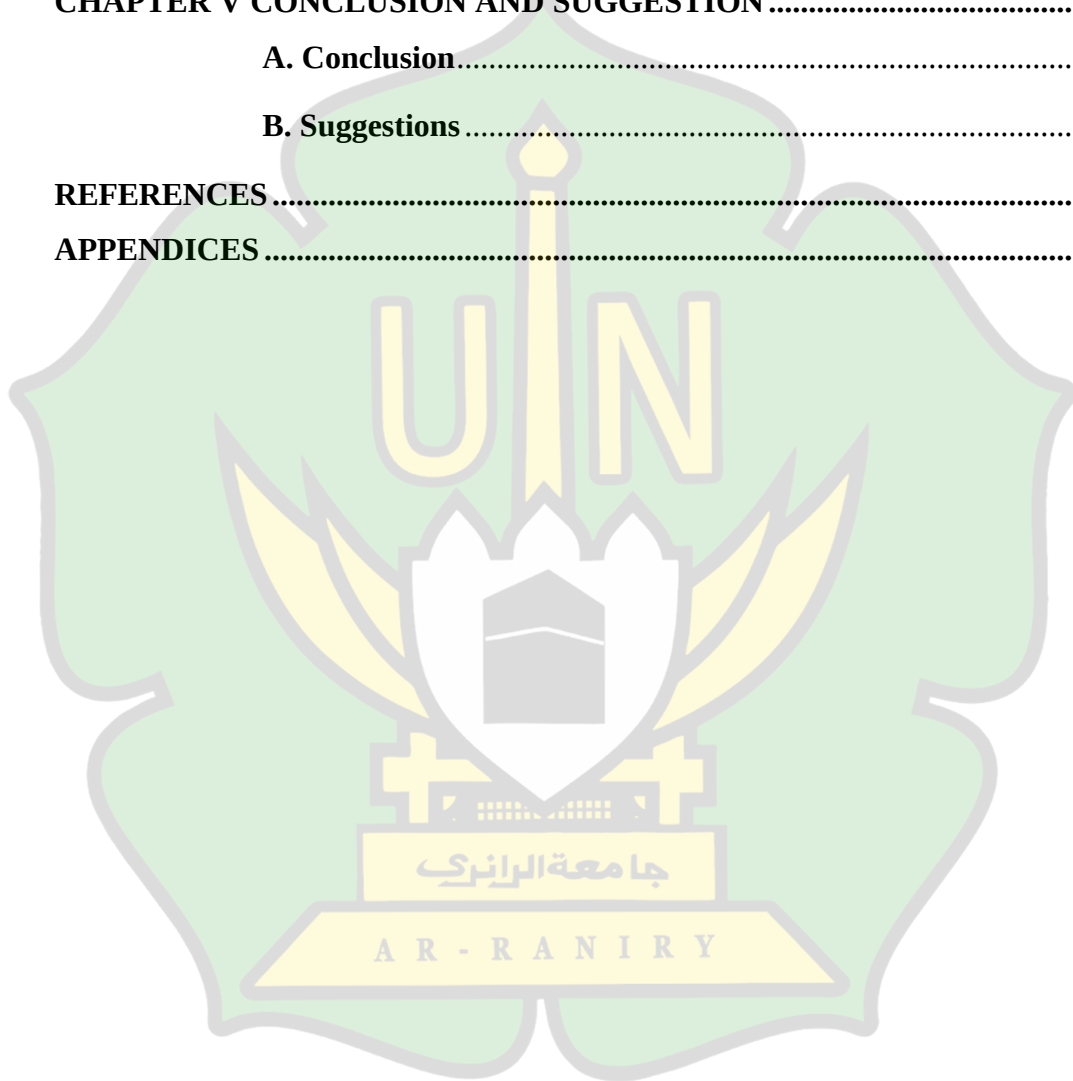
Name : M. Machdum Chairul Alam
NIM : 210203092
Faculty : Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan
Major : Department of English Language Education
Thesis Working Title : EFL Learners' Culture Shock in Teaching Practice:
A Case Study on International Community Service
Program
Supervisor : Prof. Dr. phil. Saiful Akmal, M.A.
Keywords : Culture Shock, Adaptation Strategies, EFL
Learners, International Teaching, Thailand,
Intercultural Competence

This study investigates the experiences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh who participated in the International Community Service Program (PPKPM) in Thailand, focusing on the challenges of culture shock and the adaptation strategies employed during their teaching practice. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight participants were purposively selected from the 2021 cohort of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry to explore their perceptions, challenges, and coping mechanisms in a cross-cultural teaching context. The findings reveal that participants encountered significant cultural challenges, including language barriers, differences in classroom management styles, adaptation to local customs, and varying levels of student engagement. Emotional impacts such as homesickness, confusion, and feelings of isolation were also evident during the initial adjustment phase. Despite these challenges, participants employed various adaptation strategies such as learning basic Thai phrases, using translation tools, observing and imitating local practices, and relying on peer and community support. These strategies not only facilitated smoother integration into the host environment but also enhanced participants' intercultural competence and teaching skills. The study underscores the importance of cultural awareness and flexibility in international teaching programs and suggests that future participants be provided with pre-departure cultural training to better prepare them for the challenges of teaching abroad.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	x
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
A. Background of The Study	1
B. Research Question	3
C. Research Aim	4
D. Significance of The Study	4
E. Terminology	5
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
A. Culture Shock	9
B. EFL Learner in International Context.....	18
C. Teaching Practice for EFL Pre-Service Teachers.....	19
D. The Concept of International Community Service Program	21
E. Previous Research	25
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHOD	28
A. Research Design	28
B. Research Participants.....	29
C. Method of Data Collection	30
D. Technique of Data Analysis	31
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	33
A. Research Findings	33
1. Culture Shocks in Teaching Faced by EFL Learners	34

2. Adaptation Strategies Used by EFL Learners	39
B. Discussion.....	44
1. Culture Shocks in Teaching Faced by EFL Learners	44
2. Adaptation Strategies Used by EFL Learners	45
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	48
A. Conclusion.....	48
B. Suggestions	50
REFERENCES	53
APPENDICES	61



LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Appointment Letter of Supervisor

**Appendix B: Recommendation Letter from Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan
to conduct the research**

Appendix C: Transcripts of Interview



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

International initiatives, such as the International Community Service Program are essential for augmenting the competencies and cultural awareness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. These programs offer valuable opportunities for learners especially those from non-English-speaking countries to immerse themselves in different cultural settings, thereby enhancing both linguistic proficiency and intercultural understanding. Deng (2019) emphasizes that immersion in varied cultural environments not only improves language skills but also cultivates a deeper sensitivity to cultural diversity.

Among those who benefit from such programs are EFL learners from the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry, particularly students from the 2021 cohort, who participated in the International Community Service Program in Thailand in 2024. As pre-service teachers, these students were exposed to a new cultural and educational environment, which presented both learning opportunities and adaptation challenges. While these international teaching experiences are valuable, they often come with psychological and emotional challenges, primarily in the form of culture shock. This phenomenon can manifest as anxiety, confusion, homesickness, or frustration factors that may hinder both language development and professional performance. Li and Liu (2021) emphasize the importance of institutional support systems to help

participants cope with such experiences and transform them into meaningful learning opportunities.

The relationship between language and culture is inseparable, particularly in EFL teaching contexts. Guellil (2020) argues that effective English language instruction must include a focus on cultural literacy, especially in real-world settings such as classrooms, business environments, and intercultural communication. Without cultural sensitivity, the learning and teaching of English may become superficial, limiting the learner's ability to engage meaningfully across diverse contexts.

International teaching practice and community service programs, such as the one undertaken by UIN Ar-Raniry's English Education Department students, offer not only pedagogical enrichment but also deep cross-cultural exposure. These programs allow student teachers to experience different educational systems, teaching methods, and cultural expectations. However, these encounters often include various challenges, such as language barriers, unfamiliar teaching practices, and adjustment difficulties. While previous research Nisa (2024) has examined the cultural benefits of such programs, including cultural exchange through activities like Batik-making or promoting Indonesian cuisine, there remains a gap in understanding the personal and academic difficulties EFL student-teachers face during teaching practice abroad. This study aims to address that gap by exploring the culture shock experiences of EFL learners specifically English Education Department Students from UIN Ar-Raniry during their teaching practice in Thailand, with

a focus on their adaptation processes, pedagogical struggles, and coping strategies.

According to Krauter (2024), although overseas programs offer significant benefits, they can result in shallow cultural understanding if not carefully structured. Thus, comprehensive preparation both linguistic and cultural is essential. Programs must equip students with the skills to navigate cross-cultural classrooms effectively while also fostering deep cultural respect and awareness. Without such preparation, the risk of miscommunication, stereotyping, or cultural insensitivity increases.

In conclusion, International Community Service Program offer great potential for EFL learners to grow linguistically, pedagogically and culturally. However, the challenges of culture shock and the risk of superficial cultural engagement highlight the need for well-designed support systems. By addressing these aspects, such programs can truly become transformative experiences that prepare future educators to succeed in multicultural and globalized teaching environments.

B. Research Question

1. What are the culture shocks in teaching faced by EFL Learners during their International Community Service Program in Thailand?
2. How do the EFL Learners adapt to cultural differences and manage culture shock during their practice in Thailand?

C. Research Aim

The objectives of this study are as follow:

1. Identify the culture shock in teaching these EFL Learners face while engaging in academic and social activities in a cross-cultural environment.
2. Examine the strategies and approaches EFL Learners use to adapt to cultural differences and manage the effects of culture shock during their practice in Thailand.

D. Significance of The Study

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance in the field of cross-cultural education and international teaching programs. Theoretically, it contributes to the academic conversation on cultural adaptation, language acquisition, and the issues confronted by pre-service teachers as EFL Learners in international teaching situations (Korolova, L. 2024). Practically, it gives significant insights for students, universities, and politicians to boost the efficacy of overseas programs, particularly in preparing students for cultural and academic adaptation.

1. From a theoretical standpoint, According to Kuncahyo et al., (2023) this study improves the existing literature on cross-cultural education, international student mobility, and teacher preparation in varied situations. By documenting the experiences of EFL Learners in Thailand, this research provides new insights into the relationship between cultural adaptation, language proficiency, and the psychological aspects of culture shock. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of incorporating cultural education

into language learning curricula, ensuring that EFL Learners not only acquire linguistic competence but also develop intercultural communication skills necessary for a globalized world.

2. From a practical standpoint, according to Olagunju et al., (2024) this research benefits students, universities, and educational institutions involved in international teaching and community service programs. The findings offer critical insights into the challenges in teaching faced by EFL Learners and the adaptive strategies they employ, helping universities design more effective preparatory programs. These programs should include linguistic training, cultural awareness, and psychological readiness to equip EFL Learners with the necessary skills for teaching in a foreign cultural setting. Additionally, this study serves as a reference for future researchers and educators in refining international community service initiatives, ensuring that EFL Learners gain meaningful cross-cultural experiences while minimizing potential cultural misunderstandings.

E. Terminology

1. EFL Learners

EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners refer to individuals who study English in a context where English is not the dominant language of daily communication, often within countries where English holds a foreign rather than a second language status. These learners typically acquire English in formal educational settings, such as schools or universities, rather than through natural immersion in an English-speaking environment. The experiences of

EFL learners are shaped by various factors, including limited exposure to authentic language use, cultural differences, and the challenges of transferring classroom knowledge to real-life communication contexts. According to Alberth (2023), EFL learners often struggle with fluency, confidence, and pragmatic competence due to the lack of consistent interaction with native or proficient English speakers. This distinction is crucial in understanding how EFL learners may respond differently to cultural and educational experiences abroad, particularly in settings where English is more commonly used as a medium of instruction or communication. Their learning journey is not only linguistic but also deeply intertwined with socio-cultural adaptation, especially when they engage in international teaching or community service programs.

2. Culture Shock

Culture shock is a prevalent phenomenon for persons adapting to a new cultural milieu, characterized by confusion, anxiety, and disorientation. This condition is especially common among students relocating for scholastic reasons, since they encounter different social norms, languages, and cultures. The adaptation process generally has multiple stages: initial euphoria, crisis, adjustment, and eventual absorption, all of which profoundly influence students' emotional well-being and academic success. Suseno and Rinawati (2024) assert that "culture shock results from the incapacity to utilise familiar habits, norms, and values in an unfamiliar environment, resulting in frustration and communication challenges." This study defines culture shock as the difficulties faced by EFL Learners during their involvement in the

International Community Service program in Thailand. This study examines the crisis and adjustment phases of culture shock, as both stages are essential for comprehending how students encounter challenges and formulate coping mechanisms. The crisis stage underscores the preliminary challenges, encompassing sentiments of uncertainty, irritation, and fear stemming from disparities in language, pedagogical approaches, social conventions, and everyday encounters. The adjustment stage analyses how pupils progressively acclimate by formulating new learning techniques, enhancing cross-cultural communication abilities, and devising methods to surmount emotional and academic obstacles. This study focuses on the emotional and academic aspects of culture shock experienced by EFL learners during their teaching practice, particularly the crisis and adjustment stages, which are commonly experienced during short-term international teaching programs.

3. Teaching Practice

Teaching practice refers to a structured, supervised period in which student teachers apply their pedagogical knowledge and skills in real classroom settings, typically as part of their teacher education programs. It serves as a bridge between theoretical coursework and professional teaching, providing pre-service teachers with the opportunity to experience the complexities of classroom management, lesson planning, student engagement, and instructional delivery. As noted by Mahmood and Aziz (2023), teaching practice plays a central role in shaping a teacher's professional identity and pedagogical beliefs through reflective experiences and feedback from mentors. When carried out in an international or

cross-cultural context, teaching practice becomes even more significant, as it introduces additional layers of linguistic and cultural negotiation. EFL learners participating in teaching practice abroad must navigate not only the challenges of delivering lessons in English but also the expectations and norms of a foreign educational culture. This experience can lead to a deeper understanding of intercultural communication, yet it may also result in culture shock, especially when learners face unfamiliar classroom dynamics or educational values. Hence, teaching practice is both a formative and transformative component in the development of future English language educators.

4. International Community Service Program

International Community Service Programs are structured efforts that enable EFL Learners to engage in academic and social activities beyond their home countries, boosting cross-cultural interchange and professional development. These programs aim to develop EFL Learners pedagogical skills, intercultural competency, and adaptability by immersing them in varied educational and cultural situations. Beygi et al., (2022) assert that "international community service programs afford EFL Learners the opportunity to apply their academic knowledge in practical contexts while addressing cultural differences and communication obstacles." This study examines the International Community Service Program that conducted by English Department students from UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh in Thailand, emphasizing their teaching experiences, cultural adaptation, and professional development.