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## ASSOCIATIVE AND DISSOCIATIVE RESPONSES IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

### Abstract

This research is intended to investigate the social interaction strategies experienced by Thailand students in Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang. As the foreigner students, they may experience associative and dissociative responses to construct self adjustment with their educational circumstance. Associative responses refer to positive feelings, kinship, and cooperation among students when they are interacting with the local students. In contrast, dissociative responses show the negative feelings, disintegration or even conflict. Those different reactions can generally occur when the foreigner students have been introduced new norms or cultures by the local students that are not similar to theirs. After gathering and analyzing the data from the research subject, the research accentuates that the awareness on the self negative and positive responses can perpetuate the social tolerance between the Thailand students and local students that can support their academic achievement.



*Social Interaction, Dissociative, Associative, International Students*

### مستخلص


استكشف هذا البحث الطلاب من تايلاند الذين درسوا في جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية مالانج حيث عانوا استجابة معايشة وغير معايشة في التكيف مع البيئة التعليمية. والاستجابة المعايشة تشير إلى الاحساس الإيجابي والمقاربة والمعاونة بينهم وبين الطلاب الإندونيسيين. وبالعكس، فالاستجابة غير المعايشة هي الاحساس السلبي والمفارقة والمخالفة بعد ما عرف الطلاب الأجانب المعايير والعادات حول الطلاب الداخليين. وبعد جمع البيانات من الطلاب من تايلاند، عرف أن الوعي بالاستجابة المعايشة وغير المعايشة يؤدي إلى التسامح بينهم، وذلك تظهر الانجازات الأكاديمية لهم.

التعامل الإجمالي، استجابة معايشة، غير معايشة، الطلاب الأجانب


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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menginvestigasi strategi interaksi sosial yang dialami mahasiswa Thailand di Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Sebagai mahasiswa asing, mereka mengalami respon asosiatif dan disosiatif dalam beradaptasi dengan lingkungan belajar. Respon asosiatif merujuk pada perasaan positif, kekerabatan dan kerjasama saat berinteraksi dengan mahasiswa asli Indonesia. Sebaliknya, tanggapan disosiatif berkaitan dengan perasaan negatif, disintegrasi hingga konflik. Reaksi yang bermacam-macam itu umumnya terjadi setelah mahasiswa asing mengetahui norma atau tradisi baru yang ditunjukkan mahasiswa lokal. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran diri terhadap tanggapan positif dan negatif dapat mengekalkan toleransi sosial antara mahasiswa Thailand dengan mahasiswa lokal dalam mendukung prestasi akademik mereka.

 *Interaksi Sosial, Disosiatif, Asosiatif, Mahasiswa Asing*

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## INTRODUCTION

Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang (UIN Maliki Malang) has conducted a lot of efforts to reach the World Class University (WCU), as nominated in 2012. One of which is establishing bilingual classrooms in Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty and Islamic Law Faculty. The bilingual classroom is named as the International Class Program (ICP) which is occupied by the Indonesian students (local) and the foreigner students that employ international languages (Arabic and English) as media to interact in the classroom instructions. The number of international students in UIN Maliki Malang started from 2012 to 2014 is 222 students emanating from Asia and Europe for instance Thailand, Philipina, Sudan, Australia, Libya, and Rusia. Those students can be deemed minor community because of the total of the students that are not lower than that of the local students. In fact, Thailand becomes the majority groups of the International students because the number of Thailand students is fewer than others, 55 students.

Although the overseas students are categorized as small community, they must be able to socially interact with other students. Social interaction can occur when encompassing more than one communicator, creating social contact, saving communication purpose, and happening in a certain time. It is indicated that the overseas students can make a good relation among others since they spend a lot of time to be together in any academic or non academic occasions. They can learn how to build social relationship not only with the local students but also with the students coming from other countries in the world whose socio cultural background and language are different. The need to mingle either with local or overseas students can avoid the

students from shock culture. They will accept the norms or values that are not similar with them. Simply to say, international students must have good social competence that can encourage them to build their cultural awareness used to minimize the discrepancy.

Basically, conflict can appear when the speakers and the hearers are in the process of self adaptation. Therefore, if the overseas students can construct harmonic social interaction with the minor and major community in UIN Maliki Malang, they will be able to perpetuate self companionship and become accepted by their community. In so doing, they will neglect the feeling of difference. The higher degree of proximity will lead them to the intimate relationship so that they will easily communicate and show their willingness with others.

Therefore, mutual social interaction should be established. Social interaction is a major factor in social life. It is a dynamic social relation which concerns with the interrelationships between individuals and groups of people. This form of social interaction is the accommodation, cooperation, competition, and conflict. Social interaction is the key to all social life because disintegration can emerge without social interaction. Humans as social beings must undertake social interaction within the framework of the joint life (Herimanto & Winarto, 2011). The social life is always characterized by two contradictory trends. In one side, humans interact to cooperate with others by giving appreciation, showing respect, living in harmony, and building mutual cooperation. In another side, human can interact in the form of conflict, war, lack of sense of belonging, and others. Social interaction has two patterns, namely social interaction that leads to a pattern of unification (associative process) and refers to a pattern of separation (dissociative process).

#### **a. Associative**

Broadly speaking, associative can be said as a positive social interaction which leads to cooperation between individuals or between groups. The other pattern of associative social interaction is collaboration including accommodation, assimilation, and acculturation.

#### **b. Dissociative**

Dissociative leads to the social interaction patterns such as dispute or conflict. The dissociative social interactions can be in the form of competition, controversy and hostility.

Interaction is the nature of human relationships that is dynamic not static. It is also known as the relationship between humans and the other one that encourages the dynamic experience. This interaction can produce the associative and dissociative values and norms in the form of acceptance and unacceptance in society where the views on what is considered good or not can affect daily behavior.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research uses qualitative approach, based on a methodology that investigates social phenomena and human problems. Lexy (2002) suggested that qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the written and spoken forms obtained from the people and observed behaviours (Muhadjir, 1996). Approach of this research is phenomenology. It is purposively selected to glaringly reveal the situation and condition from certain phenomena of how the pattern and process of social interaction of international students in UIN Maliki Malang. The subjects are the international students from Thailand that are from various departments in UIN Maliki Malang. After observed during the classroom interactions and other academic activities, the subjects are interviewed to share their own strategies to socially interact with their circumstance.

## FINDINGS

The analysis of this research centers on the pattern of social interaction of Thailand students, the ways of Thailand students to avoid difficulties and their strategies to adapt with Indonesian students in UIN Maliki Malang.

### *The Social Interaction Pattern of International Student*

Social interaction has two patterns, namely social interaction that leads to a pattern of unification (associative process) and directs to a pattern of separation (dissociative process). The former discusses accommodation and cooperation in a group society that can lead to harmonic relationship, while the latter examines competition and conflict during the process of social interaction.

As associative notion, Thailand students usually interact by using Indonesian language. They start start interacting by saying "hello" or "hai" to other students for introduction, sometimes they also answer the other's greeting. As observed, there is unexpectedly a Thai student who feels shy to start greeting to the local students. What is in her mind is she has to wait for other local students to greet first. She said that:

*"...I was shy and reserved students, so I was start the interaction with other students waiting to greet me first. And I feel happy when they say hello and talking to me..."*

She continued that some of her friends also begin a small talk with the local students, if the local students are talk-ative. Unless, they remain afraid of melting the condition. Thailand students mostly tend to be silent and wait for the other students to start speaking.

In any cases, they will use gesture to communicate with other students when they cannot catch the meaning of utterances. They can use their hands, eyes, or heads to

symbolize their willingness. It exemplifies that the Thailand students have great motivation to build interaction with the local students. If their motivation is less, they will not try to adjust with their circumstance. She said that:

*"...sometimes I use gesture to make them understand what I mean, sometimes I'll discuss with our Thai student that seniors and more understand Indonesia language well than me..."*

As observed, the Thai students' interests and motivations are high due to the positive responses of the local students. They admit that the local students are easy-going to invite and teach them how to learn Indonesian and understand the local values that tend to be different from their habits and customs. She said that:

*"...local student here are very good, they taught me to understand well about language..."*

From the Thailand students' explanation above, their relationship with the local students is nice because they have found that the local students help them communicate in appropriate language. It indicates that the local students have good efforts in building relationships with the Thailand students that make them enjoy studying in UIN Maliki Malang. Communication is important to be taught to the Thailand students since even they have learned Indonesian, they still have to learn how to use that language in acceptable manners admitted by the Indonesian. When the local students do not teach language to the Thailand students, the Thailand students will say that they are uncomfortable with the local students.

*"...first time I will shock in doing interactions here, shake hand between girl and boy students here is used by students here in doing interactions. And I can't follow that way..."*

The second data show that the Thailand students have found that they experienced shocked culture due to the different socio cultural background. Based on the interview, the student told that she does not she hand with male students because she is bound up with her culture asking that shake hand can be done with those in similar gender. Therefore, the Thailand students have a pattern to avoid the tradition that is considered inappropriate with them.

*"...once a time I have a group for discussion in the class consist of two Thailand's students only, because there is no one invite me to be member of they groups for discussion..."*

The third data signifies minority feeling by the Thailand students in UIN Maliki Malang because they think that they are ignored by their community. In this case, they would like to join learning together with local students, but no one invited them.

### ***The Ways to Avoid Challenges or Difficulties***

There are some strategic programs that are provided by Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang to minimize the Thailand students' shocked culture. Those are emphasized in the form of language development. The university has encouraged the Thailand students and other overseas students in UIN Maliki Malang to join Indonesian language program for two months to help them easily communicate and interact with the local students. This Indonesian language program is supported by the existence of international language such as Arabic and English language subjects that are inserted in curriculum. Those two international languages are purposively selected to be one of strategies to facilitate students to mingle with others so as to share a lot of things related to their academic sphere and interests. The transcribed data of the students' ways to avoid interaction difficulties are explained as follows:

*"...I feel comfort with Thailand student, but Indonesian student is also be a good friends to me as helping doing assignment and taught me about the language..."*

The first interview shows that doing assignment or group work can be a strategy for Thailand student to build proximity with the local students. In the process of discussion or learning together, the Thailand student can argue their opinions and ideas that are possibly not similar to those of the local students. This activity can familiarize the overseas students with the thinking ways of the local students in constructing arguments and vice versa. Undeniably, they will also be more familiar with the Indonesian language because that activity is focused on the listening and speaking skills.

The other strategy of the Thailand students to avoid difficulty to socially interact is by using gesture. The student tells that gesture is a creative idea to develop social contact and achieve their expectation. When the students keep silent and do not interact, there will be no associative and dissociative response. The sense of belonging will be lack and the students can feel discriminated since they do not try to build intimacy. This can be known from the second data that are stated as follows:

*"...using communication here is easy, maybe little bit in language I didn't understand well. Usually, I use gesture to make they understand. But, it doesn't matter..."*

Culturally speaking, people will be afraid of getting involved in a new circumstance. It is also experienced by the Thailand students when they are getting acquaintance with the local students. In fact, the Thailand students state that the local students are friendly, respectful and friendly to communicate. In addition, they have argued that the local students' attitudes have similarity with the students from their country. Furthermore, they feel easy to build communication and have no significant difficulty in building relationship with the local students. It is can be read as follows:

*“...first time I feel afraid to speak with Indonesian student, but as long time I can to be mix with them. Because they help me to understand more about language...”*

## DISCUSSIONS

Associative and dissociative responses can commonly be precipitated by unfamiliarity on the signs, symbols or norms of social intercourse. These cues or norms include various strategies we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life, such as how to address someone, what address terms to be used when meeting certain community, how to receive invitations, when to reject invitations, how to shake hand and many more (Oberg, 2006). As investigated, most of the Thailand students can follow the interactional norms that are available in UIN Maliki Malang.

According to Francis and Hester (2004) social interaction is the collective activities done by certain group of society relation between people individually. They also state that other activities may be performed individually but with reference to others, or in a context that involves and is made possible by other people. Examples of this are talking to certain group of people, getting dressed in the morning, walking along the street, reading a book or writing a letter. Such activities can be referred to as “individual” activities so long as it is remembered that, like collective activities, what is done and how it is done is shaped by the fact that the activity is part of a shared social life, a life that we lead with others. Because the social interaction is able to affect an individual's behaviour, alter or improve the behaviour, the use of immersion classrooms in UIN Malang is appropriate to avoid negative responses in the learning and teaching process.

## CONCLUSION

This research covers the associative and dissociative responses by the Thailand students as the minority group in UIN Maliki Malang, East Java, Indonesia. They will try to avoid dissociative feelings (which indicate negative relation) by creating good social contact such as smiling, greeting, shaking hand, creating good communication, doing self adjustment, mingling with the local students and sharing food to understand different culinary etc.

Dealing with cultural shock that is occurred in the first adjustment, the Thailand students state that the Indonesian students are helpful to make them have self adjustment with the local culture, particularly how to communicate. Additionally, the religious side also affects the ease for adjustment. They argue that the Islamic Thailand students are as friendly as Islamic Indonesian students. Based on the interview, the strategies of Thailand students to adjust with the local students are divided as follows: (a) creating good interaction, (b) doing group work discussion, (c) learning Indonesian language more from the local students, (d) practicing Indonesian language frequently

so as to master the language and minimize the degree of cultural shock due to cultural difference, (e) familiarizing themselves with greeting one another and sharing culinary.

Actively getting involved with any academic and non academic activities that support their academic achievement and self adjustment, such as dormitory activity, informal classroom activity, and going in a tour or travelling together with the local students.

Because UIN Maliki Malang is the promotor for the World Clas University (WCU) that receives the overseas students who have different socio cultural background either with the local students or the teachers, UIN should provide more activities and facilities that environmentally support the cultural understanding for both overseas students and local students. The Indonesian language program can be focused not only for the instructional objectives. It can be emphasized more on the students' need to build communication with Indonesian students and teachers. Besides, the local teachers and students in the classroom should master international languages that support them to explain the learning materials and make the students understand the lesson well.



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