



Culture Shock in Higher Education: Experiences of Freshmen in Two English Education Departments

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Abstract

The transition from high schooling to higher education often triggers culture shock among newcomers, particularly those majoring in English education. This study aims to investigate the nature of culture shock experienced by freshmen majoring in English and their coping mechanisms. The study includes four participants—two males and two females—from the English Education Department of two different universities in Pekalongan. Employing a narrative approach, the research unveiled five categories of culture shock: course load, teaching methodologies, learning resources, assignment frequency, and self-confidence. The study also found eight strategies employed by these students to navigate culture shock: personalized learning approaches, embracing mistakes confidently, seeking guidance from seniors, practicing self-disclosure, approaching lecturers for assistance, understanding the education system, refraining from comparisons with peers, and fostering relationships and friendships. These findings offer valuable insights to assist new students in mitigating negative culture shock, while pursuing their English studies. However, due to the contextual limitations, which many not apply to other educational settings, future studies should explore diverse academic backgrounds.

Keywords: *Culture Shock, EFL Learning, Freshmen*

INTRODUCTION

The transition from high school to university is a universal experience for freshmen, often inducing feelings of anxiety and confusion as they navigate an unfamiliar environment. Termed the "horrible phase" by Gayatri (2007), this period is marked by academic and personal pressures, encompassing challenges such as financial concerns, loneliness, interpersonal difficulties, and struggles with change and personal development (Gajdzik, 2005). Freshmen undergo an adaptation process, acquiring new skills to become flexible within the social context of university life (Hutapea, 2014). Self-adjustment, as described by Schneiders, as cited by Rohmah (2004), involves mental and behavioral changes in response to internal and external demands, including the need to grasp subject matter specific to their university majors.

In the English Education Department, freshmen face a distinct challenge in developing more in-depth and extensive language skills compared to high school. Tertiary-level English education is specialized, covering a range of skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with teaching skills acquired through pedagogy courses and professional competencies in literature, linguistics, and tourism (Adnyani, 2016). Despite the Indonesian government's inclusion of English as a subject throughout education, learning English at the university level remains a significant adjustment, often associated with culture shock, a psychological state defined by feelings of confusion and discomfort in a new environment (Hutapea, 2014).

Culture shock, as elucidated by Oberg and discussed by Mulyana (2008), is the anxiety and apprehension individuals feel when exposed to an unfamiliar culture. While not a clinical term, it describes a psychological state wherein transitioning to a different and unfamiliar culture induces confusion and uncertainty (Kingsley & Oni, 2006). Successful adaptation to the new cultural environment is crucial for freshmen to shield themselves from the negative psychological effects of culture shock, which can impact their learning activities and academic success (Novera, 2004). In the context of learning English, culture shock among freshmen involves academic challenges, a sense of difficulty, and anxiety (Siddiqua, 2010).

This qualitative research delves into the experiences of EFL students encountering culture shock throughout their English learning process. Participants are drawn from the English Education Department at two universities in Pekalongan. The study seeks to provide valuable insights, particularly for new English majors, guiding them in mitigating the emotional impact of culture shock during their language learning journey. By comprehending and addressing these challenges, freshmen can better prepare themselves to navigate the coursework within the English Education Department. The study's novel contribution lies in

synthesizing insights from two prior studies. Andi Hudriati et al.'s (2017) research explored culture shock in UMI Makassar's English students, focusing on communication challenges and proposing solutions. Fiktorius' research (2019) detailed an Indonesian student's U.S. college life, elucidating culture shock stages. Our research offers a comprehensive examination of culture shock among English majors by considering both academic and cultural challenges, with the aim of uncovering and analyzing the coping strategies employed in diverse educational settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Distinguishing between language learning and acquisition is crucial. Language acquisition, an innate and unconscious process, relies on natural communication sources. During this, individuals absorb a language without conscious awareness of its grammar or syntax, and the process unfolds effortlessly without deliberate intent. This innate mechanism allows individuals to subconsciously internalize a language, making it a seamless part of their cognitive development. In contrast, language learning involves a more intentional effort to grasp a language's rules and structures, often through formal instruction. Understanding this distinction sheds light on the varied cognitive processes involved in acquiring language naturally versus the deliberate efforts associated with language learning.

Language learning manifests in two primary forms: second language acquisition and foreign language learning. Second language acquisition occurs when an individual acquires a language other than their native tongue within the context where that language is commonly used. Conversely, foreign language learning involves the process of acquiring a language outside of its commonly spoken environment. In the Indonesian context, where English is not widely used in daily conversation, the learning of English aligns with foreign language learning (Santi Indriani et al., 2021). Recognizing these distinctions is fundamental in understanding how individuals navigate language acquisition based on contextual usage and exposure.

While learning English in Indonesia, students may confront culture shock as they navigate unfamiliar linguistic structures and communication norms distinct from their native language. Typically associated with geographical relocation and adapting to a new culture, "culture shock" is less commonly applied to shifts in educational settings. Importantly, this new culture doesn't solely pertain to foreign countries; it extends to new experiences in religion, educational institutions, workplaces, or even shifts in family dynamics (Mundeza, 2021). Recognizing the broader applicability of culture shock beyond geographical boundaries

underscores its relevance in diverse contexts, including educational transitions and linguistic learning environments.

The term "culture shock" finds its roots in anthropologist Oberg's description of it as a form of "sickness" experienced by individuals residing in a different cultural environment. Oberg conceptualized culture shock as the anxiety stemming from the loss of familiar cultural cues and symbols essential for social interaction, particularly after an extended period in a new culture (Kristian, 2012). Expanding on this in a more nuanced psychological context, Adler (1975) characterizes culture shock as the consequence of losing universally recognized social interaction signals, leading to heightened anxiety. Individuals grappling with culture shock often deploy various defense mechanisms, such as repression, regression, isolation, and rejection, as external manifestations of underlying feelings of insecurity, encompassing emotions like loneliness, anger, irritation, and self-doubt.

Culture shock, as articulated by Kohls (2001), encapsulates the psychological disorientation commonly experienced by individuals relocating to a culture distinct from their own for an extended period. Ward et al. (2001) further characterize culture shock as an active response involving affective, behavioral, and cognitive processes when adapting to an unfamiliar environment. It serves as an individual's reaction to the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive aspects encountered in a different culture. The emergence of culture shock is marked by feelings of helplessness, an outsider's struggle to navigate their environment due to unfamiliarity with the culture's cognitive aspects, and challenges in performing essential role-playing skills (Taft, 1977).

Addressing culture shock in English language learning can be effectively mitigated, for instance, by incorporating intercultural perspectives into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum. Introducing diverse cultural content, fostering cross-cultural communication, and integrating intercultural competence development can enhance students' understanding and appreciation of different cultures. By emphasizing intercultural perspectives, educators create an inclusive learning environment that not only facilitates language acquisition but also prepares learners to navigate diverse global contexts (Jackson, 2019). In addition, this approach also fosters an equal position between teachers and students in terms of authority of knowledge and vocal participation, encouraging open dialogue and valuing students' diverse background (Sofi, 2022).

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing narrative inquiry to delve into the experiences of culture shock among new students pursuing English studies in higher education and their coping strategies (Moleong, 2008). The qualitative method, based on participants' personal narratives, facilitated a comprehensive exploration of their encounters with culture shock during their English learning journey (Thomas, 2012). Two universities in Pekalongan, namely UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan and Universitas Pekalongan, served as the research settings, both hosting English education departments. The study involved four freshmen—two males (MSNF and WKM) and two females (SZA and SNA)—enrolled in the English education department for the academic year 2022/2023, ensuring gender diversity among participants. Pseudonyms (SZA, MSNF, SNA, and WKM) were assigned to protect participants' privacy, and informed consent was obtained before conducting interviews, with assurances of confidentiality for their personal information. The narrative inquiry approach aimed to offer readers valuable insights by presenting detailed accounts of the participants' culture shock experiences.

Data Collection

The research adopted a semi-structured interview method to gather essential data, leveraging its capability to extract detailed insights into participants' individual experiences. Semi-structured interviews involve the use of open-ended questions, allowing for a more descriptive exploration of the participants' perspectives (Sugiyono, 2015). This method, as highlighted by Griffee (2012), combines predefined questions with the flexibility for interviewers to seek clarifications or pose follow-up inquiries, offering participants the freedom to elaborate on their responses. Importantly, it allowed participants to articulate their experiences in their own words. Conducted in the Indonesian language, this approach aimed to ensure clarity and prevent any potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the questions, facilitating a more nuanced exploration of the participants' encounters with culture shock during their English learning journey.

Data Analysis

In this study, data collection involved conducting interviews with participants after they had completed their responses. The researchers employed thematic analysis, a method initially proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), to analyze the gathered data. To facilitate analysis, the

researchers transcribed the information obtained from the interviews. The transcript was then carefully reviewed multiple times to identify key themes, and the data were categorized into these themes. Thematic analysis encompassed five distinct steps, as outlined by Widodo (2014). The first step involved repeated listening to the recorded interviews. The second step entailed the transcription of the data. The third step consisted of interpreting the data using the participants' own words and expressions. The fourth step focused on verifying whether the data accurately reflected the participants' intentions. Finally, in the fifth step, data credibility was established by seeking input from the participants regarding the interpretation of the data. Subsequently, the researchers analyzed all the data through the lens of relevant theory concerning culture shock in English language learning within higher education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Culture Shock in English Language Learning in Higher Education

The following section presents the outcomes derived from the interviews conducted with freshmen regarding their experiences of culture shock in the context of English language learning at the higher education level.

a. The course loads

The initial concern pertains to the participants' views on the quantity of English courses offered. This query seeks to elicit their perceptions of culture shock related to the number of English courses they are enrolled in. The participants shared varied perspectives on their experiences with the number of English courses in college compared to high school. SZI expressed a mild culture shock, noting the increased detail but a lower overall number of courses. MSNF, on the other hand, found the college course load similar to high school, with an expected emphasis on English courses for their major. SNA attributed their lack of culture shock to the introductory nature of the first semester. Lastly, WKM highlighted the contrast, noting a higher subject count in high school compared to the more streamlined college curriculum.

The quantity of English courses offered poses a challenge for freshmen and may lead to heightened academic stress, necessitating more diligent and active study efforts (Fumasa, 2007). However, the interview data reveals contrasting perspectives among the participants regarding their perception of the number of English courses taught. In contrast to Fumasa, SZI experienced a mild form of culture shock as she found the university

courses to be more detailed compared to high school, although the overall course count was higher in high school. WKM shared this perspective, asserting that high school had more subjects than college, and he did not experience culture shock related to course quantity. Similarly, MSNF indicated that the number of courses was nearly the same as in high school. SNA also concurred, explaining that perhaps it was because they were still in their first semester, with the courses focusing on basics and featuring a smaller number.

b. The teaching methodologies

The second issue concerns the participants' outlook on diverse teaching methods. This query aims to unveil their perceptions of culture shock stemming from the variations in teaching approaches. The participants shared insights into their cultural shock experiences with the teaching methods on campus compared to their high school education. SZI expressed surprise at the shift from comprehensive teacher explanations in high school to more independent learning in college lectures. MSNF noted the difference in teaching styles, emphasizing that on campus, lecturers provide a brief overview, leaving students to delve into the material through assignments. SNA also highlighted the need for increased student engagement and discussions in college lectures compared to the more teacher-centric approach in school. Similarly, WKM found a notable contrast in teaching styles, with high school teachers offering detailed explanations compared to college lecturers who provide materials with minimal elucidation.

Adjusting to a new environment includes dealing with the challenge of varying teaching methods, which can be a significant aspect of mitigating culture shock for students (Handayani et al., 2019). However, according to the interview data, the participants have distinct perceptions of the different teaching approaches. They noted differences in the level of explanation provided by lecturers and teachers. For instance, WKM mentioned that in high school, teachers would consistently elaborate on the material until students comprehended it. In contrast, MSNF shared that university lecturers primarily provided brief explanations, followed by assignments. SZI and SZA also underscored the requirement for student participation, which contributed to their experience of culture shock.

c. The learning resources

The third issue concerns the participants' viewpoint regarding the utilization of learning resources. This inquiry aims to convey their perceptions of culture shock stemming

from the use of different learning materials and resources. The participants conveyed their cultural shock experiences regarding learning resources in college lectures compared to high school. SZI highlighted the shift from provided textbooks in high school to receiving materials in PDF format from lecturers in college, necessitating careful consideration of sources. MSNF echoed the sentiment, expressing surprise at the predominantly self-directed online search for learning resources on campus. SNA shared a similar experience, noting the absence of provided textbooks and the need to independently seek out materials, sometimes resorting to borrowing and photocopying. WKM expressed culture shock over the limited references given by lecturers, requiring students to actively search for additional learning resources beyond the provided materials.

One notable distinction between high school and college education lies in the provision of learning materials. In high school, educational materials are typically supplied by the school in the form of textbooks and student worksheets. Conversely, in college, students source their material from designated libraries, books, literature, and online resources (Afnida et al., 2019). Learning resources encompass a diverse array of materials employed to convey information and support classroom learning, including textbooks, handouts, worksheets, films, games, and other aids (Fikriyani et al., 2022). According to the interview data, participants perceived marked differences in the utilization of learning resources between high school and college. In high school, teachers typically provide all the necessary materials, whereas in college, students are responsible for seeking out their own resources. MSNF mentioned that students often seek online learning materials. SZI and SNA noted that lecturers primarily share materials in PDF format, while WKM added that lecturers also recommend references from books and journals.

d. Assignments frequency

The fourth concern pertains to the participants' perspective on the frequency of assignments. This query aims to convey their perceptions of culture shock related to the frequency of assignments. The participants shared their perspectives on the frequency of assignments in college compared to high school. SZI expressed surprise at the increased workload, noting that each of the three daily courses in college comes with substantial assignments, notably involving paper writing rather than the question-based tasks in high school. MSNF echoed this sentiment, highlighting the higher frequency and complexity of assignments in college lectures compared to the relatively easier tasks in middle school.

SNA shared a similar experience, emphasizing the more practical and project-oriented nature of college assignments. In contrast, WKM saw the assignment frequency as comparable between high school and college, with varying workload fluctuations.

As per Dhei et al. (2020), students encounter psychological challenges during their adjustment to college life, stemming from both academic and non-academic factors. One such academic challenge is the frequency of lecture assignments. Additionally, Hutabarat and Nurchayati (2021) noted that lectures heavily depend on assignments, making them often challenging to manage. According to the interview data, participants generally perceive the frequency and difficulty of assignments in college lectures as higher compared to high school. In college lectures, assignments are typically assigned at every meeting and may encompass tasks such as writing papers, practical assignments, and projects. However, WKM holds a differing view, asserting that the number of assignments in high school and college lectures is comparable.

e. Self-confidence

The fifth concern centers on the participants' perspective regarding the issue of diminished self-confidence. This inquiry seeks to convey their perceptions of culture shock arising from feelings of inadequacy or a lack of confidence. The participants candidly shared their experiences of lacking confidence on campus. SZI expressed a sense of inadequacy, especially compared to peers with a prior English course background. MSNF identified introversion and discomfort speaking in front of the class as contributors to their lack of confidence, particularly when interacting with academically proficient classmates. SNA felt a heightened lack of confidence as a fresher, accentuated by a gap year, leading to a perception of being less proficient than their peers. In contrast, WKM acknowledged occasional confidence dips when alone but overall maintained a resilient and confident demeanor, avoiding a notable culture shock in this regard.

Lack of confidence represents one of the symptoms of culture shock that individuals may experience when adapting to a new environment (Niam, 2009). In terms of the cognitive component, Fauziyyah and Ampuni (2018) suggest that the manifestation of culture shock in an individual's cognition, if negative, can result in diminished social skills, notably a lack of confidence. According to the interview data, it becomes evident that participants express a lack of confidence, particularly in their lecture settings and self-assessment of their abilities. They often perceive their peers as possessing superior English

skills. MSNF additionally attributes his lack of confidence to his personality traits. However, WKM holds a differing view, indicating that he feels quite confident in these situations.

Strategies for Facing Culture Shock in English Language Learning

The subsequent section outlines the discoveries derived from the interviews with students regarding freshmen's encounters with strategies to address culture shock in the context of English language learning within higher education.

a. The personalized learning approaches

The initial inquiry seeks to elucidate the participants' viewpoints regarding the adoption of a particular learning approach as a strategy to address culture shock. This query aims to convey their perceptions of how having a specific way of learning can serve as a response to culture shock. The participants shared insights into their specific learning approaches. SZI adopts a routine of daily study, favoring English learning videos over extensive text reading for better comprehension. MSNF, however, currently lacks a defined learning style, mentioning a preference for watching English films. SNA employs a method of summarizing taught material and reviewing it weekly, supplemented by watching accessible English learning videos. In contrast, WKM doesn't adhere to a specific style, responding flexibly to assignments and taking notes when there's no designated task.

Students encountering challenges in adapting must possess the capacity to navigate shifts in learning culture and address the associated hurdles. One effective approach involves adopting a self-study or self-directed learning method, which entails comprehending lecture materials through various means (Silvia & Wangka, 2021). According to the interview data, participants commonly employ distinctive learning techniques during lectures. They often watch English videos and engage in the practice of summarizing and documenting the material elucidated by the lecturer as part of their special learning style.

b. Embracing mistakes confidently

The second inquiry delves into the participants' outlook regarding the strategy of not fearing mistakes and maintaining confidence as a response to culture shock. This question seeks to convey their perceptions of how embracing the absence of fear regarding errors and sustaining confidence can serve as strategies to address culture shock. The

participants shared their experiences of overcoming the fear of being wrong and staying confident in their academic journey. SZI transformed from rarely asking questions in high school to confidently engaging in inquiries, guided by the belief that staying confident and unafraid of mistakes is crucial for progress. MSNF credits joining an organization for boosting public speaking confidence and applies a mindset of fearlessness when asking or answering questions in lectures. SNA's increased confidence in college is attributed to realizing it's okay to mix English and Bahasa while not fearing errors, with self-belief contributing to broader recognition by lecturers. WKM embraces the philosophy of staying confident and learning from mistakes, viewing errors as valuable lessons in academic growth.

According to David (1975), errors constitute an integral part of the learning and adaptation process. Fearlessness in the face of making mistakes facilitates the navigation of culture shock, as it fosters openness to embracing and comprehending new cultures. This "not being afraid of being wrong" approach aids in mitigating the anxiety and confusion often associated with culture shock. Additionally, maintaining confidence is a crucial attribute for students. Self-assurance enables individuals to confront and overcome challenges effectively (Aisha, 2014). The interview data underscores the participants' commitment to the strategies of not fearing mistakes and staying confident. They frequently engage in asking and responding to questions posed by lecturers without trepidation regarding potential errors. For instance, SZI's perspective emphasizes the importance of not fearing mistakes and staying confident to avoid falling behind others. MSNF conveys his belief in self-assurance, emphasizing that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. SNA highlights her confidence in speaking English, acknowledging that mixing languages can occur in class discussions without fear of being incorrect. Similarly, WKM views mistakes as valuable learning experiences during the learning process.

c. Seeking guidance from seniors

The third inquiry pertains to the participants' outlook regarding the strategy of seeking guidance from senior students as a response to culture shock. This query aims to convey their perceptions of how frequently seeking advice from senior peers can serve as an effective strategy to address culture shock. The participants discussed their experiences of seeking guidance from seniors during their academic journey. SZI, initially hesitant due to a lack of acquaintances, started asking questions after joining a major organization and

building connections with seniors. MSNF followed a similar trajectory, engaging more with seniors after joining an organization, seeking advice on study plans and other academic matters. SNA, benefitting from having upper-class friends and a senior cousin in the English department, frequently sought guidance on various aspects, including books and lecture rules. WKM consistently turned to seniors for insights on lecturers, materials, and courses whenever they were together.

As per Supriadianto (2018), when students encounter challenges, it is advisable not to hesitate to seek guidance from senior peers. Students can turn to their seniors for assistance when faced with perplexing situations, as seniors often have the responsibility of supporting and guiding junior students (LPM Gema Keadilan, 2021). The interview data underscores the participants' proactive approach of frequently seeking advice from senior students. They commonly reach out to seniors for information and guidance on various aspects, including matters related to lectures such as course registration (KRS input) and lecture regulations. Additionally, they seek advice on English language learning, recommended books, courses, and study materials.

d. Practicing self-disclosure

The fourth inquiry revolves around the participants' perspective concerning the strategy of self-disclosure as a means to address culture shock. This question seeks to convey their perceptions of how self-disclosure can serve as an effective strategy for responding to culture shock. The participants shared their perspectives on self-disclosure in college. SJI noted increased openness since entering college, actively engaging with peers, asking questions, and discussing academic challenges. MSNF, while generally reserved, becomes more open with close friends, sharing feelings and experiences in lectures. SNA values openness with familiar friends, discussing college challenges, and finding common ground in shared experiences. WKM described themselves as moderately open, selectively disclosing personal matters, and being more forthcoming about college-related issues when conversing with friends.

Culture shock can be effectively managed by harnessing personal abilities and skills inherent in each individual, with self-disclosure being a significant contributor (Sekeon, 2013). According to the interview data, participants exhibit a notable degree of self-disclosure, particularly within their close circles of friends. They engage in discussions

about the challenges and difficulties encountered during their college experiences, allowing them to navigate the cultural adjustment process more effectively.

e. Approaching lecturers for assistance

The fifth inquiry pertains to the participants' outlook regarding the strategy of being willing to seek guidance from lecturers as a response to culture shock. This question seeks to convey their perceptions of how their willingness to approach lecturers can serve as an effective strategy for addressing culture shock. The participants provided insights into their willingness to engage with lecturers during their academic journey. SZI highlighted a transformation from initial hesitation to regular interaction, actively seeking clarification on unclear materials and gradually building confidence in asking questions, recognizing the potential benefits for activity points. MSNF expressed a similar willingness but acknowledged the influence of the lecturer's demeanor on their decision to ask questions. SNA actively sought information about lectures and grading systems, preferring to ask questions during class discussions. WKM confidently raised questions during lectures, even when not explicitly prompted by the lecturer, demonstrating a proactive approach to seeking clarification.

Engaging with lecturers and seeking their guidance can significantly alleviate the challenges encountered by students. When students confront incomprehensible lecture material, they have the option to approach lecturers for clarification, and instructors are typically open to providing assistance (Parlindungan, 2020). According to the interview data, participants display a willingness to ask lecturers questions, particularly inquiring about aspects related to their lectures, such as the assessment system. Additionally, they seek guidance regarding their courses, including seeking clarification on previously covered course material. This proactive approach helps them navigate the cultural adaptation process more effectively.

f. Understanding the education system

The subsequent query delves into the participants' perspective concerning the strategy of comprehending the education system as a means to address culture shock. This question aims to convey their perceptions of how understanding the education system can serve as an effective strategy for responding to culture shock. The participants shared their experiences in navigating and comprehending the education system during their time in college. SZI initially faced challenges in understanding the system as a fresher but

gradually gained clarity over time, seeking insights from friends and lecturers. MSNF actively sought to comprehend the lecture system by consulting seniors and department staff, particularly regarding class offerings and the process of inputting KRS. SNA took a multifaceted approach, consulting lecturers, seniors, and peers from different majors to understand aspects like credits and GPA. WKM, similarly, sought guidance from seniors and siblings to understand the intricacies of the lecture system, focusing on aspects related to GPA.

Culture shock exerts a considerable influence, often leading individuals to experience stress and discomfort when confronted with unfamiliar situations, such as an education system in lectures that diverges from their high school experience, characterized by elements like Semester Credit Units (SKS) (Indrianie, 2012). The interview data indicates that participants possess a clear understanding of the education system within the context of their lectures. They actively seek information from various sources, including peers, senior students, department personnel, and lecturers. Their inquiries cover topics such as course offerings, procedures for course registration (KRS input), credit systems, and grade point averages (GPA). This proactive approach aids in their effective adaptation to the academic culture.

g. Refraining from comparisons with peers

The subsequent inquiry pertains to the participants' outlook regarding the strategy of refraining from comparing themselves to other students as a response to culture shock. This question seeks to convey their perceptions of how avoiding comparisons with their peers can serve as an effective strategy for addressing culture shock. The participants reflected on their attitudes towards comparing themselves with other students. SZI initially struggled with feelings of inferiority but redirected her focus towards self-improvement through consistent learning, avoiding constant comparisons. MSNF adopted a positive comparison approach, using others' abilities as motivation to enhance their own skills. SNA, over time, shifted focus to self-acceptance and recognition of individual learning processes, avoiding comparisons with those who had prior English training. WKM emphasized a lack of concern for others' grades, maintaining a focused and self-oriented perspective on academic performance.

According to Ward et al. (2001), refraining from comparing oneself to a new environment can be instrumental in effectively overcoming culture shock. Here, abstaining

from comparisons with others or one's culture of origin is a valuable approach to mitigating the stress and frustration associated with adapting to cultural changes. Drawing from the interview data, it is evident that participants consciously avoid making comparisons with their peers. Szi, for instance, actively concentrates on enhancing her skills to circumvent the trap of comparing herself to others. Conversely, Wkm and Sna adopt a self-directed approach, with Sna displaying a commendable awareness and acceptance of her own abilities. In contrast, Msnf occasionally finds himself making comparisons, which, interestingly, serves as a source of motivation for him. These divergent strategies reflect the participants' varied approaches to navigating culture shock.

h. Fostering relationships and friendships

The final query delves into the participants' perspective regarding the strategy of cultivating friendships and relationships as a means to address culture shock. This question aims to convey their perceptions of how forging connections and establishing relationships can serve as an effective strategy for responding to culture shock. The participants provided insights into their approaches to building friendships and relationships during their college experience. Szi actively cultivated friendships, finding solace in sharing cultural shock experiences with close friends and establishing connections through organizational involvement. Msnf joined the major's organization intentionally to expand relationships, considering themselves sociable in friendship-building. Sna, initially reserved, gradually found a suitable friend, while Wkm embraced social connections from the beginning, valuing the support and companionship of friends from various majors since the start of college.

Having a network of friendships can be instrumental in addressing challenges associated with culture shock (Furnham, 2004). Raharjo and Pebriyenni (2020) further underscore the significance of actively fostering communication and relationships, both within and outside the campus, as a proactive strategy to mitigate the impact of culture shock. Based on the interview data, it is evident that the participants actively engage in building relationships and friendships. Wkm, for instance, initiated the process of building these connections from the outset of his college journey. Similarly, Szi and Msnf proactively seek out friendships and relationships, with their involvement in major organizations serving as a platform for this endeavor. Szi emphasizes that her friendships have played a pivotal role in navigating culture shock, as they collectively learned to

overcome its challenges. In contrast, SNA initially faced challenges in building relationships and friendships during her early college days, only finding her social circle several months into her studies. This diverse range of experiences reflects the participants' varied approaches to utilizing interpersonal connections as a strategy to cope with culture shock.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to illuminate the multifaceted experiences of culture shock faced by incoming university students within the realm of English language learning in higher education. It delves into the nuances of culture shock, encompassing factors such as the intensity of English coursework, variances in pedagogical approaches, shifts in learning resources, alterations in assignment frequency, and challenges related to self-assurance. In response to these challenges, first-year students have developed a repertoire of coping strategies, including the cultivation of specific learning methodologies, bolstering their self-confidence, actively seeking guidance from more experienced peers, engaging in open self-disclosure about academic difficulties, fostering a proactive relationship with their lecturers, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the academic system, refraining from detrimental comparisons, and proactively cultivating social connections and friendships. One limitation of this research is its focus on a specific context and may not fully represent culture shock experiences in other educational settings or disciplines. Future research could delve into the experiences of students from diverse academic backgrounds and cultures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of culture shock. Additionally, examining the long-term impact of these coping strategies on students' academic and personal development would be valuable for educators and institutions.

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