INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THEIR ADAPTATION TO INDONESIA AND THEIR INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Special focus on differences in communication styles and the role of English as a lingua franca

Master's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

The present study examines international students' views on their adaptation to Indonesia. A special focus is on exploring how the relationships the students established during their sojourn affected their adaptation to Indonesia. The study further focuses on investigating how the students perceived cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English as a lingua franca affected their relational development process.

The study was qualitative in nature. The sampling method used in this study was a mixture of snowball and convenience sampling. The number of research participants was eleven. Ten of the respondents participated in an AIESEC internship program whereas one respondent took part in an AFS exchange program. The data was gathered via e-mail by using semi-structured open-ended questions and was analyzed by using inductive thematic analysis.

The analysis revealed that the respondents' social networks consisted mainly of host and international ties. These relationships were perceived significant for their adaptation to Indonesia. Another factor that enhanced the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation was the personal characteristics they possess. Lastly, host country receptivity was perceived another factor that enhanced the students' cross-cultural adaptation. In case of some of the respondents, host country receptivity was, however, inhibiting adaptation as the respondents experienced the big amount of attention they received from local people uncomfortable.

Analysis revealed three factors that enhanced relational development with the students' international ties; international contacts' good English language skills, the perceived similarities and proximity. Instead, Indonesians' limited English skills, their tendency to use indirect communication style and their low level of self-disclosure were perceived inhibiting the relational development with Indonesians. Proximity and good English skills of those host nationals with whom the students established more intimate relationships were perceived as important factors that enhanced relational development.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, miten kansainväliset opiskelijat kuvaavat sopeutumistaan Indonesiaan. Sopeutumista tarkastellaan erityisesti niiden ihmissuhteiden valossa, joita opiskelijat loivat Indonesiassa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on lisäksi selvittää opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä siitä, miten kulttuuriset viestintätyylien erot sekä Englanti lingua franca -kielenä vaikuttivat ihmissuhteiden kehittymiseen.

Tutkimusote on laadullinen. Tutkimukseen osallistujat valittiin yhdistämällä lumipallo- ja mukavuusotantatapoja. Tutkimusjoukoksi valikoitui 11 opiskelijaa, joista 10 osallistui AIESEC-järjestön työharjoitteluohjelmaan, kun taas yksi tutkimukseen osallistujista oli AFS-ohjelman oppilasvaihdossa. Aineisto kerättiin sähköpostitse käyttämällä puoli-strukturoituja avoimia haastattelukysymyksiä. Aineiston analysointi toteutettiin induktiivista teema-analyysiä käyttäen.

Tutkielman tulokset osoittavat, että opiskelijoiden sosiaalinen verkosto koostui pääosin kansainvälisistä sekä kantaväestön kanssa solmituista ihmissuhteista. Vastaajat kokivat nämä ihmissuhteet tärkeänä sopeutumista edistävänä tekijänä. Toinen tekijä, joka edesauttoi vastaajien sopeutumista Indonesiaan, oli heidän henkilökohtaiset ominaisuutensa. Lisäksi kokemuksella kohdemaan hyvästä valmiudesta vastaanottaa tulijat näytti olevan suuri sopeutumista edistävä merkitys. Jotkut vastaajista toisaalta kokivat kohdemaan valmiuden vastaanottaa tulijat heikoksi, sillä he kokivat paikallisilta saamansa suuren huomion epämukavaksi. Tällä kokemuksella näytti olevan negatiivinen vaikutus näiden vastaajien sopeutumiseen.

Aineistosta nousi esiin seuraavat kolme tekijää, jotka edistivät opiskelijoiden kansainvälisten ihmissuhteiden muodostumista; kansainvälisten kontaktien hyvä englannin kielen taito, kokemus samanlaisuudesta sekä fyysinen läsnäolo. Sen sijaan ihmissuhteiden kehittymistä indonesialaisten kanssa rajoitti indonesialaisten heikko englannin kielen taito, epäsuora viestintätyyli ja vähäinen itsestäkertominen. Fyysinen läsnäolo sekä hyvä englannin kielen taito puolestaan nähtiin edesauttavan syvempien ihmissuhteiden kehittymistä heidän kanssaan.

Preface

My beloved Indonesian host family: Ibu, Papiek, Fiki and mbak Yah. Thank you for welcoming me to live as a part of your family. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your hospitality, your care, support and all the assistance you ever provided me. I will never forget the time I shared with you. The memories are still clear in my head though over five years have already passed since I was in Indonesia. You really made me feel at home and I feel priviledged and lucky that you were my host family. I miss you and I hope to see you all soon. Next time we meet, I hope I have finally a chance to meet also Pipiet and Neno.

All the AIESEC Brawijaya members, thank you for everything! You were also a big part of my unforgettable life in Indonesia. Pak Yoga, I am forever grateful for everything you ever did for me. You, as well, certainly were playing a big role in making my Indonesian experience as great as it was. Also, I doubt that without you I could not have been able to carry out this project. Thank you very much.

You all played a part for this project to come true as you were the source of my inspiration for my thesis. Hati hati, ya!

Of course I also owe a huge thanks to my research participants. It was extremely interesting to know about your experiences and I got really excited about the thesis project once I started to analyze your writings. I really appreciate your participation and I could not have carried out this project without you.

I also owe a huge thanks to my family and friends for all the encouragement and support throughout my thesis project. A special thanks goes to my sister Päivi, obligated by the bloodline to help me. Thanks for being my sister. Anne, thank you so much for borrowing me your computer! Maria and Outi you are the best "research assistants" one

could hope for. Star and Miksu, my technical support persons, luckily you get along better with computers than I do. Thank you. Thank you also for my supervisors, Arja and Marko. Finally, I want to thank Liisa, Jasper and "the family" who I could always count on.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contacts between people from different cultures are not a new phenomenon. Through the ages people have done trade across countries' boundaries, traveled, moved from a country to another - some in search of a better life, some forced to leave their home countries due to different reasons. Much research already exists on the outcomes of intercultural encounters, as scholars from different fields, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, education, business, linguistics, communication and intercultural communication have explored the different aspects related to the phenomenon. In recent years, cross-cultural adaptation has become an extensively investigated topic and research in this area has made a tremendous contribution to our understanding on why other individuals experience the adaptation process differently than others. Today's globalized world indeed makes studying cross-cultural adaptation highly relevant as a growing number of people, such as international students, Peace Corps volunteers, expatriates, missionaries, diplomats, immigrants and refugees move from a country to another more than ever before.

Adaptation to a foreign culture is not always easy as the newcomer in an unfamiliar cultural environment has to overcome challenges in their daily lives. Research on cross-cultural adaptation carried out in the fields of psychology, communication, anthropology, social psychology and linguistics already demonstrates how multifaceted the phenomenon is. Studies have shown that several factors, such as one's motivation, personal characteristics, previous experience abroad, and a host country's receptivity influence one's adaptation to a host culture (see e.g. Kim 2001, Ting-Toomey 1999). Also the physical characteristics of a host country have an effect on one's adaptation (Bochner 2006: 182). The relationship between social networks and cross-cultural adaptation has been investigated by many researchers. Research findings have been consistent in suggesting that building social networks with host nationals as well as with immigrants and sojourners'[1] own co-nationals enhances adaptation to a host culture (see

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[1] The term 'sojourner' refers to a person who has temporarily moved to a new culture (e.g. Guirdham 1999). The term will be addressed more in detail in chapter 2.1 (p. 16).

e.g. Kim 2001, Kashima and Loh 2006, Cheah et al. 2011, Kokkonen 2010). Communication plays a key role in cross-cultural adaptation; without communication adaptation cannot occur (Kim 2001). Though research has contributed a lot to our understanding on the significance of these host and ethnic ties in newcomers' positive cross-cultural adaptation, the *intercultural social* ties – the relationships with other sojourners and immigrants who are living in the host country – has remained a neglected area in adaptation studies (Kashima and Loh 2006: 472).

At the same time as international population flow has increased and the world has become interconnected in several different domains of life, it has created a need for a shared language. Today, English has become a worldwide lingua franca, a language which enables people from different parts of the world to communicate. As Chrystal (1997: xiii) maintains, it is "an amazing world resource which presents us unprecedented possibilities for mutual understanding, and thus enables us to find fresh opportunities for international cooperation." English influences life in many parts of the world; it is used on every continent of the world and there are more speakers who use English as a lingua franca (ELF) than there are native English speakers. There exists plenty of research on how sojourners and immigrants' host language competence enhances the newcomers' adaptation to a foreign cultural milieu (see e.g. Kim 2001, Masgoret and Ward 2007: 61). However, as Seidlhofer (2009: 207) points out, while research has concentrated on investigating the use of English among the native speakers, or among the speakers who use it as an additional or official language, much less attention has been paid to investigating ELF communication. Piller (2011: 152) criticizes intercultural communication studies maintaining that the research "gives the impression that intercultural communication takes place in some kind of linguistic never-never land: we are never told which language is the language in which a particular interaction takes place or how proficient the interlocutors are in that language." The present study aims to contribute to the ELF research with an attempt to address these gaps.

In addition to addressing the topic of ELF communication, the present study also considers the different communication styles which play an important part when

intercultural communication is taking place. Different cultures have different sets of values, and, these values people hold have a profound effect on how they use a language. In other words, the cultural values shape our communication styles (see e.g. Chen and Starosta 2005: 43, Gudykunst and Matsumoto 1996). The investigations on cultural variability on communication styles have heavily focused on studying the phenomenon in contexts of Japan, China and the U.S. The main reasons for this are probably due to the facts that many of the leading scholars of the field of intercultural communication are of U.S and Chinese origin, and that these cultures are, say, quite extremes when it comes to the features which characterize their communication styles – Japanese and Chinese cultures being high-context and the U.S. low-context. While research has concentrated on investigating the phenomenon contexts of Japan, China and the U.S., it has ignored many other cultures, including Indonesia. The present study aims to shift the focus of research by giving a special attention in investigating cross-cultural adaptation in Indonesian context.

As pointed out above, previous studies have shown that relationships a newcomer in a foreign culture establishes have a significant effect on his or her adaptation. When interactants use a language which is not their native language, it is likely that they cannot fully express themselves in a foreign language, and, thus, sharing meanings and going into "deeper" level in the relationship is likely to be more challenging compared to those who share the same native language. In addition to the linguistic challenges, differences in the interactants' cultural backgrounds affect the communication encounters. It should go without saying that the more efficient the communication, the more likely a person is to establish new relationships. The central focus of the study is on the students' communication and relationships they established during their time in Indonesia. Although research has contributed a lot to our understanding on human relationships, investigations on *intercultural* relationships have been limited (see e.g. Chen 2003: 225). In addition to above mentioned gaps in ELF research and cross-cultural adaptation studies that have given little attention on the role of intercultural social ties, the present study aims to contribute to filling also the gap that seems to exist in research on intercultural relationships by investigating how ELF communication and different culturally-bounded communication styles affect the formation of intercultural relationships.

The aim of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate international students' perceptions on their adaptation to Indonesian society. More specifically, the study examines how the international students perceive the relationships they established affected their adaptation to Indonesian society. In addition, the study aims to research the students' perceptions on how they consider cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English language as a lingua franca affected the process of establishing relationships. The focus of my interest is to explore the students' *experiences* and *perceptions* – to describe their experiences from *their* perspective, not from the viewpoint of an outside researcher. To meet the aims of the study, a qualitative approach was adopted to investigate this phenomenon as it enabled me to bring out the research participants' *own voices*, which was the most important criterion for me when making the methodological choices of my study.

Motivations for the study

I did my internship of three months in Indonesia (City of Malang, East Java) in 2010. The three months in Indonesia were the best time of my life that far. Having said that, the life there was not always easy, since Indonesian culture is very different from Finnish culture and as I did not speak the local language and the local people in general did not speak English. I lived in a host family, which was very caring and made me feel very welcome. My host family members helped and supported me whenever I needed it and I was treated as a "real" member of the family - they made me feel at home. I feel that the close relationships I established with my host family members, was the reason why I experienced my Indonesian experience as positive as I did. I also believe that one of the biggest reasons I became that close with my host family was the fact that their English skills were very good, which made it possible for us to take our conversations into a deeper level, and thus, enabled our relationships to develop into something more profound. Furthermore, the social ties – some weaker, some stronger – I established with the local Indonesians as well as with other international students was definitely

another big factor which enhanced my adaptation to Indonesia. This is how I got the inspiration for this study.

From my westerner's eyes, Indonesian communication style tends to be indirect and many times one has to read between the lines to grasp the intended meanings; in other words, the communication style is high-context. Harmony, courtesy, and saving face are aspects that are fundamental elements of Indonesian culture. Furthermore, Indonesian society is hierarchical and one's place in the hierarchy defines largely how one is expected to behave, communicate and use language in order to show respect towards a person with a higher status. I see it crucial for successful communication that a foreigner takes these aspects into account when communicating with Indonesians. Guirdham (2011: 88) presents: "There are certainly more similarities than differences between human beings from different groups, and this applies to their ways of communicating as much as to anything. Nevertheless, the differences are significant and do affect communication between different groups of people." With this quote I want to underline that in this study my intention is not to highlight the differences, but simply to demonstrate that differences do exist and those differences do have a profound effect on encounters of people with different cultural backgrounds.

The structure of the study

The following two chapters will present the theoretical framework of the study. In chapter 2, I will start the discussion by presenting research on cross-cultural adaptation, especially concentrating on the central role of language and communication and the significance of relationships in one's cross-cultural adaptation process. After presenting research on the crucial role of language, communication and relationships, chapter 3 moves on to looking into the intercultural communication process more closely. The central focus is on describing the implications that different culturally-bounded communication styles and the use of English as a medium of intercultural communication have on intercultural communication encounters and how they affect intercultural relationship formation. The methodology employed in the study is

described in chapter 4. Next, in chapter 5, the results of the study are presented. After presenting the results, the analysis of the findings is presented in chapter 6. Finally, I will draw conclusions of the study in chapter 7.

2. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS IN CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

The present chapter reviews research findings on the crucial role of communication, language and relationship in newcomers' adaptation process in a foreign cultural milieu. After reviewing literature on cross-cultural adaptation relevant for the purposes of the present study, ELF communication and cultural differences in communication styles will be discussed in the following chapter. The underlying assumption of the present study is that communication is at the heart of human relationships. Thus, communication plays an essential role in the process of establishing relationships. The discussion started in the present chapter is taken into a deeper level in the following chapter as I will present how the differences in communication styles and the use of ELF as a medium of international communication affect establishing intercultural relationships.

Key concepts

To begin with, I will briefly define a few basic concepts used in the study. First, i*ntracultural communication* refers to interaction between people within the same culture, whereas *intercultural communication* refers to interactions between people from different cultures. Similarly, *intracultural relationships* refers to relationships between people from the same culture, whereas *intercultural relationships* refers to relationships between people distinct in their cultural origins. For further clarification, in the present study the term *relationship* is used to refer to all different kinds of relations between people; relationships with acquaintances, relationships with casual friends, friendship relations, romantic relationships, family relationships etc. Furthermore, the term *interactant* used in the study, refers to people who interact.

Furthermore, the terms *assimilation*, *acculturation*, *integration, adjustment and cross-cultural adaptation* must be defined. The terms used to describe cross-cultural

adaptation are complex and varied, and indeed might cause confusion as they are overlapping and often used interchangeably. I will not attempt an extensive review of how these terms have been employed in the literature, as the terms have been used variably depending on whether studies focus on a micro or on macro level, whether the point of view of the research has been assimilationist or pluralist, or, depending on a researchers' preferences. Broadly speaking, the *assimilationist* approach holds that strangers are to acquire the host country values, norms and behaviors. Adaptation is viewed as a linear process in which strangers lose their own ethnic cultures as they are learning the new host culture values, norms and behaviors. Thus, *assimilation* is used to refer to the internalization and acceptance of the host values. In contrast, according to *pluralist* perspective, strangers maintain their own cultures while they are at the same time acquiring the new cultural values, norms and behaviors. *Acculturation* has been used to describe the process in which newcomers acquire different aspects, however not all, of host culture. *Integration* has been used to refer to newcomers' social participation in host environment, whereas *adjustment* has been used to refer to the reactions new cultural milieu arouses from a psychological perspective.

For the purposes of the present study, I have adopted Kim's (2001) conceptualization on *cross-cultural adaptation* which she defines as "the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with those environments" (Kim 2001: 31). However, Kim has encompassed a*ssimilation, acculturation* and *integration* in her conceptualization of cross-cultural adaptation with which my ideas are not completely accordance. By *acculturation* she refers to "the process by which individuals acquire some (but not all) aspects of the host culture", by *integration* to "social participation in the host environment" and by *assimilation* she refers to as "acceptance and internalization of the host culture by the individual" (Kim 2001: 31). Departing from Kim's assimilationist perspective on cross-cultural adaptation, my approach is based on the pluralist idea. Despite the fact that Kim coins assimilation as part of the definition of cross-cultural adaptation, I have adopted her definition of the adaptation process as I see it captures the essence of cross-cultural adaptation and serves as a good working definition for the present study.

2.1 Short-term versus long-term adaptation

In order to start the discussion on (short-term) adaptation, there is a need to define the term *sojourner*. Sojourner is, as Guirdham (1999: 280) explains, a person who has grown up in one culture and has temporarily, for at least a month, moved into another culture, who depends to some extent on the host environment to meet his personal and social needs, and who is engaged in first-hand continuous experiences with the host environment. Furthermore, the study uses the concept *stranger,* (a concept used for instance by Gudykunst 2003, Kim 2001) to refer to individuals, whether immigrants or sojourners, who have relocated whether temporarily or permanently to a new cultural environment.

When discussing cross-cultural adaptation, it is important to distinguish between long-term and short-term adaptation. Long-term adaptation refers to immigrants and refugees whose stay in the foreign culture is permanent or more or less permanent, whereas short-term adaptation refers to sojourners, that is, to people whose stay in a foreign country is temporary. Thus, the crucial distinction between permanent settlers and sojourners is *the purpose* of the stay and *the amount of time* spent overseas. The research participants of the present study are international students whose stay in Indonesia was temporary, lasting from one month to eleven months. Thus, the study deals with short-term adaptation of sojourners.

The distinction between short-term and long-term adaptation is important. Bochner (2006: 181) explains that as sojourners know that their foreign stay is temporary, it has an effect on their acculturation. Sojourners know that they are not going to stay in the host country permanently but will return back home in a certain period of time, and thus, their motivation to try to integrate into the society differs from that of immigrants. When it comes to immigrants, they are likely to be more committed to integrating into the new society as their aim is to stay permanently, or more or less permanently, in the host country. These motivational factors affect the overall adaptation process (e.g. Ting-Toomey 1999, Kim 2001). Further, whether the transition to a new culture has been

voluntary or involuntary has a great effect on strangers' psychological well-being (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2001: 111). If a person is forced to move, as, for instance, refugees are, their adaptation is usually much harder than, for example, sojourners and those immigrants' whose cross-cultural transition is voluntary.

Also, if we consider short-term sojourners and the definition of a*ssimilation* ("acceptance and internalization of the host culture by the individual") it could be asked if we can even discuss the two in a same sentence. Say, if an individual's sojourn lasts for one month, it could be argued that the time spent in the host country is not sufficient to internalize the different aspects of the host culture. Adaptation is taking place from the moment a sojourner enters the host culture, but longer term exposure to a host culture would be required in order the sojourners to start to internalize the aspects of the new environment. On the other hand, the intensity of each individual experience is different and sojourners might have extremely intensive immersion to the host culture in a relative short time depending on many different factors. All the research participants of the present study lived in local Indonesian host families, which might have made their exposure to the foreign culture significantly deep and intense. All in all, though there exist significant differences between short-term and long-term adaptation, what is common in both is that "everyone is challenged by the unfamiliar milieu to engage in at least some degree of new cultural learning and modification in old cultural habits" (Kim 2001: 17)

2.2 Integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation

In her *Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation,* Young Yun Kim (2001) brings together the research knowledge gained in different fields in social sciences with an attempt to present interdisciplinary theoretical foundations for the study of cross-cultural adaptation. Kim aims to explain the essence of cross-cultural adaptation and to differentiate the factors that contribute to some strangers experiencing the adaptation process differently than others. Kim posits communication at the heart of cross-cultural adaptation, considering communication a prerequisite for one's successful

adaptation to a foreign culture. Adaptation is taking place as long as newcomer is in contact with the environment. Kim's theory is based on the following three assumptions:

1) Humans have an innate self-organizing drive and a capacity to adapt to environmental challenges.

2) Adaptation of an individual to a given cultural environment occurs in and through communication.

3) Adaptation is a complex and dynamic process that brings about a qualitative transformation of the individual.

(Kim 2001: 35-37)

In her theory, Kim presents the *Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic Model* (Figure 1) to describe the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Instead of viewing adaptation as a linear process fixed in different phases, she sees cross-cultural adaptation as a continuous cyclic process of learning and growth. An underlying assumption is that newcomers experience stress when they enter a new cultural milieu. Cross-cultural adaptation is gained through learning as a person encounters challenges every day in his or her life and manages to overcome the challenges met in a foreign environment. Gradually, this process will lead to a newcomer's adaptation to the host culture. Though Kim's model depicts adaptation in relation to time, it does not determine any fixed phases in time as, for instance, the U-curve hypothesis, which has been much employed in describing newcomers' adaptation process to a foreign culture, does.
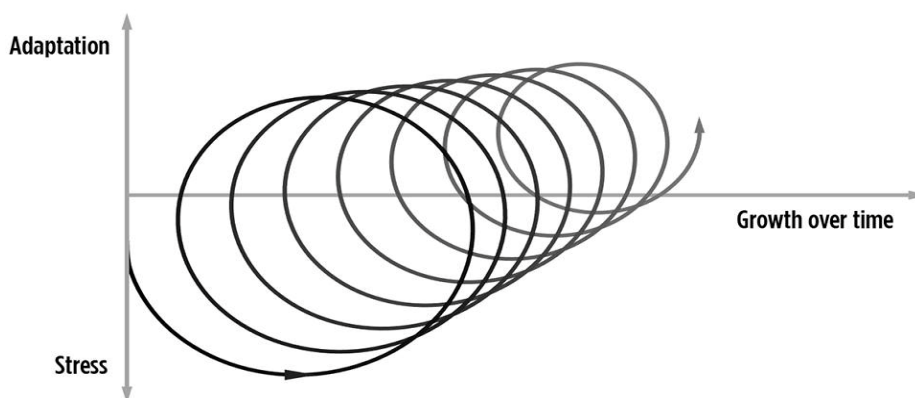
Figure 1. Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic

Another model Kim includes in her theory is called the *structural model of cross-cultural adaptation*. The model differentiates five different dimensions: 1) *personal communication*, 2) *host and ethnic social communication*, 3) *environment*, 4) *predisposition* and 5) *intercultural transformation*. All of the dimensions are divided into smaller components. The focus in the present study is on *personal communication* and *social communication* which will be presented in the next sub-chapter. Social communication not only involves interpersonal communication but also (host and ethnic) mass communication. However, the focus of this study is on interpersonal communication, and therefore, mass communication is excluded from the literature review below. For the same reason, the dimensions of *environment, predisposition and intercultural transformation* will be presented only briefly in sub-chapter 2.2.2.

2.2.1 Host communication competence: Personal and social communication

As pointed out earlier, Kim views communication as a prerequisite in adapting to a new cultural environment. According to Kim, in order to communicate effectively with the host environment, strangers need to be competent in the host communication, that is, one needs to acquire *host communication competence* (abbreviated HCC hereafter). Successful adaptation is gained through HCC, which again is achieved by participating in host communication activities (both *interpersonal* and *mass communication*). Thus, personal communication and social communication go hand in hand. Due to the interconnectedness, I will discuss both in this same sub-chapter. These parts of Kim's theory are first explained, followed by a more extensive review of literature on the topic.

Personal communication

Kim divides HCC into three components; *cognitive, affective* and *operational competence. Cognitive competence* encompasses knowledge of the host communication system, cultural understanding and cognitive complexity (referring to strangers' ability to process new information in a host environment). *Affective competence* includes strangers' motivation to adapt, to be empathic, flexible and to be capable of managing

ambiguity aroused by the new culture. *Operational competence* encompasses technical skills, synchrony and resourcefulness. Technical skills include the skills needed to carry out the daily activities. By synchrony, Kim refers to the communication skills that are "compatible, congruent and harmonious" when communicating with the host members (Kim 2001: 115). By resourcefulness Kim refers to strangers' ability to accommodate their behavior and adjust to unfamiliar cultural setting. For instance, strangers have to come up with ideas on how to manage face-to-face interactions and how to initiate and maintain relationships (Kim 2001:116).

Kim (2001: 117) explains that the three components are intertwined and together they reflect a stranger's "capacity to select and enact behaviors that are likely to be effective and appropriate in various social situations". Together the three components enhance strangers' participation in the environment and host social communication, at the same time decreasing long-term ethnic communication, which Kim considers to affect strangers' adaptation negatively (to be addressed in the next sub-chapter). Kim explains:

> Strangers with an advanced level of cognitive competence […] are likely to be more motivated to interact with the natives, are more positive and flexible in their orientation toward themselves and the host environment, and are better able to understand and participate in the emotional and aesthetic experiences of the natives. The same strangers also tend to be skilled and resourceful in responding to new situations through effective and appropriate behaviors and are more in sync with the rhythms of the host communication process.

(Kim 2001: 118-119)

With this Kim describes the advances a stranger has made in the three different dimensions of *personal communication* towards host communication competence, referring to the positive effects that the knowledge of the host communication, cultural understanding and cognitive complexity have on other dimensions of communication.

Social communication

Kim divides social communication into *host* and *ethnic interpersonal communication* and *host* and *ethnic mass communication*. Communication with host nationals is crucial for strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. It is important to strangers not only as they receive social support, which is to alleviate stress, but also because it is valuable for their cultural learning since they gain important information about host mindset and

learn about the people's behavior. This cultural learning again is to enhance HCC. Kim considers ethnic communication as a positive factor, enhancing immigrants' cross-cultural adaptation. However, ethnic communication enhances cross-cultural adaptation only in the short term. If strangers' social communication is limited too much on ethnic communication while communication activities with the host nationals are minimized, it slows down the development of host communication competence, and thus hinders the adaptation process.

Research findings on personal and social communication in relation to cross-cultural adaptation

As explained above, in Kim's theory, communication with host nationals is crucial for strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. It is important for strangers not only because they receive social support which alleviates stress (i.e. enhances strangers' psychological adaptation), but also since it is valuable for their cultural learning as they gain important information about the host mindset and learn about the people's behavior (socio-cultural adaptation). This cultural learning again enhances HCC. It goes without saying that the more efficient the communication, the easier it is to establish relationships.

There exists plenty of research literature that supports Kim's ideas on the crucial relationship between communication and successful adaptation. Lee and Chen (2000: 766) maintain that cross-cultural adaptation ''starts with and proceeds in and through communication.'' In order for successful communication to take place, it is necessary for strangers to have at least some level of skills in the host country language. (Masgoret and Ward 2007: 60-61). Masgoret and Ward (2007: 63) explain that knowledge of the language of the host-country is important for one's cultural learning process as "language is the primary medium through which cultural information is communicated". Previous studies have shown that that lack of adequate language skills is the major reason that makes the adaptation to a foreign culture more difficult and is likely to cause acculturation stress for newcomers. Kokkonen (2010) found out in her study on refugees' interpersonal relationships in Finland that they experienced that the biggest reason which prevented them to establish relationships with Finnish people was

their inadequate Finnish skills. Paige (1993: 7) maintains: "The ability to speak the target language is not always absolutely essential, nor does it assure wholly effective intercultural communication or cross-cultural adjustment, but lack of language skills can lead to social isolation and frustration." Rohrlich and Martin (1991) found out in their research on American undergraduate students in Europe that the students experienced language to be, among housing, money and coursework, their most significant concern. Also, Henderson, Milhouse and Cao (1993) found in their research on Asian students in the United States that the biggest difficulty for the students was inadequate language skills.

Lee and Chen's (2000) study revealed that the better the HCC of Chinese adolescents was the better was their psychological adjustment in Canadian culture. Cheah et al. (2011) found that English language competence, interpersonal relationships and media use enhanced Bosnian refugees' adaptation to Canadian society. Their results suggest that competence in English language affected positively the refugees' interpersonal relationships with the host nationals, their host media use and their functional fitness and psychological health. Masgoret and Ward (2007: 72) maintain that "Language, communication and social interaction skills, along with a wider knowledge of norms and values, all contribute to sociocultural adaptation."

Research has found considerable evidence that the relationships that strangers establish with host as well as their co-nationals enhances their cross-cultural adaptation. Hendrickson and his colleagues (2010) investigated friendship networks of international students in relation to their social connectedness, homesickness and satisfaction levels. Their results indicate that the students who had host national friends the most, felt significantly more satisfied, content and less homesick compared to the students who had less host nationals in their network of friends. The students who had more co-nationals in their friend network felt less satisfied and reported lower levels of social connectedness. Smith's (1999) intercultural network theory also emphasizes the importance of social network in one's acculturation process, one of the propositions of his theory suggesting that the more strangers have host nationals in their social network, the more likely is their acculturation. Ward (1996: 136) maintains that the relationships

with co-nationals are perhaps "the most salient and powerful source of social support for both sojourners and immigrants." Social support can be divided into different types of support. House (1981) distinguishes *emotional* and *informational* support. Emotional support refers to the support we receive when someone shows concern and acts emphatic towards us. Informational support refers to the support we receive when we are given instructions and advice that we can use for solving different problems. Kokkonen (2010) investigated interpersonal relationships of refugees living in Finland. Her study revealed that *weak ties* were a significant source of social support for the refugees, thus positively contributing to their attachment to the new cultural environment. *Strong ties* refers to the relationships in which the contact is frequent and close, whereas *weak ties* refers to relationships which are more casual and not as deep as with strong ties. For instance, neighbours, teachers, a shop keeper whose store we are used to visit, a hair-dresser we go, and so forth, tend to be weak ties. The reason why social ties are important for newcomers' adaptation from the perspective of the psychological adaptation is related to the social support we get when we are in a relationship with someone. When looking at adaptation from the socio-cultural adaptation perspective, the social ties are important in that they promote the newcomers' cultural learning on the host culture. Cultural learning again enhances the newcomers' psychological adjustment.

Research has contributed a lot to our understanding on the kind of support *ethnic* and *host* ties provide to strangers. However, while intercultural research has focused on investigating the impacts of co-national and host national ties on strangers' cross-cultural adaptation, *international* social ties in strangers' adaptation process have been neglected, as also pointed out by Kashima and Loh (2006). The authors contend that though the host national might be the best source of cultural learning for newcomers, the long-term international residents in a host-country may also facilitate cultural learning (Kashima and Loh 2006: 472). Kashima and Loh (ibid.) investigated international students' acculturation to Australia. Their research suggests that not only the social ties established with host and co-nationals, but also the *international* social ties, that is, the relationships with other international students, significantly enhanced the students' cross-cultural adaptation. Actually, the authors found that the wider the students' network of *international* ties was, the better was their psychological

adaptation. Their findings suggest that the social ties established with the host nationals eased acculturation stress among those students who were experiencing their adaptation as stressful. However, in contrast to previous studies, they did not find linkage between social ties and socio-cultural adaptation.

The focus of interest in the present study is on exploring the *social communication* taking place in the host environment. The present study does not only investigate the host and ethnic ties, but also *international* ties. Furthermore, when it comes to host country language skills, the focus of the study is not limited to exploring communication in the local host language, but addresses also lingua franca communication, which creates an additional perspective in investigating social communication as conceptualized by Kim. The rest of Kim's (2001) theory will be briefly presented in the next subsection.

2.2.2 Environment, Predisposition and Intercultural transformation

Environment: *Host receptivity, host conformity pressure* and *ethnic group strength*.

Kim (2001) presents that there exist three environmental factors in the host culture that affect strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. *Host receptivity* refers to the host nationals' willingness to receive strangers. If a host country has a positive attitude towards strangers, it provides better opportunities for strangers to socialize with the host nationals, and, thus, ultimately enhances strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. *Host conformity pressure* refers to the degree to which the host nationals expect the newcomers to confirm to the local norms of behavior, learn the local language and communicate according to the host communication norms. Sojourners are not as likely to be affected by host conformity pressure as immigrants are. *Ethnic group strength* refers to "the relative status and power that membership in an ethnic group accords" (Kim 2001: 155). The higher the ethnic group strength is, the more possibilities the strangers have on influencing the host society.

Predisposition: Preparedness for change, ethnic proximity and *adaptive personality*

Kim lists three factors that are within the strangers themselves and together constitute the adaptive potential. First, *preparedness for change* refers to strangers' adaptation potential in terms of their background characteristics. Education, training (on host language and culture), and previous experience abroad facilitate cross-cultural adaptation. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, if the strangers' relocation to the host country is voluntary (instead of involuntary) and if the relocation is planned in advance (instead of unforeseen), they are more likely to be successfully adapted.

Ethnic proximity refers to the degree to which strangers are seen to be similar or different in comparison with the host nationals – in terms of both physical appearance and "intrinsic markers of cultural and communication systems" (Kim 2001: 171). This topic will be dealt in depth in the following chapter in which different communication styles are discussed. A*daptive personality* encompasses personal characteristics of openness, strength and positivity. Having an open mind and positive attitude facilitates individuals' cross-cultural adaptation. Personality strength enhances cross-cultural adaptation as it helps in coping with the acculturation stress.

Intercultural transformation: Functional fitness, psychological health and intercultural identity

Kim views intercultural transformation as a gradual outcome of development of HCC and participation in host social communication. *Functional fitness* refers to a state when a stranger is well adapted to the host society, that is, has learned to manage their daily life and feel comfortable in the host culture. Once the stranger is well adapted, *psychological health* is increased. As the ultimate outcome of the adaptation process, accompanied with functional fitness and psychological health, a stranger is interculturally transformed emerging with *intercultural identity* which is "increasingly richer in content and more complex in structure" (Kim 2001: 191). Kim uses the term *intercultural personhood* to describe strangers who have gone through this fundamental transformation process in terms of identity change.

2.3 Summary

To sum up, in the present chapter, I have reviewed literature on the significance of communication and interpersonal relationships in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. Kim's integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation was presented, giving special focus on *personal communication* and *social communication*. Research has found evidence that establishing relationships in the host country – with host nationals, co-nationals as well as with other international strangers in the host environment – enhances strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. Communication is an essential part of adaptation as it is the means through which strangers are able to establish relationships in the host environment. Interpersonal relationships are important to newcomers as they offer social support, thus alleviating their acculturation stress. In addition, interpersonal relationships, especially those with host nationals, are crucial in the adaptation process as they enhance strangers' cultural learning and understanding and thus enhance their cross-cultural adaptation.

I will now move on to take a deeper look at the intercultural communication process. The focus of the following chapter is on describing the use of English as a medium of intercultural communication, and on presenting how culturally bounded communication styles affect the process of establishing intercultural relationships.

3. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION STYLES AND USE OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

The aim of the study is to investigate international students' perceptions on their adaptation to Indonesian society. I am interested in investigating how the international students perceive the relationships they established affected their adaptation to Indonesian society. In addition, the study aims to research the students' perceptions on how they consider cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English language as a lingua franca affected the process of establishing relationships. The previous chapter presented that language and communication skills play an important role in one's cross-cultural adaptation process, and that establishing relationships – ethnic, host and international social ties - in a host country is crucial in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation process. Having presented the importance of social ties in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation and the crucial role communication has in establishing these social ties, the present chapter goes deeper into the topic of (intercultural) communication as such.

Central in the discussion of the present chapter is the concept of culture. Hofstede (2001: 10) presents: "Culture determines the uniqueness of a human group in the same way personality determines the uniqueness of an individual." Culture is not something human beings are born with, but it is something we all learn as we live in our surrounding environment. Each member of a culture is taught from an early age the rules and norms of the culture, the appropriate ways to behave in the culture; we learn to internalize the "societal and cultural norms, attitudes, values, and belief systems" (Matsumoto 2004: 134). Also, we learn the language of our culture. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988: 99) explain: "At different language acquisition stages, children do not learn language per se, rather they learn the various patterns and styles of language interaction that enable them to function as competent communicators in different situational contexts." This process is called *socialization*, also referred to as *enculturation*. Hofstede (1997: 9) refers to the socialization process by presenting that "culture is the collective programming of the mind". In intercultural communication,

contrary to intracultural communication, due to these deeply internalized learned ideas and behaviors, which are distinct in each culture, communication tends to be more challenging as these learned patterns of behavior have a profound effect on how individuals communicate. Culture has a pervasive effect on how one thinks, behaves, and perceives the surrounding world. Those differences in worldviews are the fundamental reason behind misunderstandings and miscommunication between members of different cultures (Stephan and Stephan 2003: 111-112).

I will open the chapter by discussing English as a lingua franca (ELF), a language that has become a medium of international communication. I will present which implications ELF communication have on intercultural encounters. Next, beyond the linguistic aspect, the chapter moves on to examine culture's influence on communication and dimensions of cultural variability, *high-context* and *low-context communication* and the *individualism-collectivism* dimension, will be presented. I will address the implications that different communication styles due to different cultural backgrounds and use of English as a lingua franca have on intercultural encounters.

3.1 English as a lingua franca - ELF

English has become a dominant language of intercultural communication and undeniably, it holds the status of the global lingua franca in today's world. Lingua franca (LF) refers to "a language used as a common language by speakers whose mother tongue it is not" (Ife 2003: 23). Though ELF is an extremely current topic, it still remains a relatively little investigated area. Seidlhofer (2009: 207) maintains that "[…] considerable descriptive effort should be going into understanding the real state of affairs of how speakers make use of English as a lingua franca." She maintains that while research has focused on investigating English spoken by its native speakers, or those who speak it as an additional or official language, "hardly any descriptions are available of how ELF works – ELF is not regarded as 'Real English'." Today, thanks to increased investigations on the topic and the research findings on its special characters, the attitudes toward ELF being a "deficit language" are changing.

Compared to native speaker interactions, LF communication can be very different as the interactants use a language that is not a native language of anyone who takes part in the communication situation. Research has recognized special features that are present in ELF interactions and ELF communication can indeed be seen to differ greatly from L1 – L1 interactions. The central focus in ELF research has been on pronunciation, lexis, lexicogrammar and pragmatics (Jenkins 2012: 486). Seidlhofer (2004) has investigated lexicogrammatical features of ELF and identified systematic differences between ELF communication and native English language use. Jennifer Jenkins's investigations have contributed much to ELF research. Jenkins (2000) has for instance, studied phonology and intelligibility in ELF communication. More specifically, she examined which aspects due to phonological factors, problems and errors in pronunciation, lead to misunderstandings in ELF communication. House (1999, 2002a, 2002b) has studied pragmatic features of ELF focusing especially on pragmatic competence. Though recent investigations have contributed to our understanding on the special nature of ELF, and though ELF does not hold anymore a status of "incorrect English", native English still is to a great extend considered as an ideal form of English, the rules and norms of which EFL (English as a foreign language) learners should aim to internalize.

The focus in EFL teaching has traditionally been on the language learner's goals to learn to communicate with the *native speakers* of the language, and, to learn about different aspects of English speaking countries, for instance their literature and history. The ultimate aim in language learning is to acquire *communicative competence* in a given language and culture. Yule (1996: 197) defines communicative competence as "the ability to use the L2 accurately, appropriately, and flexibly." Thus, being competent in a language is much more than just mastering the grammatical rules. As a competent language user, one has to know how to use a language appropriately – one has to learn the pragmatic norms of a language. What makes lingua franca interaction distinctive from L1 – L2 communication is that in a lingua franca context there are no L1 speakers present. Ife (2003: 30) contends: "To say that it is the job of the language learner to learn the norms of the target language does not take account of the lingua franca situation. When both or all speakers in an interaction are L2 speakers then two or more sets of linguistic norms make contact and it is possible or even likely that neither speaker knows the other's language or culture." In LF communication the crucial

question then is: Which pragmatic norms are to be followed - the norms of the different respective cultures and languages of the participants in an ELF interaction or the norms of English language? But if English, which English then? As Kachru (1986: 122) points out "a speech act that is appropriate and congruent for American English is not necessarily appropriate in Indian English, Nigerian English, or Singaporean English."

The question of cultures' influence on ELF communication divides opinions. Some researchers (e.g. Meierkord 2000, Meierkord 2002, House 2002a, House 2003, Byram 1997) see English as a *culture-free tool,* or in other words, purely a tool to get messages across. Other perspective holds that language cannot be used only as a tool but it is a *language of identification* (Hülmbauer 2009, Fiedler 2011, Edwards 2010), meaning that ELF speakers bring into the communication their own respective cultures and languages. Fiedler (2011) contends:

> Speakers of English as a lingua franca display an array of various identities, with the English native language and culture(s), their own primary languages and cultures and a specific ELF identity being important pillars. The degrees to which these three constituents are activated as well as their interaction depend on a variety of factors that are of influence in a specific communicative situation. (Fiedler 2011: 92)

My view is in accordance with Fiedler's. The users of ELF inevitably bring to lingua franca encounters their own cultural identities, as well as the norms of their own respective native languages, and their experiences of their previous LF encounters. Take for instance, a Finnish person who speaks Finnish as her native language. She has learnt in school EFL holding on to American English standards of the language. She has lived most of her life in Finland but has also spent some time living in England. She has a wide network of international non-native English speaking friends from all over the world with whom she communicates in English. She has lived in Mexico for six years, where she solely used Spanish as a language of communication. I would argue that this person brings inevitably those previous (intercultural) experiences and her knowledge of American English and British English as well as Spanish and Finnish language to LF encounters. She takes, unconsciously as well as consciously, bits and pieces of her identity, which is strongly built by the above mentioned intercultural experiences. Why certain parts (instead of some other parts) of the identity and communication behavior get activated manifesting more in a communication situation at hand, depends on different socio-contextual factors. Often we are not even conscious of those features we

bring into a communication situation. Sias et al. (2008) investigated intercultural friendship formation among college students. The results of their study indicate, that the experienced difficulties in language use led the students to develop "their own unique language and vocabulary" (Sias et al. 2008: 11). Interestingly, some of the respondents experienced the language difficulties very positively as the difficulties brought humor and play into their interactions which again was experienced to enhance the friendship formation.

Research on ELF seems to be strongly focusing on misunderstandings and on the problematic nature of ELF interactions. However, research (e.g. Seidlhofer 2004, Mauranen 2006, Kaur 2010) suggests that misunderstandings are actually not as common in LF interactions as it has been assumed. This can be explained by the collaborative nature that research suggests characterizes ELF communication. For instance, Firth (1996) has studied co-operativeness in ELF communication. His research suggests that the interactants in ELF communication use different communication strategies to overcome the challenges in ELF interactions. Other research findings also suggest that ELF interactions are supportive and collaborative (Hülmbauer 2010, House 2003, Cogo 2009, Meierkord 2000). The results of Sias and her colleagues' (2008) study on intercultural friendship formation among college students also suggest the cooperative nature of ELF communication. Though inadequate language skills were experienced as a barrier especially in the initial phase in the relational development, the students who were able to overcome the linguistic challenges, succeeded in establishing close friendships. More importantly, the experienced difficulties in language use led the students to develop "their own unique language and vocabulary" (Sias et al. 2008: 11). Interestingly, some of the respondents experienced the language difficulties really positively in a sense that they brought humor and play into their interactions, and thus the language difficulties were also experienced to enhance the friendship formation.

Having said that, in intercultural encounters it is common that misunderstandings and misinterpretations do occur as people rely on their own culture's frame of reference when interpreting the behaviors of the people from other cultures (e.g. Stephan and Stephan 2003: 111-112). Guirdham (2011: 202) explains: "There are subtleties of

language use that enable receivers of messages spoken in their native language to draw accurate inferences about the speakers' meaning. These subtleties will tend to escape non-native speakers. Equally, the other source of inference, the knowledge of the 'world', may be defective when the speaker is from another culture, as the two participants' 'worlds' will be influenced by their culture." In ELF communication English competence of the interlocutors may be far less than perfect, which already sets challenges for communication to be efficient. In addition to the linguistic challenges in ELF communication, culture affects how interlocutors use English and how they interpret others' language used. The focus of my study is not to highlight the presence of misunderstandings, nor to concentrate on problems or communication breakdowns on intercultural communication encounters. My aim is simply to try to demonstrate that differences do exist and those differences do play an important role in intercultural communication encounters. I will now move on to discuss these other important cultural factors, which are beyond the linguistic dimension of intercultural encounters that influence communication situations. My focus will be on presenting how cultural values guide communication and behavior of people in social interactions, and on presenting what implications different communication styles due to different cultural backgrounds have on intercultural communication encounters.

3.2 Cultural variability in communication

The present chapter presents different dimensions of cultural variability - *high-context* (HC) and *low-context* (LC) *communication* and *individualism-collectivism* (IC). I will start the discussion by presenting HC and LC communication. After that, in the following sub-chapter (3.2.2), I will review literature on IC dimension. The sub-chapter 3.2.2 on IC also explores deeper what was previously said about HC and LC communication with an aim to present explanations why members of individualistic cultures tend to use LC communication and why members of collectivistic cultures tend to use HC communication.

In order to discuss high-context and low-context communication and individualism-collectivism, the concept of values needs to be first addressed. Values we hold affect how we communicate (Chen and Starosta 2005: 44). Chen and Starosta (ibid.) present: "Just as communication is a mediator of values, communication is shaped by our value system. Because values determine what is desirable and what is undesirable, they dictate the way we choose to act in a process of communication." (Chen and Starosta 2005: 44) Research suggests that members of collectivistic cultures tend to use HC communication, whereas members of individualistic cultures have a tendency to use LC communication (Gudykunst and Matsumoto 1996, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988). The assumption of the present study is that our preference to use LC versus HC communication can be explained by individualism-collectivism. This connection will be explored in the present chapter. In the present study, the term communication style is used to refer to high-context and low-context communication and individualism and collectivism. Take the following definition of *communicative style* by Barnlund (1998: 44): "the topics people prefer to discuss, their favorite forms of interaction – ritual, repartee, argument, self-disclosure – and the depth of involvement they demand of each other. It includes the extent to which communicants rely upon the same channels - vocal, verbal, physical – for conveying information and the extent to which they are tuned to the same level of meaning, that is, the factual or emotional content of messages". Barnlund (ibid.) uses the term *communicative* style, whereas the present study uses the term *communication* style when referring to the same phenomenon.

Though HC and LC communication, as well as IC dimensions, have been widely accepted and used in intercultural communication research and regarded as powerful tools in explaining cultural variability in communication across cultures, the classifications have indeed received criticism. The criticism is discussed at the end of the following two sub-chapters on pages 40-41. At this point, I want to emphasize that it is important to take into account that though cultures can be classified to be either HC or LC, or, individualistic or collectivistic, it is never that black and white and within every culture both dimensions exist. After addressing the criticism, I will draw a summary of the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 and move on to present the methodology employed in the present study.

3.2.1 High-context and low-context communication

Edward T. Hall, an American anthropologist, introduced the concept of high-context (HC) communication and low-context (LC) communication in his book *Beyond culture* in 1976. His classification has been extensively used and one of the most frequently used concept in intercultural and cross-cultural communication research. Martin and Nakayama (2007: 220) maintain that "A primary way in which cultural groups differ in communication style is in a preference for high- versus low-context communication." Hall (ibid.) presented that cultures can be divided into categories of HC cultures and LC cultures based on their tendency to use HC communication or LC communication. Hall presented that most of the eastern cultures use HC communication and most of the western cultures use LC communication. Hall presented that in HC communication, most of the information is in the physical context and words are not so important to deliver and to receive a message. The way people speak is indirect and the hearer has to know how to interpret the message; a message receiver has to rely on the contextual knowledge to interpret the message correctly. Instead, language behavior in LC communication is straightforward, precise and open, and most of the information is coded verbally by explicit words. Thus, in LC communication, a receiver of a message does not have to rely as greatly on the contextual cues.

The following quote by Guirdham (2011) captures the essence of the differences between high-context and low-context communication and the reasons on why misunderstandings easily arise in high- vs. low-context interactions.

> When a speaker uses HCC, the problem for LCC receivers is literally to grasp their meaning: so much is left unsaid and they are not attuned to the implicatures and inferences being used, or to the extensive use of non-verbal communication. Indirectness and an emphasis on relationship data compound the problem. When the speaker uses LCC, the problem for HCC receivers is less to grasp their overt meaning than to avoid over-interpreting and seeing inferences that may not be present. They may also be affronted by directness or the 'brutality' of the concentration on hard content: or simply suffer from information overload. (Guirdham 2011: 205)

When engaged in *intracultural* communication, we share the same "ground rules" which makes the communication easier as we use the same cultural codes to encode and decode the messages and we do not have to concentrate on "reading between the lines" (Matsumoto 2004: 288). Guirdham's lines above present well the challenge of

interpreting the intended messages correctly when we do not rely on the same frame of reference when engaged in intercultural communication situation.

Whether intracultural or intercultural communication, a receiver of a message always has to interpret the message; he or she might interpret it as it was intended by a sender, or, the interpretation might be completely different from what the intention of a sender of a message was. Scollon and Scollon (2001: 11) explain that "in order to communicate we *must* always jump into conclusions about what other people mean." In order to interpret the message as it was meant to be interpreted, it is important that the receiver understand the sender's intentions in saying something (Guirdham 2011: 99). In HC communication, much of the intended message is left unsaid and a hearer has to rely greatly on contextual cues and thus, the sent messages in HC communication style can be very ambiguous (Lim 2003: 65). Irwin (1996: 51) maintains that especially members of low-context cultures, whose communication style tends to rely on directness and explicit verbal messages, often experience high-context communication situations as ambiguous and confusing. "The greater the difference between senders' and receivers' backgrounds, the greater difference is in the meanings they attach to particular words and behaviors" (Adler 2002: 75). The key in successful high-context communication is the correct inferences on the relevance of how something was said in a relation to what was said, and also, understanding the intensions of a speaker (Gudykunst and Matsumoto 1996: 31). It should go without saying that when participants in an interaction share similar backgrounds, histories, experiences, assumptions and knowledge about the world, the communication is easier as these similarities help the participants to decode the intended meaning (Scollon and Scollon 2001: 21).

Andersen et al. (2003: 84) present that people from low-context cultures are often perceived by high-context members as "excessively talkative, belaboring the obvious and redundant." The authors go on to say that in contrast, people of HC cultures may be seen as "non-disclosing, sneaky, and mysterious" (Andersen et al. 2003: 84). These kinds of attributions easily arise due to differences in communication styles, and as a result of not being aware of the differences. Matsumoto and Juan (2004: 289) explain that when misunderstandings arise and communication does not flow as intended,

people have a tendency to make judgements on other person not knowing how to behave appropriately, of him being rude or not being a good person.

Though cultures can be classified by their tendency to use either HC or LC communication, it is important to take into account that though messages in LC communication tend to be direct and a lot of value is placed on verbal expression, HC messages are also used in LC communication. Also, it should be noted that depending on the relationship with whom we are communicating with, we use both low- and high-context messages (Gudykunst and Matsumoto 1996: 33). For instance, with our close friends and family members with whom we are close with and who we know well, high-context messages are often used as those persons are to grasp the intended meaning since they can "read between the lines" what the other person is trying to say. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that though interactants would share the same "ground rules" of encoding and decoding, successful communication is by no means guaranteed. Due to many different factors, we do not always know how to interpret the encoded message correctly as we perceive the message ambiguous or we might automatically interpret the encoding incorrectly and thus the message encoded gets distorted (Matsumoto and Juang 2004: 288). Thus, cultural differences in communication styles cannot be automatically used as an explanation why misunderstandings and misattributions occur.

I will now move on to present cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism. These cultural dimensions shed light on our understanding on how cultures can be seen to differ from one another, and also, the dimensions offer explanations on why members of different cultures tend to use high-context and low-context communication styles.

3.2.2 Individualism and collectivism

In addition to HC-LC dimensions, another way of investigating cultural variability in communication is to look at the phenomenon in terms of individualism and collectivism (IC) - the ways people perceive themselves in relation to others. Hofstede (1980) introduced the concept of individualism and collectivism and his work has been much cited ever since. Hofstede investigated social behavior and national cultures of 50 different countries with the aim of explaining how cultures can be seen to differ based on their values. His aim was to recognize different value systems that manifest across cultures. In Hofstede's original work (ibid.), in addition to *individualism-collectivism*, his dimensions of cultural variability include *power distance*, *uncertainty avoidance* and *masculinity vs. feminit*y. In his later work (1991), Hofstede added a fifth dimension of *long vs. short-term orientation*. In an attempt to explain cultural variability, other researchers have also developed models on value orientations and value systems, some of them incorporating also dimensions individualism-collectivism in their models (see e.g. Kluckhohn and Strodbeck 1961, Schwartz 1992, Condon and Yousef 1975; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997). Some researchers, for instance Hofstede (1980), see cultures as *either* individualistic *or* collectivist, whereas others, for instance Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (1961), take the position that both dimensions exist within different cultures. My view is that cultures do have a tendency to be either collectivist or individualist but the two dimensions exist within every culture. This topic will be addressed more in detail at the end of this sub-chapter (pp. 40-41).

The key to understanding how individualism and collectivism manifest themselves in different cultures is individuals' affiliation to a group membership. By definition, "individualism-collectivism is a dimension of cultural variability that focuses on the relative importance of the individual versus the group. In individualistic cultures, the individual takes precedence over the group and in collectivist cultures, the group takes precedence over the individual" (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Nishida 1996: viii). In individualistic cultures, members of the culture are brought up to become unique individuals and hierarchical differences in terms of power and status are small, equality being emphasized. In contrast, in collectivist cultures, the position of an individual in a

culture is seen to be the opposite. In collectivist cultures, one's identity is based on group-membership (Malmberg 1996: 90). The needs of a group are emphasized and members of a collectivist culture identify themselves through their group membership, opposed to through their individual position or personal characteristics. Hierarchical differences prevail and one's position in the society largely defines his role, status and also what is considered as appropriate behavior (Matsumoto and Juang (2004: 389). Northern and western regions of Europe and North America are seen to be individualistic whereas collectivism prevails in Asia, South America and Pacific (e.g. Triandis, Brislin and Hui 1988: 271) and Africa and the middle East (Littlejohn 2002: 248).

The concepts of ingroups and outgroups are inextricably connected to discussion on individualism and collectivism as group membership has significant implications on individuals' behavior. Matsumoto and Juang (2004: 386) explain that in ingroup relations, the bond that exists between the group members is stronger than with outgroup members. Feelings of closeness, familiarity, intimacy, and trust characterize ingroup relationships. In contrast, in outgroup relations this close bond does not exist. Matsumoto and Juang (2004: 389) explain "Self-ingroup and self-outgroup relationships differ in individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and these differences in the meaning of ingroup and outgroup relationships produce differences in the types of behaviors people engage in when interacting with others." The distinction made between in-groups and outgroups in collectivistic cultures is stronger than in individualistic cultures (Chen 2003: 226, Matsumoto and Juang 2004: 386). Saving group harmony and saving face in collectivist cultures is especially important (Irwin 1996: 51). Malmberg (1996: 91) explains that if a member of a collectivistic culture has broken rules of the society, he/she causes shame for the whole group, especially if the violation of rules will get public. As members of collectivist cultures place great value on their ingroup relationships, and the members' identity is constructed on a group membership, it is well understandable why their desire of saving face and harmony is an important part of their culture.

Research suggests a connection between HC communication and collectivism and LC communication and individualism (Gudykunst and Matsumoto 1996, Chen and Starosta 2005: 147). Gudykunst and Matsumoto (1996: 29-30) maintain that "Members of individualistic cultures predominately use low-context communication and tend to communicate in a direct fashion, whereas members of collectivistic cultures predominately use high-context messages and tend to communicate in an indirect fashion." Communication is the means to create and maintain harmonious atmosphere. Salo-Lee (1996: 37) explains that by means of being indirect, the group harmony is maintained. With an aim to maintain harmony, typical in HC communication is to "disguise" one's opinion into a question or a suggestion and for instance, to avoid direct negative or positive responses. Lim (2003: 65) describes HC communication style, referring to Asian HC communication style, presenting that "what Asians say out loud can mean completely different what they actually mean." Masgoret and Ward (2007: 65) explain that avoiding saying "no" is a typical feature in collectivistic cultures. Replying "yes" to a question may actually mean "no" or "maybe". This is due to the fact that saving group harmony is highly valued in collectivistic societies; replying "no" to a request might cause face-loss. Martin and Nakayama (2007: 222) explain that indirect HC communication style, instead of being completely honest, maintaining harmony in a relationship is seen more important. Members of individualist cultures are taught to solve conflicts by speaking about them, to confront them, whereas members of collectivist cultures tend to "use avoidance, third-party intermediaries, or other face-saving techniques" (Lustig and Koester 2006: 119).

Martin and Nakayama (2007: 222) discuss high- and low-context communication maintaining that the differences in communication styles tend to be a cause of the problems that arise in communication between men and women and in communication between different ethnic groups due to interlocutors' engagement to different priorities in terms of truth, honesty, harmony, and conflict avoidance. Malmberg (1996: 91) points out that "It is not always easy for a westerner to know who might lose one's face, when, and in which way." When a member of collectivist culture is engaged in a face-saving act (e.g. different strategies of avoidance), the message he is sending by his behavior can be experienced as ambiguous and confusing by a member of a individualistic culture, if the message receiver does not know the intentions behind the communication

behavior. Thus the potential for communication breakdown indeed is present. To conclude, in intercultural communication, especially in communication between participants of collectivistic and individualist orientations, who use HC and LC communication, communication may be problematic. In addition to the challenges that cultural differences in communication styles bring to intercultural communication interactions, the use of lingua franca language, as is often the case in intercultural encounters, adds challenges to the interactions.

Although the individualism-collectivism dimension has been very useful in explaining cultural variability across cultures, it has also received criticism. The dimension used in explaining cultural differences *itself* has not been the target of the critical discussion, as it has been widely accepted among researchers that individualism and collectivism indeed do exist and that the individualism - collectivism dimension is a useful tool when investigating communication across cultures. Rather, what has been extensively criticized and considered problematic is *the way* Hofstede (e.g. 1980) as well other researchers, have used the dimension in their investigations. For instance, Hofstede believes that the cultural differences can be quantified and generalized by nationality.

In addition, some researchers, including Hofstede (1980), see cultures as *either* individualistic *or* collectivist, which can be seen problematic in its "black or white" way of thinking. It is well documented in research that cultures have a tendency to be *either* collectivist *or* individualist. However, it is important to acknowledge that within every culture both dimensions do exist (e.g. Triandis, Brislin and Hui 1988: 271, Littlejohn 2002: 248, Andersen et al. 2003: 85), and thus, instead of "either/or thinking", "both/and thinking" should be applied. Though there are found to be certain consistencies in behavior of individualistic as well as in collectivistic cultures, the way individualism and collectivism manifest in different cultures is unique (Gudykunst and Matsumoto 1996: 20). Within every culture, there exist sub-cultures, and thus, different communication styles. In the following quote Gudykunst and Matsumoto (1996) call for the need to take into consideration the individual differences in investigations in individualism-collectivism:

> Individuals' communication styles are dependent upon the degree to which they have internalized the values of the culture in which they are socialized, and the way they see themselves, and the way their culture socializes people to see themselves (e.g., as independent, unique individuals or as individuals embedded in social groups). It, therefore, is necessary to link individual level variations in individualism-collectivism to communication styles. (Gudykunst and Matsumoto 1996: 33-34)

Every human being is a unique individual, and we also have to take into account these individual variations in intercultural and cross-cultural communication research.

One of the aims of the present study is to investigate the students' perceptions on *how they consider cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English as a lingua franca affected the process of establishing relationships.* In the previous two sub-chapters I have presented that cultures can be seen to differ from one another based on the different values cultures hold and that these values guide our communication behavior. I also presented how the different communication styles have influence on intercultural communication encounters and make the communication more complicated and challenging. The focus of the literature reviewed has been on ELF communication and on cross-cultural and intercultural communication and not on reviewing literature that has focused on investigating specifically *intercultural relationships*. With the above mentioned aim in mind, I will now turn my attention to presenting research on intercultural relationships.

3.3. Intercultural relationships

Research on intercultural relationships has been limited (Chen 2003: 225). However, *intracultural* relationships have been studied extensively and knowledge gained in those investigations contributes to our understanding also on intercultural relationships. Intercultural relationships have a lot in common with intracultural relationships. Nevertheless, there are features in intercultural relationships that make them different and more challenging from intracultural ones - features that are related to the cultural aspects which were addressed in the previous two sub-chapters, namely, differences in perceptions, values and in communication styles, as also pointed out by Martin and Nakayama (2007: 367). Yet another feature that characterizes intercultural relationships

and what thus makes them more challenging is anxiety that is usually experienced in initial interactions. Martin and Nakayama (2007: 367) maintain that "Some anxiety is present in the early stages of any relationship, but the anxiety is greater in intercultural relationships." It is often the case in intercultural communication encounters that the language of communication is not a native language of either of the interactants, but the interactants use LF language as a medium of communication. Thus, in addition to the challenges in intercultural communication that stem from differences in perceptions, values and communication styles, yet another challenge, which is also to increase anxiety and to inhibit relationship development, is the fact that the interactants are not communicating in their native languages.

Research on human relationships has concentrated on investigating the *development* of relationships trying to explain why relationships develop with some people, while with some other people they do not. Communication research has aimed to explain the role of communication in relationship development. Furthermore, research on human relationships has focused on identifying different *stages* in relationships. Many hypotheses, models and theories have been generated to capture these stages and reasons why and how relationships develop from one stage to another. Many of the theories are developed to explain *intracultural* relationship development but are well applicable in investigating intercultural relational development, and the theories have, indeed, been applied in investigating intercultural relationship development. The interest of the present study lies in the phases where strangers become acquaintances, and also, where the relationships with acquaintances develop into more intimate ones. As pointed out earlier (p. 12), the present study uses the term relationship to refer to all different kinds of relations between people; those with acquaintances and casual friends, friendship, romantic relationships, family relationships etc. The focus of my interest is not limited to investigating any specific type of relationships.

Berger and Calabrese (1975) presented that human relationships develop in three phases, including *entry phase*, *personal phase* and *exit phase*. In the *entry phase*, communication is guided by social rules and norms and the topics of conversation are mostly on demographic level. Followed with several entry phase interactions the

interactants move on to a *personal phase*. In this phase, communication is no longer as constrained by social norms and rules as it was in the entry phase but interactants share their thoughts about more personal matters, such as attitudes, beliefs and feelings. In the *exit phase,* relationships start to deteriorate and interactants decide on whether they want to continue the relationship. This is the stage where relationships are terminated if the interactants so decide. Berger and Calabrese's model is a very simplified approach to explaining a multifaceted phenomenon, and it has been later developed by other researchers (see e.g. Devito 1992, Knapp and Vangelisti 1992, Chen 1995) to include more specific stages. The many models, theories and hypotheses offer different explanations from various perspectives on *why* relationships develop from one stage to a next stage.

One way of investigating relational development is to look at the phenomenon on the perspective of self-disclosure. *Social penetration theory*, developed by Altman and Taylor 1973, explains how self-disclosure affects the development of relationships. The theory holds that relationships become more intimate as interactants disclose information about themselves. According to Altman and Taylor, intimacy develops in five different stages: 1) *orientation stage*, 2) *exploratory affective stage*, 3) *affective stage*, 4) *stable stage*, and 5) *depenetration*. In *the orientation stage*, communication is on a superficial "small talk" level, intimate information is not being disclosed and interaction follows social norms of appropriateness. In the second *exploratory affective stage*, interactants start to disclose more private and intimate information about themselves and their opinions on moderate topics. However, they do not yet feel comfortable in revealing too much personal information or expressing their opinions on beyond moderate topics. This is the phase where we are at with our casual friends. Most relationships do not develop past this stage. In the *affective stage*, interactants reach the level of higher intimacy and trust. They start to share more personal information about themselves and they feel comfortable in disclosing also private matters. Arguments may arise and criticism is also common. Relationships of romantic couples and best friends are at this stage and touching and kissing is typical in this phase. In the fourth *stable stage*, as its name suggests relationships become stable – it has reached its plateau as Altman and Taylor describe. The relationship has developed into highly intimate level and as the interactants know each other well, they can predict the other's emotional

reactions. In the *depenetration stage*, the interactants feel that "the costs exceed the benefits" in the relationship and they start to withdraw from self-disclosure and the relationship gets terminated.

There exist several factors that may influence how much information one is willing to self-disclose. One of those reasons has been explained by individualism-collectivism and low- and high-context orientations. Research has found that "members of high-context/ collectivistic cultures disclose significantly less than those of low-context/ individualistic cultures" (Chen and Starosta 2005: 131). Kudo and Simkin (2003) investigated Japanese students' intercultural friendship formation in Australia. They discovered that the depth and width in self-disclosure was one of the most important factors that affected the students' friendship formation. Another factor related to self-disclosure was openness in communication, which was perceived to crucially influencing friendship formation. The Japanese students felt a need to accommodate their communication style when they were in an intercultural setting, i.e. they felt they needed to increase the amount of their self-disclosure in order to establish intercultural friendships. Furthermore, Kudo and Simkin's (ibid.) results indicate that the students with lower English skills perceived that their English skills affected negatively their self-closure due to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty aroused by using English with the Australians. Instead, the students who felt confident in using English felt less anxiety, which, in turn, the authors discovered to enhance the students' contacts.

Another applicable approach for the purposes of my study is the *similarity-attraction hypothesis* which was proposed by Byrne 1971. As its name suggests, the hypothesis holds that human beings are attracted by similarity. Burgoon, Hunsaker and Dawson (1994: 51) maintain that there are two important ways how similarity between the interactants affects a communication encounter: "First, it determines who will communicate with whom, and second, how successful that communication will be." The authors go on to argue that if people have an option to choose with whom they will communicate, they have a tendency to choose someone who is similar to themselves (Burgoon, Hunsaker and Dawson 1994: 51). Ting-Toomey (1999) suggests three reasons that could explain our tendency to be attracted by similarity:

> 1) we experience cognitive consistency if we hold similar attitudes and outlooks in our relationship; 2) cognitive consistency is ego reinforcing and provides identity rewards and affirmations; and 3) with similar others, we tend to invest less time and energy in managing relational vulnerable feelings, and hence similarity bolstering interpersonal attraction."

<div align="right">(Ting- Toomey 1999: 186)</div>

It seems common knowledge that people feel more comfortable with people who they perceive similar in values, beliefs, attitudes, and many other attributes as the perceived similarities reduce anxiety and help us feel more relaxed as we do not have to put so much effort on interpreting others' behavior. Burgoon, Hunsaker and Dawson (1994: 297) aptly remark that "although it may be true in the world of physics that opposites attract, it is generally not the case when it comes to people in social relationships." However, we also may be attracted to someone simply because he or she is different (Martin and Nakayama 2007: 362). Sias and her colleagues (2008) investigated intercultural friendship development (from acquaintances to closer friends) among 30 college students from diverse cultures. The results of the study suggest that the perceived cultural similarities played an important role in the relational development. Interestingly, their results suggest that perceived cultural differences were, on one hand, seen as an inhibitor for friendship formation, but, on the other hand, they were also experienced as *enhancing* the relational development, as some of the students experienced the differences as exciting and interesting, and since the students experienced the differences were a good choice of topic to initiate conversations. Kudo and Simkin (2003) found out in their study on Japanese students' intercultural friendship formation in Australia that the students perceived similarity, in terms of individual similarity (such as hobbies, attitudes, values and personality) as well as in terms of age, affected positively their friendship formation.

As human beings, we all have a need to be cared, loved and included into social networks. The following quote by Chen and Starosta (2005) captures well why social relationships are important to human beings.

> No matter whether it is grief or pleasure we intend to share with others, we seek to be included in a human relationship network. From the moment we are born we begin to weave a social network through different channels of communication. It is our nature that we have a strong need to be cared for and loved, and when we are growing, we develop passions for caring and loving others. Through our life we are constantly developing, maintaining, and terminating relationships with persons we know well or do not yet know. We are social creatures, not isolated islands.

<div align="right">(Chen and Starosta 2005: 111)</div>

Though we would be in our own familiar home culture, we need to have people around us – it is an essential part of human life. When we are in a foreign cultural milieu, our need to have those social ties is emphasized.

3.4 Summary

The aim of the study is to investigate international students' perceptions on their adaptation to Indonesian society. I am interested in investigating how the international students perceive the relationships they established affected their adaptation to Indonesian society. In addition, the study aims to research the students' perceptions on how they consider cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English language as a lingua franca affected the process of establishing relationships.

To summarize, in chapter 2 I reviewed literature on the significance of communication and interpersonal relationships in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. Kim's integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation was presented, giving special focus on *personal communication* and *social communication*. I presented that establishing relationships in the host country – with host nationals, co-nationals as well as with other international strangers in the host environment – enhances strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. Communication is an essential part in cross-cultural adaptation as it is the means through which strangers are able to establish relationships in the host environment. Interpersonal relationships are important to strangers in a new cultural environment as they offer social support, thus alleviating their acculturation stress. Also, social ties, especially with host nationals, are crucial in the adaptation process as they enhance strangers' cultural learning and understanding and thus enhance their cross-cultural adaptation. Through reviewed literature, my aim was to point out that "Geographical locations become homes through relationships". (Huttunen 2002: 63).

In the present chapter, I presented characteristics of ELF communication. I presented that when both parties in a communicative encounter have distinct cultural backgrounds, and are L2 users using English as a lingua franca, the communication

encounters are inevitably affected by not only the participants' English skills but also their cultural backgrounds and their own respective cultures, languages and identities. Besides the challenges arising from linguistic reasons, there are deeper culture-bounded aspects that affect the communication process. Those additional challenges in intercultural communication situations are the differences in communication styles. I presented the dimension of cultural variability - high-context and low-context communication and individualism and collectivism - and pointed out how communication behavior of an individual is guided by the culture into which he or she is socialized. I also presented how the different communication styles have influence on intercultural communication encounters and why misunderstandings easily occur.

The previous sub-chapter reviewed literature on intercultural relationships. I presented that relationships develop in different stages and that there are several approaches that explain how relationships become more intimate. I focused on presenting relationship development from the view point of self-disclosure and social penetration theory was presented. Moreover, the similarity-attraction hypothesis was given special attention. The sub-chapter bounded together, so to speak, what was previously presented on the challenges that lingua franca communication and cultural differences in communication styles bring into intercultural communication interactions presenting implications that those features have on intercultural relationship development. To conclude, establishing relationships is a process which may require a long time to develop even if the two interactants have the same cultural backgrounds and share the same native language. When both of the interactants have dissimilar cultural backgrounds and use a language which is not their native language, additional challenges are inevitably present as the communication is likely to be disturbed by linguistic and cultural factors. Thus, initiating a relationship and going deeper into it becomes more challenging compared to those people who share the same native language and have similar cultural backgrounds.

Having reviewed literature relevant for the present study, I will next move on to describe the methodology used in the present study. After the methodology chapter, the

results of the study are presented in chapter 5. Next, in chapter 6, analysis of the results is discussed. Finally, in chapter 7, the conclusions of the study are drawn.

4. METHODOLOGY

The present chapter describes the methodology employed in this study. I will start by presenting the aim of the study and my research questions. Next, I will discuss why the qualitative approach was chosen to conduct this study. Then, in the following sub-chapter, I will describe the semi-structured electronic interviews employed in the study and I will present how the data was collected. Next, I will move on to describe the research participants. Finally, I will present the method used in analyzing the data.

4.1 Aims and research questions

The aim of the study is to investigate international students' perceptions on their adaptation to Indonesian society. I am interested in investigating how the students perceive the relationships they established affected their adaptation to Indonesian society. In addition, the study aims to research the students' perceptions on how they consider cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English language as a lingua franca affected the process of establishing relationships. With these aims in mind, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do international students describe their adaptation to Indonesian society?

2. With whom did the students establish relationships during their sojourn in Indonesia?

    2.1 How important were these relationships to their adaptation to Indonesian society?

3. How do the students perceive the role of the English language and cultural differences in communication styles in the relational development with the persons they established relationships with?

4.2 Nature of the study

The approach of the present study is qualitative. Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 8) present that qualitative researchers aim to "seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning." Qualitative researchers "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 3). The focus of my interest is to explore the students' *experiences* and *perceptions* - to describe their experiences and perceptions from *their* perspective, not from the viewpoint of an outside researcher. The aim in qualitative research is not to aim for generalizations, but to understand subjective experiences. Willis (2007: 189) presents that the aim in interpretivist qualitative study is "to understand a particular context". The present study does not aim for generalizations, but to understand and capture the lived experiences of the respondents. As the focus of my interest was to explore the students' experiences and perceptions, the qualitative approach was considered as the most optimal to investigate this phenomenon as it enables me to bring out *the research participants' own voices,* which was the most important criterion for me when making the methodological choices of my study. A further reason why I considered the qualitative approach as the most appropriate option to meet the aims of the study is the hypothesis-free nature of qualitative research. The study is based on the phenomenological tradition. Phenomenology is an approach to understanding subjective experiences of individuals. "Phenomenology is the study of people's perception of the world (as opposed to trying to learn what "really is" in the world). The focus is thus on understanding from the perspective of the person or persons being studied." (Willis 2007: 107). In other words, phenomenology aims to describe the reality as it was experienced by the research subjects.

4.3 Data collection

The data was gathered between March and August 2011 by conducting interviews via e-mail. I got the names and contact details of the research participants through my

personal contacts in Indonesia. All in all, I ended up having contact details of approximately 30 persons. As I first approached the potential research participants, some of them again suggested some further potential participants who I could contact. Thus, the data gathering method was a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling. Initially, 27 individuals expressed their interest to participate in my study. However, the final amount of the informants for this study ended up to be 11. As qualitative research does not aim for generalizations, 11 research participants was considered enough for the purposes of the present study. The research participants are described in detail in sub-chapter 4.3.

The potential research participants were first approached via Facebook or via e-mail to ask their willingness to take part in this project in February 2011. They were explained the purpose of the study and told the topic. Also, the data gathering methods were explained to them in as much detail as possible. I also promised to secure their anonymity if they chose to take part in my research. After the initial positive reply to participate in the research, the research participants were first asked to fill in a background information form (see Appendix I), the purpose of which was to gather some important basic information about the research participants. I will present the information acquired by the background information form in the next sub-chapter (4.4) which concentrates on describing the research participants.

The interview questions were divided into two parts; Part I (Appendix II) and Part II (Appendix III). The theme of Part I was cross-cultural adaptation and it consisted of nine open-ended questions. The theme of Part II was language, communication and relationships and it included eleven questions. After returning the background information form, the research participants were sent the first part of the interview questions. And then again, after returning the first part, they were sent the second part. The choice of dividing the questions into two parts was done to make it, say, lighter for the research participants to answer. After all, I did have altogether 19 interview questions (nine in the first part, and eleven in the second part); if I had sent all the questions at the same time, it might have lowered the respondents' willingness to take part, and also, might have affected the quality (in terms of length and depth) of their

answers. Furthermore, in order to avoid technical problems, I wanted to make answering as simple as possible. Therefore, instead of using any web-based applications to gather the data, I chose to use simple Word documents. The interview questions were in English as were all the answers I received. Furthermore, in order to avoid misunderstandings, when sending the interview questions, the e-mails also included a short cover letter which again explained the purpose of the study, reminded them about the confidentiality, and also, encouraged them to contact me if any questions would arise.

The interview questions were planned to be as little leading as possible. However, in order for me to meet the aims of the study and to acquire answers to my research questions, the questions were planned so that the respondents would concentrate on discussing the relevant topics. Furthermore, since the focus of my thesis is to investigate specifically language, communication and relationships, - *social contexts,* not the change in geographical setting itself - the respondents were advised to keep these themes in mind when writing their answers. The last question in both of the two parts gave the respondents an opportunity to discuss anything they would like to by not limiting or leading their answers in any way. They were offered an opportunity to express themselves completely freely and they were encouraged to answer as thoroughly as possible. Jackson II, Drummond and Camara (2007: 23) describe the advantage in using open-ended questions presenting that "rather than relying on a set of finite questions to elicit categorized, forced-choice responses with little room for open-ended replies to questions as quantitative research does, the qualitative researcher relies on the participants to offer in-depth responses to questions about how they have constructed or understood their experience." As the aim of the study was to explore *how* the respondents describe their experiences, open-ended questions were considered as the most suitable option to gain in-depth information about the informants' experiences. Another advantage of using open-ended questions that they are less influenced by the researcher, thus, reducing the researcher bias (Kumar 2011: 153)

Before starting the data collection, the background information form as well as both the first and the second part of the interview questions were first tested with my two thesis

supervisors, my peer students in my thesis seminar group as well as with a few friends. Based on the feedback received, some changes and corrections were made and then the questions were tested again and some few further modifications were made. This was to eliminate ambiguity and, thus, to avoid possible misunderstandings when answering the questions. Later, when I was in the process of analyzing the data, I contacted some of the research participants to ask for some clarifications concerning their answers.

My initial plan to gather the data was to conduct face-to-face interviews with Finnish students who had done their internship in Indonesia. Those students, unfortunately, turned out to be too few, or, too much time had already passed since their Indonesian stay for them to remember their experiences. Therefore, my initial plan was abandoned. Therefore, I focused on searching for research participants from all over the world. Geographical reasons, obviously, forced me to abandon the idea of gathering the data by using face-to-face interviews. This led me to come up with another idea and I decided to gather my data via e-mail. Though university exchange students would have been easier to reach, I did not want to include them in my research. The reason behind this is that studies on exchange students have shown that their primary social network consists of other international students (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2001: 147) and therefore, the contacts with host nationals tend to limited. Therefore, as the focus of interest of the present study was to investigate relationships also with the host nationals, I did not want to include exchange students to the study.

Other data gathering methods, such as asking the research participants to write stories about their experiences could also have been employed to gather the data. Conducting interviews online (for instance, via Skype or Messenger) was also considered as an optional method to collect the data, which would have been closer to my preferred initial plan to gather the data by conducting face-to-face interviews. However, I considered that using real-time computer mediated communication has certain drawbacks and I did not want to use that method. Keeping a diary (written, visual or audio-visual) was excluded as an option for gathering the data, since I wanted to gather the data *after* the research participants had returned to their home countries. After considering different possible options for acquiring the data, open-ended interview

questions gathered via e-mail was considered as the best option to meet the aims of the study.

The selected data collection method turned out to be a good choice and well suited for the purposes of the present study. Some of the answers received were quite long and profound and the research participants explained their experiences, opinions and perceptions thoroughly. However, some of the answers were rather short or did not concentrate on discussing what the focus of the study was, and thus, were not that informative. All in all, I am content of the methodological choices made as the method chosen allowed the respondents to reflect on their answers in depth and I managed to acquire data which was well sufficient to meet the aims of the study.

4.4 Research participants

As presented earlier, the sampling method used in this study was a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling. I received the names and contact details of the research participants through my personal contacts – mainly through one contact person - in Indonesia. As a result, by including these individuals suggested by my contact person, all my research participants, except one of them, ended up to be students who lived in the same city and all of them, except one, took part in internship projects of the same local AIESEC. I will present AIESEC in the next paragraph. This has important implications for this study in terms of securing the respondents' anonymity. Namely, since all of the research participants lived in the same city and did their internship for the same AIESEC, the possibility for them to get recognized – by their host family members, the local AIESEC, or by some other party involved with their internship activities – is high. Thus, as I had promised to guarantee the research participants' anonymity, I had to pay careful attention in describing the respondents and when presenting the findings of the study.

Ten out of eleven of the respondents did an internship organized by AIESEC and one of the research participants participated in an AFS Exchange program. AIESEC is a worldwide student-run student organization which aims to enhance university students' leadership skills through activities it organizes at students' home campuses as well as abroad through internships organized with its local partners. (See www.aiesec.org for further information). It is typical that if an intern does not receive a salary, accommodation is arranged in a local host family. In Malang, where the students' internship took place, the local AIESEC had assigned a personal support person, "a buddy", to each international intern. Those support persons were members of the local AIESEC. In the present study, when I refer to "AIESEC buddy" I am referring to these local Indonesian university students. AFS operates worldwide offering different intercultural learning programs for teenagers, young adults and teachers. (See www.afs.org for further information). One of the respondents took part in an AFS Exchange program which is targeted for high school students. Host family accommodation is also arranged to AFS Exchange students. Like AIESEC, AFS also has network of local volunteers who act as support persons for the students, and also, for their host families.

In addition to coding informants' names (to be presented later on p. 60 in the present sub-chapter), I removed identifying information from the respondents' comments when presenting the results. For instance, if the informants discussed addressed someone by name, those names were omitted and instead referred to by "host mother/father/brother/ sister/", "local AIESECER", "AIESEC buddy", or for instance, "fellow intern". Furthermore, when the informants mentioned the name of their home country, it was referred to as "my home country". Clearly, if there had been, during the whole history of receiving students in Malang, only one individual, say, from Denmark, and if I mentioned the name of that country the informant's host family, the local AIESECERS (especially them, as they are the most aware of the incoming students) and the informant's fellow interns could easily recognize this person. When it comes to the student who participated in the AFS Exchange program, I had to be even more cautious in not revealing the student's identity as the student was the only one who participated in the AFS program. The topic of balance between confidentiality and transparency of the present study is discussed more in depth in chapter 7.1 in the evaluation of the study.

As presented earlier, the background information form was designed to collect certain important information about the respondents. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, in order to determine whether the candidates met the criteria to participate in the study, and secondly, to gain other important supplementary information in order for me to understand the respondents' experiences better, and thus, carry out the analysis. For the purposes of the present study, the following three aspects of the respondents' background were considered when selecting the participants; 1) whether the research participants spoke English as their mother tongue, 2) when their sojourn took place 3) for how long their sojourn lasted. The aspects I considered to be not criteria, but important pieces of information for me to know in order to understand the informants' experiences better, were: 4) whether they knew Bahasa Indonesia or some other Indonesian language 5) whether they had lived in Indonesia before 6) where they were located 7) what the purpose of their sojourn was and 8) their cultural backgrounds. Each topic is addressed below and explained more in detail.

Language (A criterion)

None of the research participants were L1 English speakers. As the present study focuses on investigating ELF communication, this was a crucial criterion. The respondents were not asked to evaluate their level of English – though this was first considered as a possibility.

Duration of sojourn (A criterion)

The present study focuses on investigating short-term adaptation. Thus, the research participants are sojourners. The term sojourner was defined on page 14 as follows: "a person who has grown up in one culture and has *temporarily, for at least a month*, moved into another culture, and who depends to some extent on the host environment to meet his personal and social needs, and who is engaged in first-hand continuous experiences with the host environment" Guirdham (1999: 280, emphasis added). Therefore, taking into account the definition of a sojourner, one month was set as the minimum criterion for the sojourn. Although no criterion for maximum duration of the stay was set, the Indonesian stay had to be temporary, i.e. sojourn. The shortest amount

of time spent in Indonesia was one month and the maximum amount of time was 11 months. In order to investigate the research participants' experiences and perceptions on their host country environment, one month's sojourn was considered enough for them to have gained enough experiences on what they could reflect on. The duration of stay of each research participant is depicted in the table (Table 1) below.
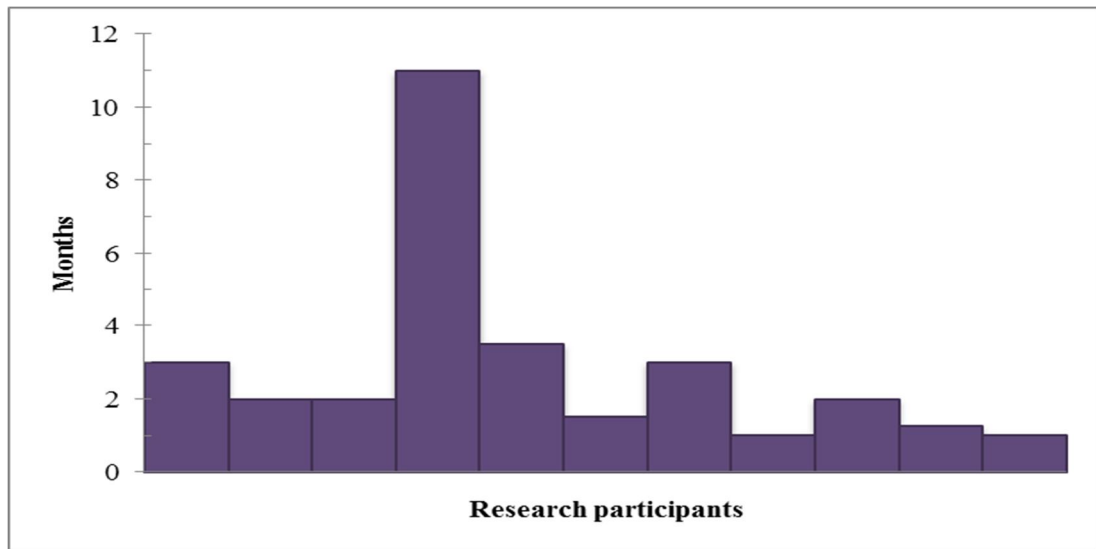
Figure 2. Duration of sojourn

Time of sojourn (A criterion)

The research participants' Indonesian sojourn took place between 2006 and 2011. At the time the data was gathered, all of the research participants had already returned from their sojourn. One significant advantage of gathering data by questionnaire *after* the research participants have returned home is that their answers are not influenced by whether they are having a good or a bad day. Kauppinen (1993: 13-14) points out that "everyone has his good days and bad days. A person's answers to questions about his felt degree of adjustment or satisfaction with various issues might differ depending on what kind of a day he is experiencing". A disadvantage of gathering data after the respondents have returned home is that the informants do not remember well their lived experiences, or, they may have forgotten the negative feelings and remember only the good aspects of their stay; as they say, memories grow sweeter with time. However, the time passed was not considered to be too long for them not to recall their experiences.

Previous experience in Indonesia (Not a criterion)

Yet another background factor which was considered important to know in order to understand the students' experiences better was whether the respondents had been to Indonesia previously. The reason behind that is that if they had, they would have perhaps known Indonesian language(s), perhaps had already some contacts to the local people, and, had already accustomed to Indonesian habits and the way of life. As presented in the literature review in chapters 2 and 3, these issues play an important role in cross-cultural adaptation. Each of the respondents reported that it was their first time in Indonesia. None of the respondents knew Bahasa Indonesia or any other of the many Indonesian languages before their sojourn.

Place of the stay (Not a criterion)

All of the research participants were located in East Java, at the city of Malang. However, in addition to staying in Malang, two of the respondents stayed a while also in two other towns in East Java. I wanted to know their place of stay for two reasons. First, Indonesia is a huge country and it consists of numerous sub-cultures with their own distinct traditions and local languages. In Java, the absolute majority of the population is Muslim and the Javanese culture could be characterized as quite conservative – not only because of prevalence of Islam, but also because of the great emphasis on respect which influences all social behavior and interactions between people. In addition, Malang is not a touristic destination and the locals are not used to seeing foreigners, and the odds to come across someone who knows English are small in Malang. If the research participants had sojourned for instance to Bali, where Hinduism is the dominating religion, where the locals are accustomed to having foreigners around, Bali being a popular touristic destination and where the locals are more likely to know English (due to extensive tourism), it would have been an important piece of information for me to know in order to understand the research participants' experiences. The second reason for asking their place of stay was due to ethical reasons; I wanted to know the place of their stay so that I would know to be cautious in securing the respondents' anonymity. The topic was addressed at the beginning of this sub-chapter and will be discussed more in depth in the evaluation of the study in chapter 7.1.

Purpose of the sojourn (Not a criterion)

The respondents were asked the purpose of their stay. All of the respondents, except one, were in Indonesia for the purpose of doing an internship which was organized by AIESEC (presented on p. 55). One of the respondents came to Indonesia through another organization, AFS (presented on p. 55). This piece of information was important for me as I learned that there is one exception in the profile of my research participants. The major differences were the following: 1) the student was younger than the other students, 2) instead of being involved in internship work the student was attending high school courses, 3) the student's sojourn was considerably longer than other research participants'. Due to the fact that this student's profile was different from the other research participants, I had to consider whether the student can be included in the study. As my sampling method was a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling, age was not a criterion, and as there was no criterion for maximum time as far as the stay was temporary, I decided to include this student into my research. Implications of this choice will be discussed in chapter 7.1 in evaluation of the study.

Cultural background (Not a criterion)

Five of the respondents were from six different European countries, three were from the same East Asian country, one respondent was from North Africa, one from South-East Asia and one from the Caribbean. In the background information form the research participants were asked three questions concerning their cultural background: 1) *Where are you from?* 2) *Have you spent most of your life in the country you mentioned above?* 3) *Have you lived in some other countries? In which other countries and for how long?* If I had asked *Where are you from?,* or, *What is your nationality?*, that would not have necessarily been informative at all. To give an example, a person might have been born and lived the first four years of his/her life, say, in Germany, and thus s/he would reply to a question number 1 "Germany". However, this person might have lived the rest of his/her life in Sudan. Thus, the reply Germany would be very misleading for the purposes of my research. Therefore, this was done in order to understand what their cultural backgrounds were.

The table below (Table 1.) shows the coded names of the research participants, and their cultures' prevailing value orientation and tendency to use high- or low-context communication.

Table 1. Research participants

Coded name	Cultural area	Prevailing cultural value orientation	Tendency to use either high- or low-context communication
RP1	Europe	Individualistic	Low-context
RP2	Europe	Individualistic	Low-context
RP3	Europe	Individualistic	Low-context
RP4	Europe	Individualistic	Low-context
RP5	Europe	Individualistic	Low-context
RP6	Latin America	Collectivist	High-context
RP7	North Africa	Collectivist	High-context
RP8	South-East Asia	Collectivist	High-context
RP9	East Asia	Collectivist	High-context
RP10	East Asia	Collectivist	High-context
RP11	East Asia	Collectivist	High-context

Research participants (RP) #1-5 were from European countries, from cultures that can be seen individualistic and to use low-context communication. Research participants #6-11 were from Latin America, North Africa and from different Asian countries. Those countries are classified as collectivistic and to have tendency to use high-context communication. (See chapter 3 for details on individualism-collectivism and high- and low-context communication).

Lodging (Not a criterion)

All of the respondents lived in a host family. Most likely, it would have become apparent from their answers whether they lived in a host family or not, but I wanted to

confirm their lodging arrangements so that I would not have to contact them later to ask that in case I had needed that piece of information.

4.5 Data analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was considered as a convenient methodological choice to analyze the data. Inductive thematic analysis is not dependent on theories and/or hypotheses employed in research as some other qualitative methods to analyze data often are. The aim of inductive thematic approach is to let themes emerge from the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Thus, because of the data-driven nature of thematic analysis, it is well applicable for the purposes of my study as the objective of my study is to bring the informants' own voices about their experiences and perceptions. Braun and Clarke (2006: 78) state that "through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data". In thematic analysis, a researcher tries to capture "repeated patterns of meaning" from the data. (Braun and Clarke 2006: 86). Thematic analysis can be either inductive or theoretical. The inductive approach is data-driven as the aim is to let the themes emerge from the data. Thus, the themes formed depend on the data. Instead, when theoretical approach is employed, themes are created based on a researcher's theories, hypotheses and therefore, the coding and the themes are based on a researcher's pre-existing coding frame. (Braun and Clarke 2006: 83). The data was analyzed by following Braun and Clarke's (ibid.) guidelines of thematic analysis that consists of six different phases; 1) *familiarization on data* 2) *coding* 3) *searching for themes* 4) *reviewing themes* 5) *defining and naming themes* 6) *producing the report*. The data analysis process of the present study will be described below step-by-step in detail.

1) *Familiarization on data*

I started the analysis by getting myself familiarized with the data by reading the data through numerous times. The purpose was to gain general understanding of the respondents' experiences and to recognize themes and categories. Throughout the reading process I was making notes; documenting observations and related thoughts,

questions and ideas that were aroused. At this phase, I already also started to consider how I would code the data.

2) *Coding*

Following the principles of inductive thematic analysis, the themes (or categories) were neither created from my expectations nor from the literature but from the data, from the perspectives and experiences of the respondents. The entire data set was coded manually. I did the coding by using highlighters of different colors and marking notes on the texts. Some of the extracts were assigned up to two or more different codes. Having coded the data set, I gathered together all the coded extracts that were assigned the same code. If an extract was assigned, for instance, two codes, it was collated into two different groups. I created a list of codes where all the codes appeared.

3) *Searching for themes*

Having coded the data set, I started to analyze the codes to search for potential themes. This phase "involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes." (Braun and Clarke 2006: 89). I created a mind-map, a big poster which consisted of 15 A4 sized papers attached together. The mind-map was extremely helpful in classifying the codes into initial potential themes. As I was reading the list of codes and reading through the coded extracts, themes started to stand out naturally from the data. I collated all the coded extracts under the different initial themes. Many of the extracts were collated under two or more distinct themes.

4) *Reviewing themes*

Once I had found the initial themes that emerged from the data, I started to re-analyze them. At this phase, I noticed that some modifications needed to be made. Braun and Clarke (2006: 86) note that "analysis is not a linear process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Instead, it is more recursive process, where movement is back and forth as needed, throughout the phases." Some of the initial themes were combined, as I

noticed that they actually form one single theme, whereas some of the themes were discarded as it appeared that there was not enough data to support the theme. Some of the coded extracts were moved under another theme that appeared more suitable for the given codes. Having identified the major themes from the data, I read through the whole data once again to check whether I had missed something important. I found a few extracts from the data which I had missed. I coded them and assigned them under a theme it matched with. No additional themes emerged.

5) *Defining and naming themes*

This phase involves "identifying the 'essence' of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures" (Braun and Clarke 2006: 92). I had formed a clear idea already in the previous phase while I was reviewing the themes and analyzing them and reasoning what is the "story" the themes tell. The mind-map that I made in phase 3 was useful in this phase also, as it allowed me to visualize "the bigger picture". I had already initially named the themes, but at this phase, I came up with more descriptive names, and thus, renamed the themes.

6) *Producing the report*

Having defined and named the themes, I started describing the results. Denzin (1998: 323) maintains "an event or process can be neither interpreted nor understood until it has been well described." I decided to divide my analysis of the results into two chapters; in chapter 5 I describe the results and in chapter 6, the findings are discussed more deeply. As the study aims to describe the perceptions and experiences of the research participants and to bring out their voices, I will present as many extracts of their answers as possible, choosing the most vivid examples to represent the data. If the respondents reported exactly the same issue using only one short phrase to state their view on a certain topic, I did not see it meaningful to present more than one or two extracts. Therefore, when presenting the findings within some of the themes, there are less extracts presented than when presenting the findings within some other themes. Also, in many cases, it would have been difficult to present the idea behind some short extracts as the respondents discussed their experiences on a certain topic in several

different parts throughout their answers, and therefore, I should have collated all the bits and pieces so that a reader could have made sense of their experiences. Once the findings are described, I move on to discuss them more deeply in the following chapter. In the chapter 6 the data is analyzed and discussed making references to the extracts that are presented in chapter 5. While chapter 5 concentrates on discussing the findings within the themes, in chapter 6, the findings are analyzed profoundly also across the themes.

Having described the methodology employed in the present study, I will now move on to present the findings of the study.

5. RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in the present chapter. The chapter is divided in two themes; adaptation and relationship development. The first sub-chapter (5.1) focuses on describing the respondents' experiences on their adaptation, while the latter sub-chapter (5.2) presents the findings on relational development. Five key themes stood out from the data that affected the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation: 1) language barrier 2) organizational difficulties 3) relationships 4) host-country receptivity, and 5) adaptive personality and preparedness for change. When it comes to relational development, four key themes, which influenced the relational development, emerged from the data; 1) English skills 2) self-disclosure and indirectness 3) perceived similarities, and 4) proximity.

5.1 Adaptation

All in all, the respondents seem to have had a very positive experience in Indonesia. Three of the research participants (RP), RP1, RP4 and RP6, however, stood out from the rest of the respondents as they were clearly experiencing difficulties during their sojourn and their adaptation to Indonesian culture was more difficult than for the others. In the first part of the interview questions, the respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 10 (1= very difficult – 10= very easy) how easy or difficult they experienced their adaptation process into Indonesian society. This question was to complement and support the respondents' answers in the open-ended questions in order to understand better the respondents' overall experience.

Table 2. Respondents' rates on their adaptation

RP1	RP2	RP3	RP4	RP5	RP6	RP7	RP8	RP9	RP10	RP11
3	7	8	3	10	3	8	6	8	6	7

Table 2 reflects well the respondents' stories on their experiences. Some of the respondents mentioned that issues such as food, mosquitoes, not having hot water, and different toilet and bathroom facilities took time to adapt to and that those issues were problematic for them to some extent. Furthermore, health problems caused by different food seemed to have had a significant role in one of the respondent's Indonesian sojourn. Without a doubt, being ill and getting hospitalized has an effect on one's cross-cultural adaptation, making it more difficult.

I will now describe the five key themes that affected the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation: 1) language barrier 2) organizational difficulties 3) relationships 4) host-country receptivity, and 5) adaptive personality and preparedness for change. Of these themes 1) relationships 2) host-country receptivity and 3) preparedness were found to enhance adaptation, whereas 4) language barrier and 5) organizational difficulties were reported to make the adaptation more difficult.

5.1.1 Language barrier

None of the research participants knew the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) and the respondents repeatedly reported that, in general, Indonesian people did not speak English more than a few words. Indonesian AIESEC students, however, had good English skills and the research participants did not experience difficulties in communicating with them due to linguistic reasons. Furthermore, several of the respondents reported that their host family members could speak English well, so the language problems were not present with their host family members. However, some of the respondents reported that their host family members' English skills were very limited and they could communicate only on a very basic level in English.

It became evident from all the respondents' answers that the language barrier was present in their daily lives. The respondents repeatedly reported that due to not knowing Bahasa Indonesia, and due to the Indonesians' poor English skills, they faced challenges

in their daily lives – in using the public transportation, in asking directions, in doing shopping etc. When asked what they think would have made their adaptation easier, many of the students reported that having a common language would have helped. The extracts below describe the reality the respondents were living. In the first two extracts (1) and (2) the respondents are reflecting on the language barrier in relation to their adaptation, whereas in the third extract (3) RP2 discusses the challenges he experienced when communicating with Indonesian people.

> (1) The only thing that made it [adaptation to Indonesia] difficult for me was the language barrier. (RP8)

> (2) The problem was when the people didn´t understand English and we were trying to explain something. For example, in a restaurant, with a taxi or public transportation, asking for a direction, etc. (RP6)

> (3) Language [was challenging]: I don't speak Bahasa Indonesia and only a few people speak English well. (RP2)

The respondents also encountered challenges due to the language barrier in their internship/high school environment. As a part of her internship, RP7 was teaching in different high schools. She found it difficult to deliver her messages to the students as the students had a poor command of English.

> (4) The part that was difficult for me while volunteering was bridging the gap in communication. I had a big challenge of teaching high school students. (RP7)

RP1 describes how her adaptation to Indonesia brings up the language problem which she had in her internship placement. She brings up the language barrier as one of the biggest difficulties she experienced affected her adaptation.

> (5) The only person who spoke English at the NGO I was supposed to work just left, so I could not communicate with the people working there and the people they worked with. (RP1)

Despite the fact that the language problem was present in the respondents' everyday lives, and the students had to manage their daily lives by not being able to understand the locals or become understood by the locals, only a few of the respondents seem to have experienced it as stressful. This topic is addressed in sub-chapter 5.1.5 where the

respondents' personal characteristics in relation to their successful adaptation are discussed. The language barrier was clearly an obstacle in establishing relationships with Indonesians. The factors that affected the respondents' relationship development are presented in sub-chapter 5.2. Sub-chapter 5.2.1 focuses on describing the role of English in the process of relational development.

5.1.2 Organizational difficulties

Some of the respondents felt that bad organization of the projects they participated in was the biggest cause of frustration, confusion and anxiety during their sojourn. For others, these aspects were experienced only slightly negative, not causing them major frustrations. What was repeatedly reported as something problematic was continuously altering work schedules. In addition to frustrations and confusion aroused due to altering work schedules, lack of punctuality was also perceived problematic by some of the respondents. Most of the comments the respondents made about Indonesians' lack of punctuality were made referring to Indonesians' in general and not specifying that it would particularly be related to the organizational context. Altering schedules and unpunctuality were the only issues in Indonesia that RP2 perceived as negative aspects, though not problematic but just something he needed to get used to.

> (6) First of all it was a positive life, but there are some organizational problems like making a work-schedule or the punctuality. (RP2)

Below RP10 describes how she felt frustrated as she could not count on the project schedule to proceed as planned, or trust that the persons involved in the project would do the tasks that were their responsibilities.

> (7) The most difficult part is getting a confirmed and guaranteed schedule. They will   always say let's sit down and plan about it, but events and gatherings would never follow the pre-planned schedule, people like to be late and don't do what they've promised. It makes it difficult to believe anything would follow the plan. (RP10)

RP9 reflects on the negative aspects during her life in Indonesia and brings up organization of the project she was supposed to work for as a major cause of frustration and confusion for her. As she was not content with working in the project, she was offered an opportunity to participate in another project. Due to bad organization of this other project as well, she felt equally frustrated as she did when taking part in the first project.

> (8) Because my schedule was altered completely […] I did not work in the way I expected. Though they offered me another "program", the process, which was very long and complicated, made me frustrated and confused. (RP9)

In the extracts below, RP7 discusses the problem with language she had when she was teaching high school students. The language barrier made delivering the classes slow, which was not taken into consideration when planning the schedule for the classes. As a result, it was difficult for her to teach the students all the topics she was supposed to teach. For the respondent this was frustrating and she thinks this problem could have been avoided if the project had been organized better and the effects the language barrier has in teaching had been taken into consideration when planning the schedules.

> (9) As a consequence, the class time I had with the students to teach them about very important subjects was not enough. And on my schedule I only had very little time, and SO MANY things to do, and people to meet. It was a shame I could not deliver the message fully to many... (RP7)

> (10) At the core of this problem, was a management problem, which was frustrating. Due to a lack of organization and proper management; the team who was supposed to organize this whole big campaign event, did not foresee all these problems and did not communicate it very well. Lack of preparation or understanding was the main difficulty I had with the different organizations I worked with in those months. (RP7)

In addition to continuously changing work schedules, RP1 found it frustrating and difficult to get used to the work rhythm. It was very different from what she was used to and she felt the work phase was too slow.

> (11) Their perception of a workweek was rather different. There was not much to do. And their working pace was very slow. (RP1)

5.1.3 Relationships

It became evident that the relationships the research participant established during their sojourn indeed had a positive role to play in their adaptation to Indonesia. *The strong ties* in respondents' social networks mainly consisted of host family members (host ties), local Indonesian AIESEC students (host ties), international AIESEC students (international ties). Among international AIESEC students, some of the respondents met persons of their own nationalities and established relationships with them (ethnic ties). Some of the respondents met sojourners who were not related to their AIESEC/AFS activities with whom they established relationships. Hereafter, I will refer to those persons as *other international sojourners*. For further clarification, by the terms "local people" or "Indonesians" or "Indonesian people", I am referring to local Indonesian people in general; people the students met on the street, people working in grocery stores etc., in other words, people with whom the students did not have a relationship. When I am referring to Indonesian people with whom the respondents did establish relationships, I will state that. Furthermore, weak ties refers to the people with whom the respondents were acquainted, but with whom a strong emotional tie did not exist.

All the respondents reported that the relationships – both strong and weak ties – were perceived important in their adaptation to Indonesia because of the support they provided. Depending on the intimacy of the relationships, the respondents received different kinds of support. Relationships that became more intimate were perceived important as they provided the respondents emotional, informational and tangible support. Emotional support was perceived extremely valuable in their adaptation process.

In her answers, RP8 brings up several times how she appreciated the support she received from her host family members. In the following extract she describes how she felt living in a host family and establishing warm relations with them was a key element in her positive experience in Indonesia.

(11) The experience of having a host family helped me a lot. It gave me a sanctuary at the start of the internship and did not stop there but they were consistent all through out of my stay. (RP8)

RP7 established close bonds with her host family members, especially her host family sister. She brings up many times the importance of the close relationship she had with her host sister and how they could spend hours together discussing and how she felt it was important that she could share her thoughts with that person. In addition to the emotional aspect, she appreciated greatly her host family having her in the house and providing her everything she needed, which made her life easier.

(12) The biggest factor that truly helped me while I was there was the host family I lived with. They really helped to make everything simpler and easier for me. I had a cozy bed to sleep in, meals whenever I wanted, a clean bathroom and hospitality that is so endearing and loving. These were essential on my journey, they made life easier. One becomes very grateful for these things. I was so blessed that I had an amazing, caring, relaxed and fun host family! (RP7)

RP9 also established close relations with her host family members. She felt that those relations were really important to her. Especially, when she was having negative emotions due to living in a foreign country, she felt that the support she received from her host parents was valuable. She explains:

(13) Sometimes I did really feel lonely and upset, especially when it was [the name of the big traditional festival in the country of origin] during which we [nationality] normally stay with families. But staying with my host family was very comforting. I even went to a traditional wedding with [host family parents]. The host family helped me easily to adapt to the brand new environment. (RP9)

In addition to the close relationships she established with her host family members, she made two close international friends. She feels those relationships, with her host family members and with the two international friends, were the key to her positive Indonesian experience.

(14) If I had not made friends with them [strong ties], I would have felt lonely and could not help enduring 40 days in a foreign country. (RP9)

RP4 was clearly having difficulties in adapting to Indonesian culture. She repeatedly reports feeling lonely, upset and frustrated and that she felt she was an "outsider" in Indonesia. She spent a lot of time at home with her host family members with whom she established close relations, especially with her host family sister. She reports that she felt very anxious when being out of the house, but at home, however, she felt relaxed and at ease because of the nice host family members. She says that the members of her host family were the most important people for her during her stay in Indonesia.

> (15) I never felt at home on the street or at school, but I did feel at home when I was with my host family. […] My host family was very friendly and they treated me as one of them since the first day. (RP4)

In addition to establishing an especially close bond with her host sister, RP4 became close also with an international friend and with an Indonesian woman. She explains that the fact that she could share her negative emotions she was having and discuss the matters that were upsetting her with those persons helped her a lot in dealing with her negative emotions.

> (16) Those times [speaking with the three closest persons] really helped me to avoid being overwhelmed by culture shocks and my experiences and gave me an opportunity to, for an instant, escape from it all. (RP4)

RP1 was also encountering some difficulties in adapting to Indonesia. She felt that the close bond she had established with a local AIESEC student helped her to feel better as she felt that this friend was very supportive. The fact that this friend understood RP1's problems and could empathize with her was very comforting for RP1.

> (17) [My buddy] was important because she understood why I was not very satisfied. And she was very supportive. (RP1)

In addition to support the respondents received, the relationships were perceived valuable also because the respondents learnt different aspects about Indonesian culture. This is how RP6 reflects her cultural learning:

(18) Those relationships were important for me because I was able to communicate my feelings and I learned about the Indonesian society from another perspective. I learned to respect people´s beliefs and accept the situation living the experience as well. (RP6)

Not only the strong ties, but also the weak ties had an important role in the students' positive Indonesian sojourn. The relationships with weak ties were perceived important as they offered the respondents informational support. In the below extracts RP5 and RP10 explain which were the aspects during their sojourn they felt made their adaptation easier. By local people RP10 is referring to her Indonesian acquaintances as well as to her strong ties.

(19) It [adaptation] was positive and relatively easy because I received a lot of assistance from local people. Without the help I think it would be very difficult for me. (RP10)

(20) They, like my host family, always helped me with everything and tried to give their best that I feel well in Malang. Just awesome! (RP5)

Some of the respondents report that the relationships, both strong and weak ties, were important to them simply because the people provided them company. One respondent describes her life in Indonesia as very lonely time and she felt the relationships were important to her especially because they did not have to be alone and they had something to do and they had some nice activities to do.

5.1.4 Host receptivity

All the respondents reported that they felt very welcome to Indonesia due to the friendliness and friendly approach of Indonesian people. Adjectives such as friendly, hospitable, kind, helpful, polite and courteous, humble, respectful, laid-back, happy, kind-hearted and fun repeatedly appeared in their answers when they were discussing Indonesian people. Furthermore, they described Indonesians as people who are always smiling, enthusiastic, "amazing people" and who are interested in other cultures and curious to learn about them. The respondents reported that they found it nice that Indonesian people approached them and came to talk to them. Though the locals'

English skills were usually limited to only a few words, they nevertheless approached the respondents; showed interest in them and their cultures, which the respondents felt was very welcoming gesture. Furthermore, the respondents reported that the local people were always willing to help them whenever they needed assistance of any sort. Mostly, the help was related to giving directions, i.e. informational support.

RP11 feels that one of the most important reasons why his Indonesian experience was positive was the general friendliness of Indonesians. This is how RP11 describes his experience on the relationship between host country receptivity and his adaptation:

> (21) In general, when you were in a different country, a new environment, if people were friendly to you, behaving nice with smiles, you would feel comfortable and easier to get involved in the new environment. Otherwise, you might feel depressed and homesick. (RP11)

In the extract below RP7 describes her overall impression on Indonesian people and the positive feelings the local people aroused in her in.

> (22) I was especially intrigued by the openness and kindness of the Indonesian people. They all seemed so happy to have me accompany them. They were constantly smiling at me, and always asked me questions - very genuinely interested in who I am, where I came from, what I was thinking, and so on. It made me feel very special, and it made me feel relaxed. (RP7)

RP3 discusses his previous experiences in another Asian country where he had spent a couple of months before his Indonesian sojourn. He presents that in that country he many times got the impression that the local people were acting friendly towards him because they were interested in his money, or, when they saw an opportunity to benefit from him in some way. In Indonesia, his experience was different. RP3 perceives that the genuine friendliness and helpfulness of the local people played a role in making his adaptation easy:

> (23) […] the natural friendliness and helpfulness of Indonesian people helped me much in feeling more accepted in the reality. (RP3)

By "natural friendliness" in the extract, RP3 refers to Indonesians' genuine friendliness which was not driven by money or some other motive as such.

All the respondents had an extremely positive perception of Indonesian people and appreciated greatly their perceived friendliness, helpfulness and interest they showed towards the respondents. Though each respondent described Indonesian people in extremely nice words, four of the respondents, however, reported that the fact that the local people are not used to seeing foreigners had its downsides. For one of the respondents, it was truly a problem and was clearly inhibiting her adaptation. The respondent explains that the most significant negative aspect why she was having such a hard time during her sojourn was the fact that the local people were not used to seeing foreigners. Due to that, she received a lot of attention everywhere she went, which made her feel anxious and overwhelmed. She explains that though she had spent already quite a while in the city, local people simply did not get used to her. In the following two extracts she further describes her experience.

> (24) To be honest, [local people] affected my stay in a negative way. Due to them I never felt comfortable outdoors. […] If I had the choice I preferred to stay at home or to hang out with [my international friends]. The neighbors were very friendly, but even if I was walking through my street, I didn't feel at ease. (RP4)

> (25) The biggest challenge for me was to stay positive and keep smiling when people pointed at me and called after me. I did my best to get used to their culture, but […] the people on the street did never get used to me… Trying to keep smiling and don't put too much weight on it helped me to overcome these moments, but I never left the house feeling at ease. (RP4)

Furthermore, RP4 presents that being a center of attention continuously "was very exhausting" and it made her feel "very lonely at times."

In the following extract RP1 discusses her experiences with the local people. She says that she bonded with some of the local people she met on the street. On the other hand, with some of the people she had met randomly she did not like the attention she received. It was too much for her and made her feel uncomfortable.

> (26) There was a very kind family in the neighborhood shop with two sweet kids whom I would visit to cheer myself up. The people on the street staring at me all

the time made me feel uncomfortable. The friendly families who invited me in their house, invited me for food, made me feel very welcome. (RP1)

In addition to the four respondents' comments on the negative aspects, two other respondents commented that sometimes they felt that the local people reacted to him even "over positively" (RP11). Though these comments were slightly negative, these respondents did not report that they had experienced the attention as a problem.

5.1.5 Predisposition: adaptive personality and preparedness for change

Almost all the respondents reflected on their adaptation process in relation to the personal characteristics they possess. Expectations, previous experience abroad, being curious in learning about Indonesian culture, being open-minded towards cultural differences, having positive attitude and reacting to challenging situations with humor were repeatedly present in the respondents' answers when they were reflecting on the reasons that contributed to their positive adaptation to Indonesia. One of the respondents reported that being an independent person played a part in her adaptation. Another respondent perceived that among other characteristics he possesses, also his age (which was a bit higher compared to that of others') and the education he had made his adaptation to Indonesia easy. One of the respondents reported that she believes her adaptation would have been easier if she had been a few years older as she believes she would have dealt with some things differently.

RP3 discusses his adaptation to Indonesia in the two extracts below. The extracts demonstrate well his positive attitude towards the challenges he encountered. First of all, he sees the challenges as an inevitable part of living in a foreign culture, challenges being a positive part of the whole foreign experience. He believes that as one faces these challenges, it depends on oneself if you make it as a problem or not. He also perceives that his age and previous experience abroad contributed to his positive experience.

> (27) Probably, the most important "challenge" is more within yourself than arising from Indonesia: are you ready to embrace a new culture, new friends, new

ways of life and leave yours behind (plus leave friends and family). Probably, being a little older than an average intern there and having some experience abroad, I didn't perceive that as a problem, but more as an opportunity to know something new... (RP3)

(28) If I was in the need of specific information and I could not use English, then clearly the situation could have been challenging, but I always perceived those challenges to be in the same time funny, again, challenging in a positive sense and unavoidable. As a consequence, I never got annoyed or distressed... If I would have been losing myself on an Angkot[2] around some areas of Malang, next time make a wider smile and use better the information you have and the couple of words of Bahasa Indonesia in your possession! (RP3)

The respondents indeed faced different challenges in their daily lives, the biggest being the language barrier. The above extract by RP3 demonstrates well the attitude which was present in almost all of the respondents' answers. That is, when facing situations in which the communication was difficult because of the absence of a common language, the only thing, and the best thing you could do, was to have a positive attitude and react to those situations with humor.

This is how RP2 and RP8 bring up the importance of expectations as factors that they felt were enhancing their adaptation:

(29) The expectations are the most important [in adapting to a foreign culture]. If you expect another way of life/behavior, then it is no problem to my mind. (RP2)

(30) I had a good mindset as to what to expect from my internship. (RP8)

RP8 further adds that she indeed noticed differences between her own and Indonesian culture. In addition to importance of expectations, another factor for successful adaptation is having an open mind towards the cultural differences and trying to understand them.

(31) Both I and the Indonesian people I worked with were open to the difference in culture. (RP8)

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[2] Angkot is a public transportation minibus

(32) But understanding of these differences bridges that separation [the cultural differences] and then you find home in that strange land. (RP8)

RP5 discusses the relationship between the personal characteristics he possesses and his adaptation to Indonesia. In addition to the relationships he established, he thinks his adaptive personality, his previous experience living abroad, his curiosity towards Indonesian culture and open-mindedness towards cultural differences were further significant factors which enhanced his adaptation to Indonesia.

(33) My personality [helped to adapt]. I have done a semester abroad (5 months away from home) and I am in general a person that can adapt to new situations and people from other cultures. (RP5)

(34) In general I am a person that is very curious. So I always asked questions right from the beginning. (RP5)

(35) I had no problems with these differences. I actually enjoyed to recognize them and figured out that [people from my country] could learn a lot from Indonesian to improve their way of life! (RP5)

In the extract below, RP7 reflects on her time in Indonesia, vividly describing how she perceives her positive attitude and the personal characteristics she possesses affected positively her adaptation.

(36) I think my mindset and passion for what I was doing, really made me want to adapt faster. Mentally I was prepared for the best and the worst before I even arrive in Indonesia. I was really looking at the "bigger picture", not the details that we as humans can often get tangled up with and confuse ourselves. It was about having a positive attitude, on ready, and focused on the big goal. My goal was to learn and grow as a human being, to explore, and to help others, to be of use somewhere where I know people need a better life. I was just happy to be there and to be part of something I know is so important. I was also very grateful and faithful. These two qualities really helped me get through even the toughest times, the scariest times (for example during the landslides, earthquakes and floods that are frequent Indonesia). I was always thinking that I am very lucky to have this chance to have this amazing experience, and I was always grateful for whatever came my way. And amazing things did come my way. (RP7)

She feels that her great motivation to help others, motivation and interest to learn about Indonesian culture and to learn also about *herself* with an aim of personal growth, and her attitude of being able to appreciate and to be grateful for the opportunity to be in Indonesia trying to contribute to something good, were factors that helped her to adapt.

To summarize, the data revealed that the respondents had a very positive experience in living in Indonesia. Three respondents, however, stood out from the data as they were clearly encountering difficulties in adapting to Indonesia. Relationships, both host and international ties, both weak and strong ties that they established during their sojourn were perceived as an important factor that enhanced their adaptation to Indonesia. The respondents considered that crucial for their adaptation were the aspects that are within oneself; personal characteristics they possess, open-mindedness and a positive attitude towards cultural differences. The respondents did encounter difficulties in their daily lives due to the language barrier – this language barrier was not, however, perceived as a big problem as their positive attitude helped them to deal with the language obstacle. Another key factor in their successful adaptation was host country nationals' receptivity. A factor that was causing them frustration and what was considered problematic by some of the respondents, were perceived organizational problems in the projects they worked in.

Having described the key themes that had an effect on the students' adaptation to Indonesia, the focus of the chapter now shifts to describing the findings that affected the students' relationship development.

5.2 Relationship development

This sub-chapter describes the factors the respondents experienced affected their relational development with the people they met during their sojourn. Analysis revealed four factors the respondents felt affected their relational development: 1) English skills 2) self-disclosure and indirectness 3) perceived similarities, and 4) proximity.

5.2.1 English skills

As presented in sub-chapter 5.1, the research participants faced challenges in their daily lives due to the fact that they did not know the host language, and in general,

Indonesians' English skills were very limited. Many of the respondents pointed out that not sharing a language in which they could be mutually understood was the biggest challenge when communicating with the host nationals. Not surprisingly, the data indicate that this language barrier indeed was experienced to inhibit relational development with host nationals. With Indonesian AIESEC students, however, the language problem was not present as the local AIESEC students were perceived to have a good command of English. Furthermore, other international students' and other international sojourners' (who were not participating AIESEC or AFS programs but who some of the respondents met during their sojourn) English skills were perceived to be very good as well. Good English skills of these people were seen as one of the most important reasons that enhanced relational development.

RP10 explains that she found it hard to understand Indonesians' English accent. She further explains that as Indonesians had poor English vocabulary, communication with most Indonesians was quite limited. As a result, she could only discuss simple topics with the host nationals, which again affected building relationships.

> (37) It's a little bit difficult to form real relationship with them: Language obstacle (they can't explain themselves or understand me very well so most conversation was quite basic). (RP10)

RP10 further experienced that it was difficult to form relationships with Indonesian people due to cultural differences, in terms of different social norms, which caused occasional misunderstandings.

The respondents repeatedly reported that they would have wanted to talk more with the local people and get to know them but the language barrier was an obstacle that they could not pass, which inhibited relational development with the host nationals. RP3 describes his experience:

> (38) I seldom had "structured" relations with Indonesians, also due to the fact that for a number of reasons (AIESECERs were quite busy during my stay and to a large extent, poor understanding of English among Indonesians made it quite difficult to getting to know people from other environments). (RP3)

In the following extracts RP6 and RP5 explain why they felt it was difficult to establish relationships with Indonesian people. They both report that Indonesians' poor command of English slowed down the communication process.

> (39) It was difficult to me [to establish relationships with Indonesians], because I was trying to explain and communicate in English and it took more time to understand what they are saying to me and what I was saying to them. (RP6)

> (40) Sometimes it happened that it took me quite a while to explain to people what I actual mean. In general many people in Indonesia have very basic English skills and mostly only the richer families are able to speak proper English. My host brothers for example had a private English teacher that came once, or twice a week to educate them. (RP5)

RP5 goes on to explain that his host family brothers' English skills were good. Later he notes that he became close with one of the host brothers.

Many of the research participants reported that as they noticed that they could not get their message across when they were trying to communicate in English with host nationals, they relied on body language to be understood.

> (41) In my host family house, the mother only understood English very well and with other members it was difficult to communicate. I used the signal language in many situations. (RP6)

> (42) Yes, I did experience difficulty in communicating with others in English many times... I had to adapt to their ways of speaking English, with an accent, and using body language and signs MANY times... (RP7)

> (43) At first I did [find it hard to establish relationships with Indonesians] due to the differences in culture and spoken language but towards the middle part of my stay, I realized that speaking was not the only way to communicate with people. (RP8)

> (44) They [family in her neighborhood] could hardly speak English, but with little English from them and little Bahasa Indonesia from me, hands and feet, we could communicate. (RP1)

It became evident from the students' answers that Indonesians' lack of English skills inhibited the relational development with them. Simplifying their English and using non-verbal communication helped in creating mutual understanding with the local people, but the relationships remained on a superficial level as intimacy in the

relationships could not be developed as the language barrier prevented discussion on more intimate topics.

Data clearly indicate that the good level of English of other international students was perceived as one of the most important reasons that enhanced the relational development with other international students and local AIESEC students as well as with the other international sojourners.

RP10 discusses the role of language and cultural differences in relationship development. She does feel that good English skills was indeed a reason that allowed relationships to develop but she felt that it is not the only factor that enhances relational development. She explains:

> (45) I think it takes more than language for people to bond with each other and communicate. But in daily life, English is definitely very important to get things done and get message across. People who could speak better English would usually have more advantage in the communication process. In terms of relationship building, I think English is just a tool for people to communicate, there are a lot of culture things that would affect how easy it is for two people to bond with each other. So in short, language is definitely not everything in the communication process, but it still acts an important role. Culture influence is very critical in the process. (RP10)

The next sub-chapter presents the findings on these cultural factors that influenced the respondents' relational development. RP10's experiences on culture's effect on establishing relationships, to which she is referring in above extract, are discussed on pages 84-85 in the following section.

5.2.2 Self-disclosure and indirectness

In addition to the host nationals' limited English skills, further reasons which were perceived inhibiting relational development with them were related to cultural differences in communication styles. Many of the respondents discussed cultural differences between Indonesian and their own culture of origin and two issues, Indonesian indirectness and non-self-disclosure, were topics that were brought up

repeatedly in the respondents' answers. The data indicate that these two aspects were seen to make communication more challenging, some experiencing those aspects as very frustrating and influencing the relational development with the local people.

The respondents described Indonesians as very sociable people who approached them with curiosity, initiated a conversation and seemed to be very enthusiastic to get to know them and learn about their cultures. Nevertheless, though many of the respondents reported that it was very easy to have/make contacts with Indonesians and those contacts were frequent, the respondents reported that it was not easy to develop relationships into something deeper. In other words, it was effortless to have acquaintances but difficult to establish deeper relations with the host nationals. Many of the respondents used the terms "meaningful" or "real" to refer to these deeper relationships.

RP3 and RP2 reported their social networks with host nationals mainly consisting of acquaintances. The following extracts by RP3 and RP2 demonstrate what was also reported by other respondents: it was easy to make acquaintances but the relationships tend to stay on a superficial level.

> (46) If we're talking about "friendship", then yes, not easy. If we're talking about acquaintances or random people, then no, quite easy to. (RP3)

> (47) Quite easy. The most relationships were just lukewarm. (RP2)

Below RP1 describes her experiences on communication with Indonesian people. She feels that the fact that Indonesian people did not disclose information about themselves was the biggest reason why it was difficult to take relationships into a deeper level.

> (48) They are not very open, which makes it difficult to build a friendship. (RP1)

> (49) The first contact is easy. There were for example enough young people who would approach me and ask if they could practice their English with me. But not a lot of the Indonesian people are very open, so it is hard to build a deep relationship. One of the former AIESEC students and my personal manager were the only two that really showed themselves. (RP1)

RP1 established close relationship with her AIESEC buddy, her personal manager, as she refers to her. This person was not, however, Indonesian. She also became close with this other former Indonesian AIESEC student she is referring to. She feels that the person's openness was enabling the relationship to grow closer with this person.

In the following extract RP4 describes her experiences on communication with Indonesian people. She felt that it was difficult to develop the relationships into something deeper as the conversations did not pass the small-talk level and also because she felt they did not express their opinions.

> (50) As a foreigner people come to you. But despite all the attention, I found it very hard to establish meaningful relationships. It felt like if they were not truly interested in me or my culture. They asked me questions like "What do you think of Indonesia?" and "What do you think of the Indonesian people, friendly, huh?" (RP4)

Furthermore, she felt that the cultural differences in terms of religion, different perspectives on the relationships between men and women, and what is seen as rational, affected the relational development with Indonesian people. The respondent goes on to explain that due to these cultural differences she felt that she "was not able to talk openly with them and establish real meaningful relationships". These differences that she perceived also affected her own amount of self-disclosure.

Other respondents also contrasted the differences in communication styles of Indonesian and their own cultures of origin. In the following three extracts RP10 describes Indonesian indirect communication style and how she felt it was frustrating as she could not get a direct answer.

> (51) The major difference is that Indonesians don't know how to say "no". They would never say "no" directly to you, but sometimes they will just keep you waiting and in the end don't do what they've promised. This is somewhat annoying because in my own culture I don't really mind if others say "no, we can't do that". Telling me it's not possible or troublesome for them is better than giving me a "yes" and then don't do the things promised. (RP10)

> (52) I could rarely get a clear message from others, e.g. they don't really say "no". I tried to offer several choices instead of just asking "can you do…?" (RP10)

(53) They are also sometimes quite shy to express their negative feelings (e.g. if they are unhappy about some of your requests, they would not refuse you, they would only complain to their friends). (RP10)

The close relationships RP10 established in Indonesia were with other international students. In addition to the language barrier, RP10 felt it was difficult for her to develop closer bonds with Indonesian people due to the differences described above.

Below RP1 discusses the challenges she experienced in communicating with host country nationals and she further contrasts her own culture's and Indonesian culture's communication styles. She experienced Indonesians' indirect communication in terms of not being honest.

(54) They will always give you an answer, even if they don't have one, don't have a clue. They are not used to people giving negative feedback (while trying to improve). In [my country] we are very direct. It is difficult when you never know if you can trust on the answer. It is difficult to improve your process of you can't be honest about what goes wrong (what they can do better). (RP1)

RP4 expresses her frustration arising from the fact that in her culture, individuals are encouraged to have and to express personal opinions though they would conflict with those of others, whereas in Indonesia people are taught to fit in to social norms of the society. In the extract 56 below, she describes how she adapted her communication in order not to be offensive towards Indonesians.

(55) I found it sometimes frustrating when they didn't give their own opinion, but just what they were learnt. In our culture we learn to think for ourselves and to discuss topics with people who have other ideas, but this isn't a priority in Indonesian schools and society. (RP4)

(56) When talking to Indonesian people, I always was very cautious of not saying something that would upset them, didn't match with their beliefs or religion, etc. (RP4)

Although most of the respondents had perceived cultural differences when it comes to communication, many of the comments were mere observations and the cultural differences were not perceived negatively. For instance, RP3 notes:

(57) In [my country] you are able to say everything in a more concrete way. Therefore, you can say what you want and what you don't want. In Indonesia, it is more difficult as you want to be polite. (RP2)

There were a few comments such as "I did not appreciate it very much" which signaled slightly negative stance to the perceived indirectness. In the rest of the answers, all the comments made were only positive and the differences were seen as something that was interesting to learn about Indonesian culture. RP2, for instance, did not mention that he had felt the differences frustrating but instead describes the differences as something he had to take into account when communicating with the Indonesians.

5.2.3 Perceived similarities

The analysis indicated that perceived similarities were seen as particularly important for relational development. Many of the respondents explain their relational development by perceived similarities. The similarities were perceived to exist mainly with other international students, and in case of the two respondents who reported to have established ethnic ties. The similarities were perceived, for instance, in terms of similar interests, ideas, experiences and sense of humor. Furthermore, communication with other international students was experienced as easier and more comfortable, as the students felt that they had more common topics for discussion. Also, the analysis revealed that particularly important for relational development with other international students was the shared experience of being a foreigner.

In the following extract RP3 discusses the reasons why he thinks he became close with an international student he met in Indonesia. In addition to the fact that communication was easier with this student as her English skills were excellent, RP3 perceived that their cultural similarities and shared interest in traveling played a role in developing close relations with this person.

(58) English, common culture, interest on travelling and the fact we became friends over time are a reason. (RP3)

In addition, RP3 feels that similarities in terms of age also affected whom he became friends with. He explains:

(59) On average the Indonesians I was talking to were 3-4 years younger (and quite immature for the age as well, at least for western standards), meaning I also had   some sort of "inter-generational" difficulties. It is not a case the ones I befriended the most were among the oldest of them. Finally, I sometimes lacked topic of conversation with many of them, due to different interests. (RP3)

RP3 also comments that because his interests were dissimilar to those of Indonesians, he sometimes did not have topics which to discuss with Indonesians. RP10 makes a similar remark to that of RP3 concerning topics of conversation. She felt that due to the fact that she felt they had more in common with other international students, they had also more topics to discuss.

(60) We [other international students] have more in common to talk about so I feel it usually is more fun talking with them. (RP10)

Many of the respondents note that "it was just somehow easier to connect with other international students". They felt they had better connection with other international students but they could not explain why exactly they felt like that. Some of the respondents explain that it was more comfortable to talk with, and easier to establish relationships with persons who they perceived similar in their culture, ideas and experiences. This is how RP6 explains why she felt she became close with a sojourner she met and befriended with:

(61) […] because we shared similar ideas and experiences. (RP6)

RP8 explains that one of the reasons that contributed to her relational development with other international students was that they had similar sense of humor.

(62) Though we were different in origin and our practices, my co-interns and I had a lot in common. We laughed over the same jokes and loved to make the most of our stay in Indonesia. (RP8)

What was frequently reported to be important for relational development with other international students and other sojourners was the perceived similarity in that they were all foreigners in Indonesia who were sharing a similar experience. RP7 explains:

(63) Only in the case of a foreign girl who was also a house mate, did I get really close because we were sharing a similar experience in the same place. We became close because we could both share that we were in some ways "strangers" in a new place. (RP7)

For some other respondents, it was easier to bond with other foreigners as they, being also foreigners, understood the frustrations and problems the respondents were experiencing. RP6, RP1 and RP4 explain:

(64) Also, I had a good friend from Brazil, who understood my situation and problems with food because she felt like me. (RP6)

(65) She did her job very well. But I think she understood me   better than the rest because she was Chinese, so also not Indonesian. And she was very sweet. She was important because she understood why I was not very   satisfied.   She understood my situation, because she also had a different cultural background. (RP1)

(66) I also became good friends with [international friend]. With him I could talk more openly about culture differences than with Indonesian people. He understood me if I experienced culture shocks […] (RP4)

Few of the respondents explained relational development with host nationals in terms of perceived similarities. Below RP7 reflects the reason why she thinks she became close friends with her host family sister.

(67) I think [my host family sister] and I had many similarities and outlooks in life... We had similar sensitivities, and could talk to each other for hours about our joys and troubles. We connected on many levels, and helped each other. It was a bond that maybe not easy to describe in 'reasoning' terms. (RP7)

(68) We had many similarities and connected on a soul level. (RP7)

Analysis indicated that similarities were perceived to exist clearly more with other international students/other sojourners.

5.2.4 Proximity

The data indicated that English language skills, perceived similarities and the amount of self-disclosure were the most important factors that affected relational development. In addition, when reflecting reasons for their relational development with different persons, the students reported that proximity of some people with whom they established relationships was another reason. In other words, relationships developed simply because these people were physically close to them due to different reasons.

When it comes to the respondents' relationships with host family members, relational development with them was often explained by referring to proximity. The simple fact that they were living in the same house with the host family members created the conditions that allowed relationships to develop with them. In many cases though, it was not the only reason the respondents noted that affected relational development. RP2 reports that he established the closest relationship with his host family brother. He thinks the reason is simple:

> (69) The reason is clear: I met him every day and we did the most things together. (RP2)

In addition to the reasons RP7 explained in extracts 67 and 68 (p. 88), another reason why she thinks she established a very intimate relationship with her host family sister was due to the fact that they lived in the same house. She explains:

> (70) Our friendship and relationship was also formed very naturally, just because we were there together under the same roof, and because something special allowed us to bond. I cherish these rare happenings. (RP7)

When the respondents were asked whether they had more Indonesian friends/acquaintances, some of the respondents noted that their social network consisted mainly of Indonesian people as there were no international people to meet in the first place.

> (71) I think I was more interested in having Indonesian friends... also there were not many foreigners around AT ALL! (RP7)

(72) An important reason for this is that there were hardly any international people in Malang. (RP1)

Several of the respondents stated that traveling together with other international students, as well as with local AIESEC students was a great opportunity to befriend others. Mostly, however, the respondents reported that they went to the trips with other international students. As the respondents went on weekend trips with other students, they had an opportunity to get to know each other better. RP8 and RP11's extracts demonstrate well what was reported by several other respondents as well.

(73) I became close to my other co-interns. AIESEC gave us opportunities to go out on the weekends to explore Indonesia. During those trips, we bonded over our fascination for the place. (RP8)

(74) For non-Indonesians, we worked together and traveled together several times. I think traveling was a good way to create friendship. (RP11)

5.3 Summary of the results

The respondents' social networks consisted mainly of host ties and international ties. During their sojourn, a few of the respondents met their own country nationals with whom they established close relationships. All these relationships were perceived crucial to their successful adaptation. The respondents perceived these relationships significant because of the support they received. Strong ties, those relationships which become more intimate, in addition to providing informational support, were perceived important as they provided emotional support for the respondents. Weak ties, the relationships which were more casual and not that intimate, were also perceived important as the respondents felt those friendly people made the students feel welcome and received informational support from them. Another factor which seems to have enhanced the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation was the personal characteristics – such as motivation, openness, humor, interest in learning about Indonesian culture – they possess. Those characteristics helped the respondents to overcome the challenges – most importantly, the language barrier – they encountered in their daily lives. Lastly, host country receptivity – local people's friendliness, helpfulness and interest towards the respondents – was perceived as an important factor which enhanced the students'

cross-cultural adaptation. Some of the respondents, however, were having difficulties in adapting due to the great amounts of attention they received from local people. Yet another of the few negative aspects the students reported affected their adaptation was related to organizational problems. Continuously altering work schedules were experienced as frustrating and caused them feelings of anxiety.

Three factors enhanced the relational development with international ties: English language skills, perceived similarities and proximity. First, the respondents reported that as the other international students had good English skills, it was easier to communicate with them, and thus, to get to know them. Second, the respondents perceived that the other international students were similar to themselves – in terms of similar interests, experiences, sharing the same experience being foreigners in Indonesia – it was easier to establish relationships with them. Third, the fact that they were involved with the same internship projects, and the possibility to travel together was perceived to enable their relationships to grow more intimate.

When it comes to the relationships with Indonesians, most of the relationships remained on the level of being acquaintances. Indonesians' limited English skills, their tendency to be indirect and their low level of self-disclosure were perceived inhibiting the relational development. The respondents who established close relationships with their host family members reported that the host family members' good English skills allowed the relationships to grow more intimate. Furthermore, proximity – the simple fact that the respondents were living in the same house – was reported to be another reason why the respondents established close bonds with their host family members. Having described the results of the study, I will now move on to analyze them.

6. DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to investigate international students' perceptions on their adaptation to Indonesian society. A special focus was on investigating how the students perceive the relationships they established affected their adaptation to Indonesian society. In addition, the study aimed to explore the students' perceptions on how they consider cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English as a lingua franca affected the process of establishing relationships. My research questions were as follows:

1. How do international students describe their adaptation to Indonesian society?

2. With whom did the students establish relationships during their sojourn in Indonesia?

    2.1 How important were these relationships to their adaptation to Indonesian society?

3. How do the students perceive the role of the English language and cultural differences in communication styles in the relational development with the persons they established relationships with?

The present chapter is divided into two themes; adaptation (sub-chapter 6.1) and relationship development (sub-chapter 6.2). Sub-chapter 6.1 focuses on discussing the findings of the study related to research questions 1, 2 and 2.1, while the findings related to research questions 3 are discussed in sub-chapter 6.2.

6.1 Adaptation

The data suggest that the respondents seem to have experienced their sojourn in Indonesia as very positive. Analysis revealed three factors that seem to have enhanced the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation. First, the relationships the respondents

established during their sojourn were perceived significant for their adaptation to Indonesia. The relationships were perceived important because of the support they provided for the respondents. Another factor that seems to have significantly enhanced the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation was the personal characteristics they possess. The data suggest that the characteristics that are within themselves helped them deal with the new and often challenging situations – especially situations which were continuously present due to the language barrier. Lastly, host country receptivity was perceived as an important factor that enhanced the students' cross-cultural adaptation.

6.1.1 Relationships

The analysis revealed that the respondents' social networks consisted mainly of host and international ties. The data suggest that the relationships – whether host, ethnic or international ties – that the students established during their sojourn were a significant factor that enhanced their cross-cultural adaptation. Some of the social ties were weak while some of them were strong. Whether weak or strong ties, the relationships were perceived important because of the support they provided for the respondents. The type of support the respondents received depended on the intimacy of the relationships. Relationships with acquaintances and casual friends were perceived important because of the informational and tangible support they provided for the respondents. Relationships that developed into a more intimate level were perceived important not only because of the informational and tangible support they received, but most importantly because they provided the respondents emotional support. Emotional support was perceived extremely valuable in their adaptation process as the respondents could share their thoughts and worries, which consequently alleviated the respondents' stress and loneliness.

The importance of the relationships in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation is well documented in research (e.g. Kim 2001, Ting-Toomey 1999, Kokkonen 2010, Ward 1996, Cheah et al. 2011). Communication with host nationals is crucial for strangers' cross-cultural adaptation as the strangers receive social support, which alleviates stress

(Kim 2001). Due to the language barrier, the respondents were often dependent on others, for instance, when running their daily errands. In these cases host ties were extremely important for the respondents who could not themselves communicate with the locals. The host nationals accompanied the respondents, for instance, to an immigration office or to the doctor's and adviced them in case they needed information about something. The respondents perceived the help received in these kinds of situations valuable. Often the persons who helped them were the respondents' acquaintances or casual friends, i.e., weak ties. Many of the respondents established close relationships with the host nationals; mainly with their host family members but also with local AIESEC students. The relationships established with the host nationals were perceived important not only for the support the respondents received, but also because the respondents felt that they could learn much about different aspects of Indonesian culture from these persons. Communication with host nationals is crucial for strangers' cross-cultural adaptation not only because strangers receive social support, but also for their cultural learning since they gain important information about host mindset and learn about the people's behavior, which again enhances strangers' HCC (Kim 2001).

When it comes to the respondents' international ties, for many of the respondents, it was easier to speak about the negative emotions they were experiencing with their international contacts. It was repeatedly reported that discussing with these international contacts helped them to alleviate the stress they were experiencing. The international ties were, thus, experienced extremely important. This finding is in accordance with Kashima and Loh's (2006) findings on their research on international students' adaptation to Australia. The results of their study indicated that international ties the students had in their social network significantly enhanced their cross-cultural adaptation. Kim (2001) considers ethnic communication as a positive factor that enhances immigrants' cross-cultural adaptation – as far as communication is not limited too much on ethnic communication and in a short run. Kim (2001:134) presents that when strangers face uncertainty and anxiety, aroused by the new cultural milieu, they tend to seek out the company of their own co-nationals because they are similar in terms of their backgrounds and in that they are also foreigners, and can thus alleviate the uncertainty and anxiety caused by the new cultural milieu. Interestingly, the results of

the present study suggest that the international ties that the respondents established, offered them the same kind of relief and support that Kim (2001) presents ethnic ties offer. According to Kim (2001: 135), while communication with host nationals tends to be psychologically challenging, ethnic communication, instead, is not that stressful as "ethnic relations are less stressful, as they are formed on previously acquired and shared repertoires." Though these international ties were not with the respondents' co-nationals, the respondents' comments suggest that the international friends and acquaintances they made functioned like they actually were their own ethnic nationals.

6.1.2 Predisposition: adaptive personality and preparedness for change

The respondents reported that the biggest challenge they encountered in their daily lives was the language barrier. Cushner and Brislin 1996: 289 present that communication differences are one of the most obvious aspects that strangers in a new cultural environment have to cope with. This is because language is the medium through which we carry out our everyday activities. As a consequence of not knowing the local language, strangers are inevitably exposed to situations in which they cannot function like they could if they could communicate "properly" with their host environment. Hofstede (1991: 209) concludes that "in a way, the visitor in a foreign culture returns to the mental state of an infant, in which he or she has to learn the simplest things over again", which is often the case when moving to a new cultural environment, especially, if they do not have a common language with the host nationals. The importance of language skills in strangers' positive adaptation is well documented in research literature (see e.g. Rohrlich and Martin 1991, Kokkonen 2010, Henderson, Milhouse and Cao 1993, Masgoret and Ward 2007, Lee and Chen 2000).

Despite the fact that language problems indeed were present throughout the respondents' sojourn in Indonesia, it did not seem to be as big a problem and cause of stress for the respondents as the potential to experience negative emotions was. In her integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation, Kim (2001) differentiates a dimension of *predisposition* which encompasses constructs of *preparedness for change*, *ethnic proximity* and *adaptive personality*. The results of the study strongly suggest that

the respondents' adaptive personality played a significant role in their adaptation process. The data strongly suggest that the personal characteristics the respondents possess helped them in dealing with the challenges aroused by the foreign cultural milieu, especially in situations which were continuously present due to the language barrier. In other words, though the respondents reported that there indeed were problems, they did not however "make it a problem". Almost all the respondents reflected on their adaptation in relation to the personal characteristics they possess. Being curious of learning about Indonesian culture, being open-minded towards cultural differences, having matching expectations, having good motivation, having positive attitude and being able to react to challenging situations with humor were repeatedly present in the respondents' answers when they were reflecting on the reasons that contributed to their positive adaptation to Indonesia. Furthermore, some of the respondents' reported that they felt factors such as their previous experience abroad and their education, i.e. their *preparedness for change* (Kim 2001), enhanced their adaptation.

Moreover, the respondents' *affective competence* seems to also have enhanced their adaptation. Affective competence is one of the indicators of HCC, and it includes strangers' motivation to adapt, to be empathic, flexible and to be capable of managing ambiguity aroused by the new culture (Kim 2001). Ting-Toomey (1999) also presents that individual motivations, expectations, cultural and interaction-based knowledge, and also, personal attributes such as high tolerance of ambiguity, flexibility and openness enhance strangers' adaptation. Cushner and Brislin (1996: 290) emphasize the significance of expectations, maintaining that if strangers are prepared to face difficulties in the target culture, it may significantly decrease the stress aroused by the difficulties, and in general, the overall acculturation stress. Halinoja (1996) discusses cultural sensitivity and its role in strangers' adaptation. The author (1996: 119) maintains that for those who possess cultural sensitivity and who have found out about the conditions of the target culture beforehand, cross-cultural adaptation tends to be rather smooth. A culturally sensitive person is curious about the host culture and tries to learn its different aspects. In this respect, the respondents' writings on their adaptation in relation to the personal characteristics they hold reflect the research literature.

What further supports the implication that the respondents' personal characteristics were an important contributor for their positive cross-cultural adaptation, is their comments on how they viewed the difficulties and challenges they experienced as a natural and inevitable part of their Indonesian experience. Guirdham (1999: 287, see also 2011: 292) points out that when one realizes that what he is going through is normal, it helps one to tolerate stress and eventually cope. The author (2011: 289, emphasis added) further goes on to maintain: "Everyone experiences them [anxiety and stress] to some degree. How well someone adjusts depends on how they cope with the stress and anxiety, not on whether they experience them. Anxiety and stress, therefore, are not 'bad' in and of themselves." At the heart of Kim's (2001) *Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation* is the idea that cross-cultural adaptation is a continuous cyclic process of learning and growth. An underlying assumption is that newcomers do experience stress in the host country. Cross-cultural adaptation is gained through learning as a person encounters challenges every day in his or her life and manages to overcome the challenges met in a foreign environment.

6.1.3 Host receptivity

Last, host country nationals' positive attitude towards the respondents was perceived as an important factor that enhanced the students' cross-cultural adaptation. All the respondents reported that the host nationals' approach towards them was extremely warm and friendly. Many of the research participants felt that one of the key factors in their positive Indonesian sojourn was the friendliness of the Indonesian people. If the local people react positively to a stranger, it, without a doubt, helps a newcomer feel accepted and welcome to the new cultural environment. If the reactions of the local people seem negative for a newcomer, it will most likely make strangers' adaptation more difficult. This finding on host receptivity's positive affect on the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation is in accordance with previous research findings. In her theory, Kim (2001) differentiates the dimension of *Environment*, which includes factors arising from the host culture that affect strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. One of the factors is host receptivity. If the host nationals are willing to receive strangers, it has positive influence on strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. Ting-Toomey's (1999) views on the

positive influence of host country receptivity for strangers' adaptation process are accordance with those of Kim's (2001). Ting-Toomey (1999) presents that there exist three groups of factors which have an influence on how a stranger adapts to a host country. She calls them *antecedent factors*, which include *system-level factors*, *individual-level factors* and *interpersonal-level factors*, of which *system-level factors* are concerned with host culture's overall receptivity and its influence on a stranger's adaptation process. The more a stranger feels welcome, the easier his or her adaptation (Ting-Toomey 1999: 235-244).

All the respondents reported that the host country nationals were extremely friendly, hospitable, helpful and welcoming towards them. In case of a few of the respondents, host country receptivity was, however, inhibiting their adaptation as they experienced the big amount of attention they received from local people uncomfortable (see extracts 24, 25). This finding is interesting, as on one hand the respondents said that the locals felt them feel very welcome, but at the same time, however, they felt that they made them feel that they "do not belong there" as the locals' behavior towards them created a feeling of being "an outsider". For one of the research participants the attention she received was overwhelming and it was the reason why she was experiencing her sojourn as very difficult. Interestingly, RP4 says that the attention she received from the local people "made her feel lonely". In his article, Paige (1993) discusses different *intensity factors* that affect sojourners' felt psychological intensity in a foreign cultural milieu. One of the factors is *visibility and invisibility*. The author presents that if a stranger is physically different from the host nationals and feeling highly visible in the host environment, psychological intensity of the experience may be increased (Paige 1993: 10). The author presents that sometimes sojourners feel that they are "living in a fishbowl" as they are the center of the locals' curiosity (Paige 1993:10). In these kinds of situations, personal characteristics will certainly prove useful in dealing with the negative reactions aroused by the unwanted attention. Though personal characteristics and positive attitude of strangers, without a doubt, are important in facing situations as described above, it would also be beneficial for host nationals to learn the important skills of communicating with strangers. Wierzbicka (2006) aptly remarks:

> In modern multiethnic societies, newcomers need to learn to communicate with those already there, but those already there need, for their part, to learn to communicate with the newcomers. In a world that has become a global village, even those living in their

traditional homelands need to develop some cross-cultural understanding to be able to   cope with the larger world confronting them   in a variety of ways.

<div align="right">Wierzbicka (2006: 20)</div>

The world is becoming more and more multicultural every day. That is simply the reality that we are living in. When cultures encounter, in order for us to manage these encounters successfully, it would be important that also the host nationals, from their part, would adapt their behaviors accordingly.

6.2 Relationship development

Analysis revealed three factors that enhanced relational development with the respondents' international ties; good English language skills, perceived similarities and proximity. Instead, Indonesians' limited English skills, their tendency to be indirect and their low level of self-disclosure were perceived inhibiting relational development with them. Many of the relationships with Indonesians did not develop into more intimate level due to these three factors. Many of the relationships, however, did grow more intimate. In these cases, good English skills were perceived as a crucial factor that enhanced relational development. Furthermore, when it comes to the respondents' relational development with their host family members, proximity – the fact that the respondents were living in the same house – was reported to be another reason why the respondents established close bonds with their host family members. In addition to good level of English, proximity – mainly in terms of traveling together – affected the respondents' relationship development also with local AIESEC students.

6.2.1 Perceived similarities

The data suggest, that in addition to good command of English of other international students and sojourners (to be addressed in the following sub-chapter), relationship development was also enhanced by perceived similarities. The respondents reported that they perceived the other international students and sojourners similar to themselves in

many respects, for instance, in terms of interests, experiences, cultural backgrounds, and, most importantly, similar as they were sharing the same experience of being foreigners in Indonesia. Few of the respondents met their co-nationals during their sojourn in Indonesia. The data suggest that the most significant reason why the respondents established close relationships with those persons was the perceived similarities in relation to them. This finding supports Byrne's (1971) similarity-attraction hypothesis.

The perceived similarities seem to have affected the respondents' relational development in two ways. First, the perceived similarities enhanced *the initiation* of relationships with other international students and sojourners since the respondents felt that they had a lot in common, for instance, in terms of humor, interests, experiences, cultural backgrounds, and thus, it was easy to initiate conversations as they had a lot in common to talk about. Scollon and Scollon (2001: 21) maintain that it is obvious that the more interactants have similar assumptions and knowledge about the world, communication is more effective. The authors go on to maintain that "where two people have very similar histories, backgrounds, and experiences, their communication works fairly easily because the inferences each makes about what the other means will be based on common experience and knowledge" Scollon and Scollon (2001: 21).

Secondly, in addition to enhancing the initiation of the relationships, the perceived similarities contributed positively in *advancing* the relationships to a more intimate level. When the respondents were experiencing frustrations and anxiety aroused by the new cultural environment, they felt that it was easier to share these feelings with other sojourners (as opposed to Indonesians) since they understood their reactions better as they were also in a similar situation – foreigners in Indonesia facing similar challenges. This finding is in accordance with Burgoon, Hunsaker and Dawsons' (1994) ideas on how similarities affect relational development. The authors (1994: 51) argue that similarity between the interactants affects communication encounter in two important ways: "first, it determines who will communicate with whom, and second, how successful that communication will be." The authors further state that if people have an option to choose with whom they will communicate, they have a tendency to choose

someone who is similar to themselves (Burgoon, Hunsaker and Dawson 1994: 51). In their investigations on intercultural friendship development, Sias and her colleagues (2008) and Kudo and Simkin (2003) also found out that perceived similarities played an important role in the relational development process.

6.2.2 Social penetration

English language skills and cultural differences in communication styles manifested themselves in the relational development process. The results of the study suggest that perceived poor command of English, indirectness and non-self-disclosure of Indonesians inhibited the respondents' relational development with them. Conversely, perceived good English skills of other international students and other international sojourners enhanced relational development with them. The findings of the study support Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory which holds that relationships develop to a deeper level as interactants disclose information about themselves.

English skills

English language skills clearly played a central role in the respondents' relationship development process. Good command of English of the respondents' international contacts was seen to enhance relational development with them. Instead, with Indonesians, their limited English skills were perceived a significant factor that was inhibiting relationship development. This finding was not surprising. Irwin (1996: 15) maintains: "it is obvious that a common language for those involved enhances (although far from guarantees) the likelihood of effective communication. It is equally obvious that lack of common language understanding is a potential inhibitor of effective communication." The respondents reported frequently that Indonesians' English skills were very poor, which made it difficult to get to know them. Having a simple conversation with them was most times impossible.

Several of the respondents reported that they accommodated their speech when interacting with Indonesians, whose English language skills they noticed were very limited. Some accommodated their speech by simplifying the structure of their sentences, some used simpler vocabulary and many of the respondents had to rely on non-verbal communication, such as gestures, to deliver their message. The fact that the respondents were accommodating their communication in order to create mutual understanding supports the previous research findings on the collaborative nature of ELF communication (see Firth 1996, Hülmbauer 2010, Cogo 2009, House 2003). Bernstein (1971, cited in Guirdham 2011: 202) maintains that "When people realize that they are interacting with someone from a different background, they usually adapt their discourse by using elaborated rather than restricted codes". Guirdham (2011: 202) goes on to argue that though this accommodation is important, it might affect the relationship development in that it creates a feel of formality to the interaction. Formality, again, slows down the relational development process. In her theory, Kim (2001) uses the term *resourcefulness* to refer to strangers' ability to accommodate their behavior and come up with ideas how to deal with unfamiliar cultural setting. Strangers have to, for instance, adjust their behavior and come up with ideas how to manage face-to-face interactions and how to initiate and maintain relationships (Kim 2001:116).

The data clearly indicate that the lack of host nationals' English language skills inhibited respondents' social penetration process with them. The respondents reported that they would have wanted to get to know the Indonesian people better, but it was impossible due to the language barrier. Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory holds that in the second *exploratory affective stage*, interactants start to disclose more private and intimate information about themselves and their opinions on moderate topics. Though the respondents accommodated their communication and used non-verbal communication, there is a limit to how much information one can communicate through body language. As a result of not being able to communicate with the host nationals, most of the relationships remained in the first *orientation phase*, where communication is on a superficial "small-talk level" (Altman and Taylor 1973).

Instead, when it comes to the international ties, the respondents reported that as the other international students and other international sojourners had good English skills, it was effortless and comfortable to communicate with them, and thus, to get to know them as they could exchange their ideas without problems. Also, the respondents who established close relationships with their host family members reported that the host family members' good English skills allowed the relationships to grow more intimate. The findings of the study indicate that good English skills had a crucial role in the social penetration process as they allowed the relationship to develop past the orientation stage and exploratory affective stages at least onto the third *affective stage* where higher level of intimacy and trust is reached (Altman and Taylor 1973). With the statement "at least" I am referring to the fact that in the light of the data, it is impossible to say whether the relationships developed up until the fourth *stable stage*. The data also indicated that though the respondents were ELF users with varying levels of English (which became obvious when reading the respondents' answers), none of them reported presence of misunderstandings when they were communicating with other sojourners, which supports the research findings that indicate that misunderstandings in ELF interactions are not as common as it has been assumed (e.g. Seidlhofer 2004, Mauranen 2006, Kaur 2010).

Self-disclosure and indirectness

The data suggest that with those Indonesians with whom the respondents were able to communicate in English, the reason that inhibited relational development with them was their low level of self-disclosure. The respondents repeatedly reported that it was difficult to establish "meaningful relationships" with Indonesians due to the fact that they perceived that Indonesian people are not really open. With other international students and other international sojourners the respondents did not report this aspect, but just the opposite, they felt that since communication was open with them, it was easier to get to know them.

Most of the respondents reported that it was easy to have Indonesian acquaintances but difficult to take the relationship to a deeper level. Chen (2003: 229) presents that in initial encounters with a stranger, it is more likely that the interactants who have dissimilar cultural background self-disclose more than the interactants who are from the same culture. Though the level of self-disclosure is higher, that does not, however, mean that intimate information is being exchanged. The author goes on to explain that conversation does remain on a superficial level, and high level of self-disclosure can be explained simply by the unfamiliarity of the interactants. With those Indonesians with whom the respondents were able to communicate in English, the reason that inhibited relational development with them was their low level of self-disclosure, and most of the respondents' relationships with Indonesian people did not pass the *exploratory affective stage*, which is the second stage in Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory. This finding is also similar to Kudo and Simkin's (2003) findings on the role of depth and width of self-disclosure in Japanese students' intercultural friendship formation in Australia.

In addition to the finding that the amount of self-disclosure inhibited the respondents' relational development with host nationals, this finding also provides further support for the previous research findings that suggest that members of collectivistic/ high-context cultures have a tendency to self-disclose less than members of individualistic/ low-context cultures (see e.g. Lee 2003: 226, Chen and Starosta 2005: 131, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988). Chen's (2003: 226) statement that "culture's influence on relational communication is most evident in self-disclosure" seems to reflect the above discussed findings of the present study. Furthermore, Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Nishida (1996: 31) argue that "openness is not characteristic of high-context communication". The authors go on to say that a typical feature in high-context communication is that the level of self-disclosure is low.

In addition to not disclosing information about themselves, the respondents perceived that Indonesian indirectness was yet another factor that made communication challenging with them. The results of the study support the existing evidence that Indonesian culture indeed tends to use high-context communication which is guided by

collectivist values. Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Nishida (1996: 31) maintain: "Speaking one's mind and telling the truth in low-context communication requires that individuals be open with others." Irwin presents that "Asia's collectivist cultures place very high value on human relationships and the preservation of harmony and face". Irwin (1996: 51). Salo-Lee explains (1996: 37) that by means of being indirect, the aim is to maintain group harmony. Malmberg (1996: 91) maintains that the word "no" is seldom used in collectivistic cultures due to the fact that it might disturb harmony. Instead, the word "no" is replaced by more vague expression such as "I'm not sure", "maybe it is so", or, "I'll think about it". (see also Irwin 1996: 51-52).

Stephan and Stephan (2003: 113) maintain that members of ididualistic cultures often feel that collectivists are distant, whereas for members of collectivist cultures behavior of a person from individualistic culture may feel too intimate. Some of the respondents experienced the Indonesian communication style to be indirect, highly frustrating and problematic. One of the research participants (RP10) reported (see extracts 51-53) that she found Indonesian indirectness frustrating. Irwin (1996: 51-52) explains that when collectivists are engaged in maintaining harmony by means of being indirect, strangers may interpret it as being "hesitant and noncommittal". The author goes on to explain that in these intercultural interactions "people may be told what they want to hear rather than the truth" (Irwin 1996: 51-52). Wierzbicka (1991, cited in Lim 2003: 65) characterizes Javanese communication style as follows: "Javanese norms favor beating about the bush, not saying what is on one's mind, unwillingness to face issues in their naked truth, never saying what one really thinks, avoiding gratuitous truths, and never showing one's real feelings directly." Research participants' answers reflect well this characterization concerning the Indonesians' tendency to be extremely indirect. Unlike the other respondents who reported similar experiences, RP10 is from an East Asian country, the communication style of which has been characterized as one of the extremes in its tendency to use high-context communication. This supports the arguments that when classifying cultures to be either high- or low-context or collectivist or individualistic, it should be taken into consideration that individual differences always exist (e.g. Triandis, Brislin and Hui 1988: 271, Littlejohn 2002: 248, Andersen et al. 2003: 85).

Concluding remarks

To conclude, cross-cultural adaptation is extremely multifaceted phenomenon. As Chen and Starosta (2005: 163) point out: "some persons who sojourn in a foreign country adapt well to the new environment within a short period of time, while others find a new environment to be a nightmare." Cross-cultural adaptation is interplay of numerous different factors and more research would be needed in order to gain more profound understanding on the respondents' adaptation process. The results of this study offer further evidence to already existing research findings on the significance of sojourners' social networks in the host country as well as host country receptivity's positive influence on strangers' cross-cultural adaptation. Furthermore, the results of the study imply that personal characteristics and overall preparedness a sojourner possesses has a crucial role in one's successful cross-cultural adaptation process.

The underlying assumption of the present study is that communication is at the heart of human relationships; without communication, relationships could not exist in the first place. Burgoon et al. (1994: 320) maintain that "communication, in one form or another, will determine whether a relationship will progress past the initial encounter stage." The findings of the study show that language skills play an important role in the relationship development process. Though language skills are only one part of communication, they certainly have an important role in creating intimacy in a relationship. In addition to English language skills, the results of the study imply that Indonesians' tendency to self-disclose little information and to be indirect inhibited the respondents' relational development with them.

7. CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate international students' perceptions on their adaptation to Indonesian society. The focus of my interest was on investigating how the students perceived the relationships they established affected their adaptation to Indonesian society. Furthermore, I aimed to explore the students' perceptions on how they consider cultural differences in communication styles and the use of English as a lingua franca affected the process of establishing relationships.

The sampling method used in this study was a mixture of snowball and convenience sampling. The number of research participants was eleven and they were from different countries; four of them were from Europe, one from Latin America, one from North Africa, one from South-East Asia and three of them from East Asia. Ten of the respondents were participating in an AIESEC internship program whereas one participant was taking part in an AFS exchange program. All of the respondents were located in the same city in East Java. The data was gathered via semi-structured electronic e-mail interviews with open-ended questions. The focus of my interest was to explore the students' *experiences* and *perceptions* – to describe their experiences from *their* perspective, not from the viewpoint of an outside researcher. Thus, to meet the aims of the study, a qualitative approach was considered the best option to analyze the data as it enabled me to bring out the research participants' *own voices*, which was the most important criterion for me when making the methodological choices of the study. The data was analyzed by using inductive thematic analysis since the method was considered as the most suitable approach to investigate the phenomenon due to its data-driven nature.

The analysis revealed that the respondents' social networks consisted mainly of host ties and international ties. These relationships, both strong and weak ties, were perceived significant for their adaptation to Indonesia. The relationships were perceived important because of the support they provided for the respondents. Another factor that enhanced the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation, was the personal characteristics they possess

which helped them to deal with the new and often challenging situations – especially situations which were continuously present due to the language barrier. Lastly, host country receptivity was perceived as an important factor that enhanced the students' cross-cultural adaptation. In the case of some respondents, host-country receptivity was, however, inhibiting their adaptation as they experienced the big amount of attention they received from local people as uncomfortable. Another aspect the students reported that affected their adaptation negatively was related to organizational problems. Analysis further revealed three factors that enhanced relational development with the students' international ties; good English language skills, perceived similarities and proximity. Indonesians' limited English skills, their tendency to be indirect and their low level of self-disclosure were perceived inhibiting the relational development with them. Many of the relationships with Indonesians did not develop to a more intimate level due to these three factors. Many of the relationships, however, did develop. In these cases, good English skills were perceived as a crucial factor that enhanced relational development. Furthermore, proximity – the fact that the respondents were living in the same house – was reported to be another reason why the respondents established close bonds with their host family members.

7.1 Evaluation of the study

The study, being a qualitative by nature, did not aim for generalizations. The number of research participants was eleven and it was well adequate to meet the aims of the study. Some of the respondents' answers were rather short and did not provide me answers on the topics I was aiming to find out. Other answers were very profound and the respondents reflected deeply on their experiences about the phenomena investigated. Though the data I acquired was informative and I was able to detect repeated patterns from the students' answers, face-to-face interviews would have, without a doubt, been the best method to gather the data in order to acquire more profound information and deeper understanding on the phenomena investigated. The reason why the idea of conducting face-to-face interviews was abandoned was addressed in chapter 4.2.

Another factor I acknowledge that might have affected the results of this study is the fact that I myself did my internship in Indonesia, which inevitably affects my objectivity to a certain extent. Eskola and Suoranta (1998: 17) maintain that objectivity in qualitative research is achieved when a researcher recognizes his or her position as being subjective. Willis (2007: 210) points out that "do not pretend to be objective if you are not" and that "the researcher should make the reader of a study aware of his or her biases." I do recognize my position as a researcher. The fact that I myself did my internship in Indonesia does inevitably affect my subjectivity and my position as a researcher in the present study to some extent. To begin with, it had an effect that I chose to investigate this topic in the first place. Secondly, although the interview questions (see appendices II and III) were planned as little leading as possible, and though they were tested not only to check whether the questions proceed in a logical order, on their unambiguity and relevance, they were also tested to check their subjectivity, that is, whether they are leading the respondents to answer in a certain way. Though the questions were tested by my supervisors, fellow students and my friends, the interview questions might have, nevertheless, lead the respondents to answer in a way that was based on my own personal experiences. After all, those above mentioned persons by whom the questions were tested, had not had experience of living in Indonesia, and therefore, they might not have noticed such leading aspects in the interview questions in contrast to those who have had experience of living in Indonesia would had noticed. The respondents were, however, offered an opportunity to discuss freely on any topic they wanted at the end of both two parts of the interview forms. Third, when it comes to analyzing the data, though trying to be as objective as possible, my personal experiences undoubtedly affected how I interpreted the data as my understanding is inevitably shaped by my personal experiences in Indonesia. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it can never be completely objective (Willis 2007) and this subjectivity can, however, also seen as an advantage since it can be viewed that I was able to gain deeper insights and understanding on the research participants' experiences due to my personal experiences.

7.2 Ethical considerations

To guarantee the transparency of the study, I described the methodology employed in the study thoroughly in chapter 4; I provided detailed description on my sampling method, presented a step-by-step description of how I conducted the analysis and I described the research participants and presented background information on them.

Absolute confidentiality was considered crucial. Due to the reasons I presented in chapter 4.3 (pp. 54-55), the research participants could have been easily recognized by someone reading this study. I promised the research participants confidentiality by assuring them that no one's identity will be revealed. Some of the research participants revealed very personal issues, and my obligation as a researcher was to present the information in a way that the respondents' anonymity was guaranteed. Thus, I had to be cautious not to reveal too much information about the respondents while still securing the transparency of the study. This set certain challenges in describing the research participants and in reporting the findings. Firstly, I had to pay careful attention to how I described the research participants. In sub-chapter 4.3, in which the research participants were described, they were not described as thoroughly as could have done based on the background information I gathered on them. Some pieces of information were left out, for instance, their nationalities. Instead of naming their countries of origin, I described them by using high- and low-context and individualism-collectivism dimensions (see pp. 59-60). I do not see this jeopardizing transparency of the study as the present study was not aiming for cross-cultural comparisons. In addition to coding the informants' names, I removed all identifying information from the respondents' comments. Furthermore, I presented the duration of the sojourn of each respondent in a way that they could not be recognized. This was the case especially with the research participant who participated in the AFS program, not in AIESEC like rest of the respondents. The reasons why this respondent was included in the study was stated in chapter 4 (p. 59). Every piece of information, however, which is of relevance for the present study was presented and nothing crucial was never left out.

7.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further investigations

The present study was limited in many ways. Though the study shed some light on understanding the respondents' cross-cultural adaptation and their relationship development, more profound research would have been needed in order to gain in-depth understanding on the students' experiences. Firstly, the students' sojourn was short. It might be that the research participants were still in the so-called *honeymoon phase*, that is, they were experiencing everything in a new culture extremely positively as they had not yet had time to experience negative aspects of the host culture. Longitudinal studies would be needed to investigate the changes over time, and thus, to understand the respondents' experiences better. For the purposes of a project as small as a Master's thesis, longitudinal method was obviously out of question. The results of the present study suggest that the social ties the students established during their sojourn were particularly important for their adaptation to Indonesian society. It would be interesting to find out whether a stranger can start to have problems in his or her adaptation when someone with whom one has developed a close intimate relationship moves away.

Furthermore, research on cross-cultural adaptation has been heavily focused on investigating the phenomenon in the contexts of the U.S., China and Japan. I would like to encourage further investigations to shift the focus on investigating cross-cultural adaptation in other cultural contexts, as well. In Indonesian context, I would personally be extremely interested in gaining insights on strangers' experiences on their sojourn in different areas in Indonesia, for instance, in Bali. The results of the present study suggest that one of the most important factors that inhibited relational development with host nationals was the host nationals' poor command of English. Bali is popular touristic destination, and as such, the locals are accustomed to communicating with dozens of strangers, using English as a lingua franca language, on a daily basis. The results in Balinese context, therefore, might be very different when it comes to the role of English in relationship development process. Also, results concerning host country receptivity might be quite different than those of the present study. Furthermore, the present study explored *strangers'* experiences on communication with host nationals. It indeed would

be interesting to learn about the host-country members' experiences and perceptions on the communication with strangers.

In addition, though I was able to gain an understanding on the aspects that affected the respondents' relational development processes, the present study merely scratched the surface of investigating such a multifaceted phenomenon as intercultural relationship development. The results of the study provided insights based on only the respondents' *perceptions* on using English as a lingua franca. The present study was not a lingua franca study per se, as it did not focus on investigating the actual interactions between interactants. In order to acquire better understanding how English manifested in the social interactions, linguistic analysis on the interactions on high-context and low-context communication styles governed by collectivist and individualist values would have been useful. Furthermore, focusing on investigating ELF interactions would shed light also on our knowledge on intercultural relationship development.

Abundant amounts of research, including Kim's (2001) theory on cross-cultural adaptation employed in this study, have focused on *host national* ties and *host communication competence* in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation process. As has been pointed out earlier, while research has focused on investigating host-stranger relations and the importance of host communication competence, it has neglected the role of international ties and use of ELF in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation process. In multicultural societies, it is more and more common that the strangers, especially sojourners whose stay in the host country is temporary, use English – with the host nationals as well as with the other strangers in the target culture – as a medium of communication. When one sojourns to a foreign country for a short amount of time, even though one would have a motivation to learn the host language, most often he or she does not have time to learn it. Expatriates and interns in multicultural work communities, international exchange students and international voluntary workers every day face the situation that they are not communicating with the host nationals and adapting only to the host culture. At the same time, as they are interacting with people from several different cultures, they are exposed to other different languages, cultures and worldviews as well. In these interactions, which indeed are taking place more than

ever before in today's multicultural world, English as a lingua franca language has a central role in creating mutual understanding, and, building relationships. Further research on the topic is needed in order to understand the impact of ELF in the role of these international ties in strangers' cross-cultural adaptation process.

The results of the study might be useful in pre-departure trainings for people who are leaving abroad. The results might be useful to be used in the training programs as the study brought up the students' own voices, using plenty of citations of their experiences. These extracts might be especially interesting for the future sojourners to see as they could see concretely what the respondents of my study stated themselves. Furthermore, in my experience, when students are pondering over to which country they would like to go on a foreign exchange or to carry out their internship, they tend to pick a country the language of which they already speak or are studying (other than English), or, select a country in which they know English is spoken. Certainly, it is important in foreign language learning to be exposed to the target language in its natural environment, so the choice is very understandable. Likewise, it is understandable that students select a country in which they know they will be able to communicate via a common language, which is ELF in today's world, with the host nationals. The results of the present study indicated that the students' experiences were overall extremely positive though they faced the language barrier in their daily lives. Therefore, the results of this study might also be useful in encouraging students to sojourn also to countries where English is not spoken, such as Indonesia.

Shared language, indeed, is important in creating mutual understanding. It is not, however, the most important factor that contributes to successful intercultural communication. What counts more are one's skills to be open to cultural differences in others' worldview perspectives and to respect them. We do not have to agree with the differing views, yet it is still possible to understand them and act accordingly taking "the other" into consideration. Professor (emerita) Liisa Salo-Lee in intercultural communication, University of Jyväskylä, maintains:

Intercultural communication is at best intercultural dialogue, a jointly traveled path towards learning and understanding, respect and responsibility. Different opinions become a source for new solutions, and culture turns to a valuable resource. In the multicultural and interdependent world intercultural dialogue is our chance to make a difference.

(Salo-Lee 2003: 121)

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Appendix 1: Background information form

Background information

Please, fill in the information below.

1. Where are you from?

2. Have you spent most of your life in the country you mentioned above?

3. Have you lived in some other countries?

    - In which other countries and for how long?

4. Mother tongue:

5. The place (city/town/village) of your stay in Indonesia:

6. The purpose of your stay:

    - An internship?

        - Was it an AIESEC internship?

    - Other reason. What?

7. How long did you stay in Indonesia?

8. When did your Indonesian stay take place?

9. Where did you live? (e.g. in a host family, in a boarding house...)

10. Did you know Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia/some other Indonesian language) before your arrival to Indonesia?

11. Was this your first time in Indonesia?

    - If you answered NO:

        - When was the previous time?

        - How long did you stay at that time?

Thank you!

Appendix 2: Interview questions, Part I

PART I

Adaptation to Indonesian society

In this part, I aim to understand how you experienced your adaptation process to Indonesia; how easy or difficult you experienced your life there, and most importantly, *why* you experienced it the way you did. I would appreciate if you could provide specific examples.

…..

1. How would you describe your life in Indonesia? What was positive, negative, easy, difficult?

2. Please, indicate on a scale from 1 to 10 how easy or difficult did you find your adaptation process. 10= very easy -- 1= very difficult.

a) If you found your adaptation *easy* rather than difficult, describe the factors that you think were important for your successful adaptation.

b) If you experienced difficulties in adapting to the Indonesian society, what factors might have made your adaptation easier?

3. What were the biggest challenges in living in Indonesia? What helped you to overcome these challenges?

4. Did you start to feel at home at some point of your stay in Indonesia?

a) IF YOU DID, what were the reasons that made you feel at home, and, how soon after your arrival did you start to feel at home?

b) IF YOU DID NOT, please elaborate why?

5. Did you have someone who explained the local culture to you? (e.g. if you did not understand why people behaved the way they did etc.)

- If you did, who were they and how exactly did they guide you?

6. How would you describe Indonesian people?

7. How do you think the local people saw you; did they react positively/negatively towards you? Please, explain your answer.

8. What advice would you give to a friend who is going to move to Indonesia?

9. Is there something else you would like to say concerning your adaptation to Indonesia? Feel free to write about anything that comes to mind.

Appendix 2: Interview questions, Part I

PART II

Language, communication and relationships

In this section, I aim to find out with whom you had relationships, why you feel the relationships were important to you, and how you see the role of English language in establishing relationships.

…..

1. Please, describe the relationships/the social network you had *with Indonesian people* and *with others, non-Indonesians,* as well.

2. Who became the closest to you? What do you think were the reasons for becoming close with that/those person(s)?

3. Why were those relationships you described (in the questions 1 and 2) important to you?

4. How did less familiar people (e.g. neigbours) affect your Indonesian stay?

5. Did you find it easy or difficult to establish relationships with Indonesian people? Please, explain why.

6. Did you have more *international* than Indonesian friends and/or acquaintances?

Whether your answer is YES or No, please describe reasons for this.

7. Did you experience any difficulties with English language in your daily life? Please explain.

8. Who did you feel was the most comfortable to talk with? Why?

9. Compared to your own culture, what differences did you notice in the Indonesians' way of communicating, if any? How did you feel about those (possible) differences?

10. What was the most challenging in communicating with Indonesian people?

11. Is there something else you would like to comment on related to communication, relationships and the use of English language during your stay? Feel free to write about anything that comes to mind.