

**COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION PROCESS IN COPING  
WITH CULTURE SHOCK EXPERIENCED BY MEXICAN  
STUDENTS IN SURAKARTA**



**Compiled as one of the conditions to complete Bachelor Degree of communication Science of  
Communication and Informatics Faculty**

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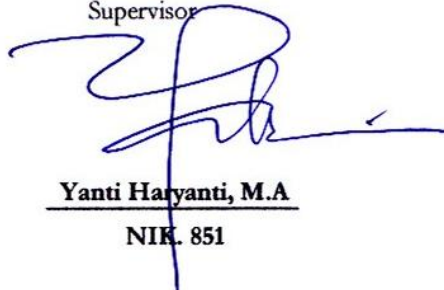
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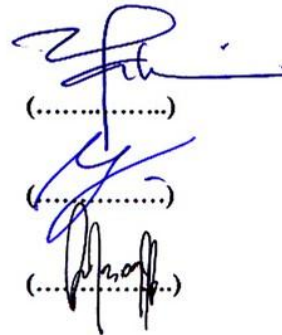
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**COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION PROCESS IN COPING WITH CULTURE  
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UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA**

**A Descriptive Qualitative Research about Communication Accommodation Process in Coping  
with Culture Shock experienced by Mexican Students in Surakarta**

**Abstrak**

Fenomena *culture shock* merupakan hal lazim yang sering dialami oleh para mahasiswa asing yang sedang belajar di Indonesia khususnya Surakarta. Lingkungan baru, adat istiadat dan budaya yang berbeda dengan negara asal adalah tantangan nyata yang tidak bisa dihindarkan. Menurut penelitian terbaru, indikasi keberhasilan mahasiswa asing tergantung bagaimana mereka menyelesaikan masalah *culture shock*. Untuk mempelajari lebih dalam bagaimana gegar budaya atau *culture shock* mempengaruhi kehidupan mahasiswa asing tersebut, faktor-faktor penyebabnya, serta bagaimana jalannya proses akomodasi komunikasi guna mengatasi fenomena tersebut, penulis melakukan sedikit penelitian dengan melibatkan tiga informan yang merupakan mahasiswa Meksiko. Metode yang digunakan untuk menggali beragam informasi tiga pelajar asing tersebut cukup sederhana yakni dengan menyodorkan beberapa poin pertanyaan atau wawancara. Hasil dari wawancara tersebut mencakup beberapa kesimpulan. Berbicara tentang hal-hal penyebab *culture shock*, masalah komunikasi (ketidakhahaman akan Bahasa Indonesia), ketidakmampuan dalam berinteraksi dengan masyarakat Surakarta, dan cara pandang yang konservatif mengakibatkan tekanan dan rasa tidak nyaman di antara mahasiswa Meksiko tersebut. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan *culture shock*, maka dibutuhkan proses akomodasi komunikasi. Secara garis besar, ada tiga penyelesaian utama yakni pendekatan bahasa, pendekatan budaya dan kesenian, serta dukungan mental dan moral dari orang-orang terdekat khususnya teman dari negara asal yang sama yakni Meksiko.

**Kata Kunci:** *culture shock*, proses akomodasi komunikasi, mahasiswa Meksiko, Surakarta

**Abstracts**

Culture shock phenomenon is such a common case encountered by the foreign students who study in Indonesia especially Surakarta. A couple of factors, like new environment, customs and culture different from the native country are tangible challenges hard to be avoided. According to the newest research, the indicator of the foreign student's success depends on the way the individual coping with the culture shock. To figure out on how the culture shock brings a significant impact to the foreign students, the causes, as well as the approaches in regard to the process of communication accommodation with an objective to resolve the phenomenon; the writer conducts a minor research involving three informants i.e. the Mexican students. The method applied to dig up information, arguably undemanding includes inquiring several questions or interviewing. The result of the interview eventually ends up in a catchy conclusion. Speaking of the factors leading to the culture shock, the communication matter (incapacity to understand Bahasa Indonesia), inability to interact with the people of Surakarta and the conservative point of views allow the students feel depressed and inconvenient. In short, there are three major solutions that include language approach, culture and art approach, and not to mention the mental and moral support from the close people especially friends from same country of origin

**Keywords:** culture shock, process of communication accommodation, Mexican students, Surakarta

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

At the bottom, human being is born as a social creature having a tight bond among others from social to cultural to religious life. The essential factor in interacting can't be apart from the process of communication involving two parties – communicator and communicant. According Thomas Florian in Indra Dewi (2013), there are some motives of people to always need other such us: the need to experience new thing, the need to get the response, the need to be acknowledge by others, and the need to feel safe. Long time ago before the globalisation era, most communication was done by people from a same place with less cultural, racial, weather, language differences. Contrary to globalization era like nowadays, more more people migrate from one place to another for finding job, spouse, education, or other personal reasons. As human migration is so common this days, inter-cultural communication is more common. Especially in the city where inter-cultural communication usually takes place, to fullfil their basic need and to ease their life, people is encouraged to interact with others with different background of race, culture, customs, weather, climate or language. (Lustig & Koester in Liliweri, 2011:11)

Speaking about Inter-cultural communication, it is one of complicated part of human interaction with different background that could lead to conflict or misfortune if it is not accessed properly (poelzl, 2012: Sorti, 2017), (Kwazdo, 2014). Immigrant who come to a new place with different culture, language, climate is required to adapt to the local culture, local climate, local habit, and understanding local language and customs, as well as obey the local rules. When the array of aforementioned matters can't be accommodated well by the individual, a fresh problem leading to an ample anxiety toward a new culture recognized as culture shock. People going through this term usually find themselves uncomfortable either mentally or physically. Stress and frustration are eventually inevitable. Kim (2003) claims that a culture shock is typically experienced by both immigrants and people moving to a new place can be settled down by the process of intercultural adaptation through communication accommodation.

Culture shock is defined as deep discomfort coming with the disappearance of familiar signs in the social connection. The indications include multitude of ways concerning the control over self in the daily life (Mulyana and Rakhmat, 2005: 174). Broadly speaking, culture shock is a type of dismay frequently experienced by an individual in a new environment (adjustment to the new culture). The value of a brand-new culture totally is disparate from the old one. Mulyana (2010: 19) reckons that culture shock is a clash of perception caused by a couple of internal factors (the culture values). They are learned by the people in a new environment of which worth contradictory and not understood. The new environment – at this case – covers new work environment, new school, new

settlement, and many others. The culture shock can cause anxiety and discomfort could lead to frustration. Furthermore, Xia (2009) infers that an individual who experiences culture shock will find some difficulties in showing interest of learning a new culture, be in a situation making them lack in deciphering a problem as well as deciding something important. Once the people fail in coping with the culture shock, they are prone to feud with the locals so that the interpersonal relation is obstructed. This serious matter can last for days, weeks, and months making them willing to leave for the origin of their country where they are used to the old culture, environment and habit. This regard is reinforced by a research conducted by Thompson (2006) concerning the impact of culture shock encountered by the international students from bachelor to master degree in a university in Australia. The result of Thomson's research indicates that the international students studying in Australia get the stress due to the pressure of new culture, mainly related to communication with family and how they live. The matters indirectly result in the academic grade of the students. Devinta (2015) also added that the key success of finishing the study abroad literally depends on how the foreign students overcome the culture shock.

The background of the issue behind the writing of this scientific publication is based on the culture shock matter experienced by the Mexican students taking a higher education in university in Surakarta. Speaking of the nationality background of the students is clearly about Mexico. Mexico is a country with a multiplicity of indigenous tribes with Spanish settlers and influence. Approximately there are 62 tribes with European settlers hundreds of local languages, with Spanish as the national language and Catholic as the main religion (<https://www.cia.gov/>). On the other hand, Indonesia has more than 300 ethnic groups with more than 700 hundred languages and Indonesian as its national language with Islam as the majority of the religion of the country (<https://www.cia.gov/>). This wonderful distinctive matter brings out a highlight why this writing is finally implemented with the subjects of Mexican students that reside in the city of Surakarta.

Surakarta is a city located in Central Java with Javanese culture as major ethnicity in this region. Being one of the city with the finest culture of Javanese kingdom, it easily to spot Javanese culture and influence in all aspect of life. Sarsito (2006) adds that the city of Surakarta as well as Yogyakarta is an urban area that takes hold of the strong Javanese culture. The culture application depicted in the daily ritual, tradition, and apparel is nothing but apparent. It is considered one of a kind – and for sure, there is no other place like Surakarta. Surakarta has some of best national university or institute such as Muhammadiyah University, State University of Surakarta, Institute of Indonesian Art Surakarta and many more (Ansyori, 2005). There is no wonder that the urban municipality in the eastern part of Central Java becomes the key destination for international students specifically the ones coming from Mexico to learn the Javanese culture and art.. According

to Rahma (2015), Surakarta is one of the cities with high of mixture of local and foreign students such as from Malaysia, Korea, Japan, USA, Mexico, Jordan, Egipt, Palestine etc.

Currently it is so common for youngsters to get new experience by moving to a new place or country to continue teir study or finding job or to just experiencing new culture (Ansyori, 2005). Ansyory (2015) statement is in accordance to Mexican student motivation to study in Indonesia. The motivation of Mexican student to study in Surakarta is they want to study indonesian culture and explore amazing Indonesian archipelago with help of Indonesian government through Indonesian scholarship program. As foreigners with different cultural, language, race, customs, weather background that contrary to Indonesia especialy Surakarta, the researcher is interested to do this research to find important point that might be useful for future research, or for immigrant who dealing with culture shock or for knowledge sharing.

There are a couple of points considered to be serious when it comes to adapting to their new environment in Surakarta. The sensitive questions oftenly asked by the adults such as the marriage status, where to go, and how to wear appropriately, locals perception and attitude toward foreigner, the condition of place to live in (according to the local culture) are a set of challenges faced by the students. The description of the problem in this research includes what makes the Mexican students undergo the culture shock in Indonesia particularly Surakarta?; how does the process of communication accommodation of the Mexican students take place?; what sort of factors supporting and hampering the process of communication accommodation of the Mexican students in regard to coping with the phenomenon of culture shock in Surakarta?; and what kind of things that make the foreigners feel safe in Indonesia and love the country?

## **1.2 Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 Inter-cultural Communication**

As a matter of fact, communication is the fundamental element each individual has. Communication plays an essential role in bridging the aim and purpose designated either the verbal and non-verbal context. No matter where we are, in our daily life, we always communicate with others of different background of culture, race, group, ethnicity, costums, etc. The word of “communication” derives from the *latin* language that is *communicatio* (originating from *communis* and having a similar meaning) (Mulyana, 2010:41). In the daily life, communication is the way of a person in interacting to another individual regardless of the place and the time. In practice, a human being always conveys and accepts a message with different type of purpose in it.

Communication and culture are not simply two words but they go with an integrated concept. According to Liliweri (2007), the modest description of intercultural communication is to add the term of culture in the communication statement between two or more people from diverse cultural



background in a couple of definitions of communication. Rahardjo, (2005:54) elaborates three most problematic areas in the scope of inter-cultural exchanges including the language obstacle, value difference, as well as the distinction of pattern of cultural behavior. Intercultural communication comes with two major functions be it the personal or social purpose. The one considered personal is classifies into social identity function, social integrity function adding the cognitive factor, and function so-called escaping. The social part covers the supervision function, connecting function, intercommunicating function, and entertaining function (Liliweri, 2007:36-44).

### **1.2.2 Communication Accomodation Theory (CAT)**

Accomodation is defined as ability to adjust, modify, or take control over someone's behavior in the response with other people (West dan Turner, 2008:217). Communication Accomodation Theory (CAT) focuses on the interaction among people from different group by judging the language, non-verbal behavior, and the use of individual's paralinguistic element (Gudykunst dan Moody, 2002:44). Communication accommodation is defined as the skill to adapt, modificate, or to regulate other's behavior or response. The core of communication accommodation theory is to shed the light on how the person is able to carry out the interaction affecting one and another. The theory of accommodation relies on a mechanism where the process of social psychology affects the observed behavior within interaction. Accommodation refers to approaches where the individuals interact, watch, and conform to the behavior during the interaction period (Rohim, 2009:212). The theory of accommodation claims that each person has an independent preference when it comes to interacting. The choices belong to the label of category including convergence, divergence, and excessive accommodation.

The initial process with regard to the theory of communication accommodation is convergence. Giles, Nikolas Coupland, dan Justin Coupland (1991) in Prasetya (2008) infers that convergence is a strategy letting an individual adapt to the communicative behavior of one and another. Convergence is a selective process not picking out the convergence strategy with other people. When the people do the convergence, they rely on their perception concerning somebody's talk and manner. Aside from perception as the result of communicating with other people, convergence is taken based on attraction. Once the communicators have an interest to each other, the convergence then take place within their conversation. The interest in the comprehensive term encompasses some characteristics such as charisma, credibility, and many others. Giles and Smith in (1979) Prasetya (2008), stated that there are some factor that influenced the attractiveness of individual to others, such as: the possibility of continues further talk, the skill communication, status difference between communicator and the communican. If both of the communicator and

communicators possess the same trust, behaviour, personality so it can be said the process of convergence will be smooth.

Contrary to Convergence, in communication accommodation, there is the opposite of convergence, where both parties decide not to have further conversation that is also known as divergence. Divergence occurs when the speakers have no effort to indicate the similarity among them. Arguably, each individual doesn't occupy their fear especially incapability of accommodating each other. However, there is a key rationale that needs to be comprehended – that's let the communicators decide to limit themselves with other communicators because of specific reasons. Those include defending a social identity or cultural pride, different role in conversation, and things undesired among the communicators (for instance, bad attitude and impolite look).

Another failure of dealing with communication accommodation is excessive accommodation. Excessive accommodation is typically a label addressed to the speakers whom the listeners think that the people are exaggerating. This term is particularly pointed to those who go with good intention but are considered demeaning. This sort of accommodation usually allows the listeners to think that they are unequal. There are some significant impacts in respect of excessive accommodation – three of them are the loss of motivation to learn a new language further, avoiding the talk, horrible manner to speakers causing the sexism. If the objective of the communication is meant so, the excessive accommodation is the main obstacle to achieve the goal. There were also times where, convergence is taken positively, and get positive response or otherwise. Local people tend to take things positively over other foreign individual that try to mimicking specific way of local culture in order to be accepted. But there were time where local don't like when there is too much convergence, especially when the convergence effort is done inappropriately, furthermore it could lead to serious problem. For example a nurse that is dealing with an old patient. In ordinance with convergence, the nurse try to talk to the patient with louder voice, as the nurse thinks usually older people have hearing problem. But the nurse gets negative respond as the old patient is offended being treated in inappropriate way. Locals tend to respond positively toward appropriate convergence according to situation and condition. But this good will that done inappropriately could lead others to be offended or getting negative response

### **1.2.3 Culture Shock**

Process of individual acquiring the rules of communication culture begins in the early phase of human being's life. By means of socialization and education, the cultural patterns are embedded to the individuals so that they appear as personality and behavior. The process of learning internalized lets the individuals interact with other members of culture whose similar patterns of

communication. The process of acquiring the patterns by those people is called enculturation (Mulyana and Rakhmat, 2005: 138).

Psychologically, the impact of acculturation is nothing else but the stress on the individuals interacting in the intercultural setting in the new environment. For instance, an individual who has to live in new place for long period of time with different language, culture, customs, standard that contrary to the individual previous acculturation, it will lead to culture shock. This communication experiences called culture shock, the individual who experience culture shock will feel deep discomfort and frustration (Mulyana and Rakhmat, 2005: 174). The term of culture shock is firstly introduced by an anthropologist named Kalvero Oberg in 1960. Kalervo Oberg (in Zapf, 1991:3) elucidates that culture shock, in essence, is described as a mental illness or work pathology addressed to those living abroad for the first time. This matter gives rise to the dismay caused by the loss of sign and symbol of intercommunication firmly adhered.

There are a couple of factors affecting culture shock itself. The first factor covers the intrapersonal matters such as communication skill, cross-cultural experience, and how the individual's personality is formed (whether it is autonomous or tolerating). Another influence in regard to this includes the physical characteristic such as appearance, age, health, and ability to socialize. Based on a research, a younger individual is prone to go through a culture shock phenomenon, higher than adults. In proportion to gender, women are subjected to get affected to this matter (Kazantzis in Milton, 1998). The second factor is the cultural variation influencing transition from one culture to another. The culture shock is likely to immediately take place of the discrepancy is highly significant. This factor is closely related to social influence, behavior, custom, religion, education, norm in society and language. Milton (1998) proclaims that the more different two cultures are, the lower the interaction between local students is. The third factor affecting expansively to the culture shock is the social politic manifestation. The clear evidence of this is the attitude from the surrounding community. They tend to do stereotyping and intimidating.

## **2. METHOD**

The research method used in this scientific publication writing research is qualitative research method. Qualitative research according Bahri (2010) is research that explain and analyze the event, phenomenon, perception, believe, attitude or believe from multiple angle of the individual or group with end result of conclusion. The purpose of this research is to know and understand the process of communication accommodation in coping with culture shock experienced by the Mexican students. The researcher is trying to dig deeper information about research subjects in descriptive way. In another word, this qualitative research uses more on case study approach used multiple

sources as many as possible (Kriyantono, 2012: 66). The purpose of this qualitative research is to describe the result of the research in systematical, factual and accurate order. The method of collecting data uses an in-depth interview with the informant. The implementation of the interview technique begins by providing some sheets with lists of queries nicely arranged so that they can be used in the formulation of the issue (Sugiyono, 2015). The researcher also adds that the technique of taking the sampling is by the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the technique used in scientific research to obtain the data with specific purpose and use. Purposive sampling is taking the data by non random sampling, the researcher has chosen the subject of the interview that matched with the research goal (Sugiyono, 2010). In addition to that, this research actually refers to some qualification to determine the sample. To specify the qualification, the researcher makes some investigation in Surakarta until the finding the correct informants from Mexico. They are foreign students varying from sophomore to senior of prestigious university in Surakarta who go through a culture shock and successfully cope with the matter through the process of communication accommodation. Three informants are comprised of one female and two males.

Speaking of the method in analyzing a data in this research, the researcher comes with two phases. The first phase is reducing the data. It classifies the acquired data and selects the data required. In the end, the information that is not needed will be discarded. The second phase is called organizing the information data successfully selected, be it the result of the interview or the documentation. Meanwhile, the third phase is drawing the conclusion. It is basically the whole description of the data based on the proper information combination (Pujeklesono, 2015). To test the validity of the research, the researcher used data triangulation. Data triangulation is the technique to check data validity by having more than one source of informant. In tune with the factuality, the researcher makes an interview with some interviewees. In the end, the data acquired is more varied and credible as the method of comparing one interviewee to another is taken. Besides, the researcher tries to match the interview result with the previous theory of the book or previous research from the journal.

The interview is conducted within two sessions involving some informants from Mexico. An informant refers to an individual who brings out both a response and a treatment given to him or her (Idrus, 2009: 91). The three objects of the research are three Mexican students that currently study at ISIS (*Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta* or Institute of Indonesian Art Surakarta). Informants who take part in this research are none other than three Mexican students who study in ISIS (*Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta* or Institute of Indonesian Art Surakarta). The first informant is named Xochitl Espinosa Santiago aged 33. The Mestizo lady who originates in Oaxaca currently is enrolled as a student of batik art making in the 4th semester (2 years).

According to Cambridge dictionary, Mestizo means people of mixed race, especially the offspring of a Spaniard and an American Indian, a term that commonly used in Latin America. The second Informant is named Leon Gilberto Medellin aged 30 from Hidalgo City, Oaxaca Province with Mestizo background. Leon lives in Surakarta for almost 4 years. He is a humanist and a senior student of *Karawitan* (it's a musical tradition from Java using gamelan instrument). Meanwhile, the last informant is Wolter Antonio B.J aged 21 years old from North Mexico with Spanish background. The guy dwelling in the northern part of Mexico studies theater for one year program. He is now a sophomore and he lives in Surakarta for 10 months. The analytic unit used in this research is comprised of communication accommodation process and culture shock. There are three steps in analytic in communication adaptation Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) such as convergence, divergence, and exaggerating accommodation.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 A Range of Points Making the Mexican Students Experience Culture Shock in Indonesia**

Based on the interview, three informants go through the honeymoon phase while living in Indonesia. Two out of them undergo a relatively short honeymoon while the rest enjoys that fun moment within a month. According to Deborah Swallow (2010) honeymoon is the first phase of culture shock when the individual experience or find new things lead to positive experience during early stage living in the new environment. After sometime, The individuals usually face the terrible culture shock in the beginning of the month that lead to stress, inconvenience and anxiety. The discrepancy of culture, language, and point of view is the key rationale why those foreign students feel the extreme inconvenience, stress, and anxiety as stated by Littlejohn (2002) uncertainty and anxiety within intercultural communication rendered by the weakness in the environment adaptation. The disruption leads to an array of matters concerning communication and social interaction against the surrounding. This following response is the clear description of how informant 1 and informant 2 feel about:

*“When I went to the campus for the first time, I experienced a communication problem as I didn't speak Indonesian. Not being able to interact with the local people totally is tough and makes me feel inconvenience. The hardest time is between month 1 and month 4. I can communicate well after having lived for a year.”* (20 April 2018)

*“For me, the first month was so hard because I had to adapt and to understand the Indonesian paradigm, especially in Solo or Surakarta. That thing was getting so hard as the state of affair made me be an Indonesian. I felt great once understanding the local culture and language. Honestly, the biggest hurdle to communicate is the language barrier as I didn't speak Indonesian even a word. Before coming to Indonesia, I didn't learn Indonesian so when I arrived in Indonesia,*

*I started learning Indonesian from zero. The thing I wonder was how come the people in an academic environment talk in a language mixing Indonesian and Javanese. Meanwhile, the society in Surakarta prefers speaking in Javanese to Indonesian. This truth was a real challenge for me.”*  
(20 April 2018)

Compared to informant 1 and 2, informant 3 felt so excited once arriving in Indonesia. The one that mattered for him is the language problem.

*“To me, the easiest part of living in Surakarta was the first week as I stayed in the dorm with other foreign students with the help of local students that always assisted foreigner for anything. I started to explore Indonesia and I found a lot of new things. The first problem I encountered was mostly the language when I lived in the boarding house in the first week. That was the first day when I had to go to the campus for the first time. I woke up in the early morning, and I didn’t have shampoo so I went out to buy one. When I was in a small shop I didn’t know what to say to buy shampoo. So I made a body gesture like shampooing my hair and then the shopkeeper understood and got me the shampoo. It took 5 minutes of body gesture until the shopkeeper understood what I meant. It was so funny that I found out that in Bahasa Indonesia Shampoo also called shampoo.”* (03 May 2018)

Besides communication problem, the cultural problem portrayed in the viewpoint of the locals against a foreign thing, is another obstacle experienced by the Mexican students once adapting to the local society in Surakarta is inevitable. The correlation between communication closely related to language and culture is nothing but obvious. As stated by Lililweri (2007), language is a reflection of culture. The greater scale of the culture difference brings out uncertainty and ambiguity in the intercultural communication. Vasilopoulus (2016) stated that language adaptation is the key factor in determining communication between foreign student and locals. As the language adaptation such as local language, non verbal language and communication pattern mastered by foreign student, the relationship of inter-cultural communication among foreign students and local could be more fluid. The better inter-cultural communication by language bridge, the more understanding of foreign student toward local culture and so does the acceptance of the locals toward foreign student. So to speak, it will be less likely conflict between foreign student with local to happen (poelzl, 2012: Sorti, 2017), (Kwazdo, 2014)

Informant 1 and 2 admitted that they got the straight impact of local’s way of thinking contrasting to the Mexican’s viewpoint in general. As stated in Tubb & Moss (2000), poor understanding in the intercultural communication will lead to failure in establishing good bond. The intercultural communication itself takes place between different cultures no matter the ethnicity or social structure is. According to the informant, most of the population they’ve met, often inquire a set of sensitive personal queries including the marital status, social status, unnecessary things no need to answer. That sort of question is not common in the Mexican culture and it’s derogatory

instead. Beside, local also have wrong perception toward Mexico lead to the problem getting worse. In accordance with informant 1 and 2, here is the short quote of the interview.

*“Generally speaking, the people of Surakarta are polite. However, there is a set of matters making me inconvenient to live in. The first ground is nothing else but the sensitive personal question. The people in my country people do not get used to asking to strangers like ‘where are you going’, ‘with whom are you?’ ‘Are you married?’ All of these questions make my day even harder and I didn't get the point why they ask this unnecessary question. I felt like I am being verbally abused when a stranger asks this kind of question to me. I also experience difficulties living in my boarding house as the woman-only boarding house would not open the door after 10 PM. Most of my activities finished after 10 PM, and it is a taboo for a woman to go out at night. I had a problem with the owner of lodging house as she didn't open the door for me and some friends in the lodging house who viewed me negatively when I went back home late at night. The second thing is how the people offer me a tough option for wearing the fully covered clothes despite the hot temperature. When I walked and wore the tropical outfit (a tank top for instance), the people gazed at me and talked behind me. For me, caring what people say is something unpleasant.” (20 April 2018)*

In another hand, informant 2, A male doesn't feel disturbed being asked about personal question as to him. But informant 2 feel something weird about locals' view toward him that makes him feel inconvenience while informant 3 seems to have less negative response to something new that he experience. Rajasekar (2015) also stated that culture shock goes with a different point view among individuals while interacting and taking on different culture in a new setting toward the social community. Each individual experiences culture shock differently depends on gender, age, previous experience about culture shock, personal motivation, ignorance, self esteem, endurance, flexibility for example woman is more sensitive to personal question, while male are not bother that much as women do appear to react more negatively to inconvenient experiences in experimental settings (Bradley et al., 2001; Chentsova-Dutton & Tsai, 2007; Grossman & Wood, 1993). Hampson and collegus (2006) added that women may be more sensitive to all the emotions of others because of their need more than men to attach with their children, or women may be especially responsive to negative emotions only because of the need to react to fitness threats more than men do.

Informant 2 managed to cope the culture shock by understanding more the local culture by learning local javanese culture before coming to Surakarta and the flexibility to adapt to local culture. In coherence with previous research done by UMS student titled Inter-cultural communication of foreign Student in KH Mas Mansyur Dormitory supported by Mesidor and Kaye (2016) the factor that contribute to cultural, social, academic, and psychology adaptation of foreign student are the previous experience or learning, endurance, self efficiency, spiritual, social support, emotional intelligent and personality. For more details here is the informant 2 statement about local's view towards him:

*“To me as a man, a question about my marital status whether I have married or not, is just funny. On the other hand, a woman will find this kind of question inconvenient. But what makes me feel so weird or inconvenience to this day is avoiding physical contact when we meet each other. In Mexico everytime we meet or see our friend of opposite sex, we usually give a hug and a kiss on the cheek. But according to local Javanese, physical contact is a no no. So I don't give a hug or kiss on the cheek to my female friend everytime I see them. It feels weird not to give a hug to friend of opposite sex, but I am trying to get used to it. Also there is one another problem that is intriguing me how Indonesian always perceive Mexico as western country. For instance my lecturer said to me, 'no wonder you are really good at playing piano because you are a westerner'. Well, frankly speaking Mexico is not a western country, people can play specific musical instruments because they learnt it not just because they are westerners. Because most people view me as a westerner, sometimes when I am being serious, critical or vocal, my lecturer said 'no wonder because you are a westerner, you are so serious, critical and vocal'. To me, being serious, critical or vocal during learning sessions is a must. It has nothing to do with the place of origin. And the funny thing is, when I am being serious about my learning, my classmates think I am an apple polisher or attention seeker. I must be serious as in learning we must be serious no matter who we are furthermore once I leave Indonesia, I will have no one to ask. It is confusing to me....well anyway I keep doing things whatever I feel right and acceptable by locals. For example, initially I thought, I wanted to be accepted by locals so I must act local and do things exactly like Javanese culture that I had personally learnt. Now, I know that Javanese is quite permissive in some aspects and not as rigid as I thought before. So sometimes I still do my habits based on my Mexican culture but I explain to the locals first the reason why I do this and why I do that. Yeah being flexible will ease the process.” (20 April 2018)*

Unlike Informant 1 and 2, informant 3 infers that the toughest culture shock he once faced with is when doing some activities without comprehending any Indonesian word. According to him, the local habits like putting the shoes off when entering the house and traveling by motorcycle are somehow surprising. In addition, the Indonesian people have unique behavior every time the individuals meet foreigners. They are prone to smile and be easy to talk to the one they've just got acquainted.

### **3.2 The Communication Accommodation Process of Mexican Students in Coping with Culture Shock in Surakarta**

Broadly speaking, the vast cultural differences become the core of culture shock problem itself. Hall (1981) clarifies that cultural differences have a close correlation to an idea or concept, self-interpretation and acceptance, and understanding of the social life of the community. To understand a new culture, communication and social interaction are highly required. The communication accommodation process of the Mexican students in Surakarta tends to belong to convergence meaning that there is communicative behavior between the first speakers (Mexican students) with other speakers (locals). A specific strategy used in adapting to other people's conduct is by means of the language approach. The language meant to be here is, for sure, the Indonesian language.

Arguably, the matter of culture shock could be diminished by understanding, learning and practicing a language officially used by the locals (Bahasa Indonesia) – and true to this case, the



foreigners quickly adapt to the surroundings by becoming proficient in Indonesian language. The more the vocabulary of local language is known, the less the misunderstanding could be caused. Liliweri (2007) affirms that language appears as a symbol system of arbitrary vowel allowing everyone in a certain culture to study a particular system of culture when it comes to interacting and communicating. When the foreign students of Mexico conceive the language, they indirectly overcome the culture shock. Additionally, Dayaksini (2008) proclaims that the language and social abilities of the foreign students are considered overriding when it comes to the adaptation process in the culture shock. The individual also adds that the one successfully getting over the culture shock is capable of going through a couple of aspects such as social competence, openness to other ways of thinking, as well as cultural adaptation. Learning local language is part of convergence in Communication Accommodation Theory, where the foreigner are trying to adapt by understanding and learning local culture. These following responses are how the informant 2 and 3 express their thought with respect to settling the matter of culture shock.

*“I think the major reason why I come to Indonesia is evident – that’s to learn Bahasa Indonesia. As a Mexican, I prefer speaking in Spanish to English. I am going to talk in English unless I have an option. When I lived in Surakarta for the first time, I found the lodging house of mine filled with foreign students who couldn’t speak Bahasa Indonesia. A condition where the foreigners had no intention to learn Bahasa Indonesia literally worsened my communication ability. Hence, I decided to move to another lodging house. At the new place, I could learn Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese due to the supporting environments”* (20 April 2018)

*“Understanding the Indonesian culture by way of speaking Bahasa Indonesia makes me easier to adapt. The language learning process seems easier because of the fact that the locals help me improve my speaking skill. The willingness to teach the language properly and correctly to a foreigner like me is highly appreciated.”* (03 May 2018)

In Addition to the language approach, another way applied by the Mexican students in coping with the phenomenon of culture shock is nothing else but the culture and art. According to Mahendra (2014), a culture refers to a way of life of particular people inherited from generation to generation. As a matter of fact, it flourishes from time to time. The form of culture can vary from custom religion and from apparel to art. When it comes to this research, a culture is represented through the people’s habit and customs. The set of aspects lead to a significant impact for the informants living in Surakarta.

Based on the interview conducted in April 2018, informant 1 tries to carry out the process of communication accommodation by finding out more on batik – a typical method to create colored designs in garment commonly found in Javanese culture. By means of this heritage, the Oaxacan lady could learn all the things concerning the Javanese culture and noble values in it. The

same is true with informant 1; informant 2 accommodates the culture shock problem by applying the approach of art. In terms of interacting with the society, this person always understands the local wisdom and acquires an array of information about the *karawitan* art. Meanwhile, informant 3 always puts high curiosity on what he has learned particularly the local culture and custom by the assistance of his close people. Here are the informants' set of answers based on the interview:

*"To get over the matter of culture shock, I put all of my effort on learning batik. I keep trying to understand the Indonesian culture by inquiring some of my friends coming with good competence regarding this."* (20 April 2018)

*"My early intention coming to Indonesia is to study the traditional Javanese musical instrument named Karawitan and figure out the life of a pengrawit or a player of traditional Javanese music instrument. This sort of motivation is the key reason why I could survive among the matters in culture shock."* (20 April 2018)

*"Somehow, there is no way better other than finding out the local customs and culture whilst facing the culture shock. I love travelling, I travel a lot, I met a lot of new people that kindly help me to understand Indonesian culture. I keep trying to act locally, wear what they put on, and eat what they eat. As time goes by I am used to it"* (03 May 2018)

Another important factor to tackle the culture shock down is by the support and motivation from the close people such as local friends, family, Mexican counterparts and not to mention the environment. The mental support literally helps increasing the self-confidence of the foreigners. The presence of a friend is one of the paramount facets in an intrapersonal relationship. The bond manifests itself just like either a family or a workmate (Strictest and Confidence, 2011). Additionally, the great value of being amiable and welcoming brought by the people of Surakarta is another point why the Mexican students can live through differences like cultures, weather, language and many others. In previous research done by UMS student titled Inter-cultural communication of foreign Student in KH Mas Mansyur Dormitory supported by Leong (2015) stated that acceptance and support of locals people, institution, country will boost the material, emotional, social and informational support that ease or hinder the adaptation process. Here is the quotation of informant 1 stating that family and friends play an important role in coping with the culture shock.

*"The most essential factor making me stay motivated and convenient living in Indonesia is the presence of my Javanese foster family. The members of the family always give their best support to me. When I was here for the first time, my friends always mentally and spiritually supported me making me more forbearing. They often entertained me when I was sad or missed my home country. And also having a friend from a same country of origin like Mas Leon (informant 2) it helped me alot. When people from same country explain to you about this and that. That feels better understood. And also when I miss speaking spanish or spanish environment, after I met mas Leon*

*(informant 1). I feel like I am recharged. You know, being able to speak freely and naturally and Spanish, that a huge relieve of longing of home country for me. ”(20 April 2018)*

Unlike informant 1 who feels great due to the support coming from the family and friends, informant 2 enjoys his life in Surakarta because of the positive impetus from his environment. To put it in a nutshell, simply check his response out.

*“The evident factors that make me being accepted in Indonesia till I feel like it is my own home are the acceptance and friendliness of the people in my surrounding, the place where I live now. When I passed in front of them, people in my neighborhood are so friendly and greet me first. I also greet them whenever I see them on my way.” (20 April 2018)*

According to informant 3, one of the key factors in improving self-confidence when it comes to coping with the culture shock is the positive value that locals always give to the foreigners. The values encompass hospitality, grace, and warmth. Those features are like nothing else in the rest of the world. This man also adds that the Indonesian people (specifically the ones he has come together) are willing to teach him Bahasa Indonesia (even it is just teaching the basic words). Here is the informant 3’s statement regarding the local treatment to the foreigners:

*“To me, the locals really assist and make me feel a lot of positive things. When I am in the restaurant to order some foods, the waiter always smiles at me and help pronouncing some Indonesian words listed in the menu. Every time I walk, people always greet me and every time I ask, the local kindly explain and even give me some help. I regularly make a call to my family in Mexico everytime I miss them. I am so grateful that most out of my local friends here help me to cope with the culture shock that I experience. And also having a friend from same country like Xochitl (Informant 1) and Mas Leon (informant 2) that is huge relief for me as she always calm me down and explained alot of things to me.” (03 May 2018)*

### **3.3 Factors that Support and Hamper the Process of Communication Accommodation of Mexican Students in Coping with Culture Shock in Surakarta**

There are two elements that can’t be apart in the communication accommodation process faced by the foreign students of Mexico – supporting and hampering factors. To cast the light on, a supporting factor basically is relevant to the all the things affecting individuals (in this case, the people refer to the Mexican students who encounter the problem of culture shock) who become reconciled to either social or cultural trouble so that the recent state of affair is better than before. Meanwhile, a hampering factor covers all aspects that lead a person in a deteriorating condition or even worse than before. The second one directly has a result in inconvenience and psychic pressure.

Based on the interview, it concludes that there are a couple of supporting factors allowing the Mexican students to be adjustable to a new environment in Surakarta. The first factor that is arguably determining is the mental and spiritual support of the people of Surakarta. The mental support meant here is the acceptance of the local society toward foreigners. According to informant 2, the key regard why the foreigner easily adapt is due to the fact that the people of Surakarta who love

welcoming the global citizens. One of the tangible samples is when the locals are not disinclined to greet him in a public area. Meanwhile, the spiritual support refers to the encouragement offered by closest people in the foreigners' surroundings such as friends, family, as well as foster family. Here is the citation conveyed by informant 2 in respect of what he feels while interacting with the people of Surakarta:

*“The attitude of locals relatively welcoming in my neighborhood eases me in adapting with the surroundings. When I walked before them, they greeted me first then I replied back. This incredible value makes me think that Surakarta is like my second home.” (20 April 2018)*

Another supporting factor that makes the Mexican students feel comfortable to live in Surakarta is the similarity between two countries. Speaking of the food or daily culinary delight, both Indonesian and Mexican cuisine is prone to be spicy and aromatic. There is no wonder that the Mexican students come with no difficulties – in this case is the food adjustment – once being faced with the matter of culture shock. In addition to that, both countries share the sameness in terms of weather. The overall summer temperature in Mexico reaching from 28 to 29 degrees Celsius has no big distinction to Indonesia. This factor lets the Mexican students feel the climate as if they were in their own country. When it comes to the social relationship, Indonesia and Mexico apply the value of mutual assistance culture. Fundamentally, the life principle of Indonesian people who need each other is the true reflection of the Mexican people. Here are some responses of the whole informants:

*“Mexican food is also spicy just like the food here. Socially, people here is similar to our people in Oaxaca, we both love to go for the mutual assistance.” (20 April 2018)*

*“The weather of my hometown overall is kind of similar and the same is true with the culture and food. Either the local people here or the Mexican community shares the same culture like the mutual help. For me, the similarity is more winning than the difference.” (20 April, 2018)*

*“Surakarta city and the city where I am from have a lot of similarities in common. Both cities are municipalities which hold strong cultural and historical background. The people living both in my hometown and Surakarta love smiling. The foods appear to be the same (although their taste is a bit different but they are spicy). The weather is somehow similar specifically weather in Indonesia is like summer in Mexico.” (03 May 2018)*

Apart from the supporting factors, the ones that play an important role in affecting the mentality of Mexican students in coping with the culture shock are the hampering aspects. The first obstacle concerning the process of communication accommodation in coping with culture shock is the viewpoint of some Indonesian people. The society believes that the nation sitting in Central America uses English instead of Spanish in the daily conversation. The stereotype commonly misunderstood by the people of Indonesia over foreigners (particularly white and originating from

the western hemisphere) that are always associated with the English speakers is not absolutely correct. As we all know that the official language of Mexico is not English but the Spanish.

The wrong assumption makes informant 1 experience the harder culture shock pressure when learning Bahasa Indonesia for the first time. This obstacle has a great impact on their psychological and it is impacted them more difficult to learn Bahasa Indonesia. The sort of barrier also affects the psychological condition of the foreigner. The process of acquiring some Indonesian vocabulary knowledge eventually experiences the retardation. Here is informant 1's statement in regard to factors that hinder the adaptation process of culture shock in Surakarta:

*“At first, it was so difficult to learn Bahasa Indonesia. Instead of talking in Indonesian, the locals especially my classmates make conversation in English.” (20 April, 2018)*

Besides wrong perception, the inconsistency of the Surakarta's people in terms of using Bahasa Indonesia (the major mean of communication in Indonesia) is the second barrier, letting the Mexican students go through difficulty in prevailing over culture shock so that the process of communication accommodation can't perform as it's supposed to be. The irregularity meant in this case is none other than the switching language system between Indonesian and Javanese (the language commonly spoken in Surakarta). This incredibly leads to a fresh matter in comprehending a new language. As we know that the Javanese comes with disparities either in the accent or the grammar. The third obstacle is the great difference of mindset between two nations. The Indonesian culture (particularly Javanese) that is prone to highlight sensitivity to other people's feeling and inexpressive character makes the Mexican students think over and over. Arguably, the foreign individuals can't express the things coming from their mind. Here are the popular beliefs of informant 1 and 3:

*“I find the way people mixing Indonesian and Javanese so tough. I thought people here will speak just like on the textbook. In fact, it is so common for people to speak in slang, the different mother tongue I totally don't understand.” (20 April 2018)*

*“Aside from language, the hampering factor might appear because of the contrasting culture between two countries. In order to easily adapt, it requires time to learn and understand something.” (03 May, 2018)*

### **3.4 A Set of Matters Letting the Mexican Students Feel Convenient Living in Indonesia**

As claimed by the Mexican informants, being away from the homeland is nothing but hard. Apart from it, there are several essential points making the foreigners feel at home and convenient living in Indonesia. The first factor is the family-based environment. The attitude of the peoples of Surakarta accepting the foreigners and amiable is the major point allowing the informants to always feel safe

like living in their own country. The locals are also helpful. When the Mexican students find difficulties while learning Bahasa Indonesia, the people of Surakarta are willing to assist them.

The second regard is related to the prime motivation why to travel to Indonesia. As we know that the Mexican students' coming is not only for the short visit but also with the cultural mission. Informant 1 stays motivated in the country due to batik. Informant 2 agrees that the archipelago deserves to be populated since it comes with the local wisdom – one of them is *karawitan* culture. Unlike informant 1 and 2, informant 3 thinks that the quality of being comfortable or uncomfortable depends on the individual's intention; otherwise this program is not worthwhile why not for not loving Indonesia as big as loving Mexico. Three informants agree that having friends from the same country (i.e. Mexico) is great to boost the mental state while being in Surakarta. It turns out that meeting and greeting bring a significant impact to dispel the longing of family and homeland.

### **3.5 The Process of Communication Accommodation Process that Experienced by Mexican Students in Coping with Culture Shock in Surakarta**

Culture shock can be only overcome by right process of communication accommodation. According to West dan Turner (2008:217) communication accommodation process has three kind of process which is convergence, divergence and excecive accommodation as stated in the literature review. Based on the interview, each individual experienced different kind of culture shock. For example informant 1 a female found that questioned by locals about marital status, unnecessary question or other personal question by locals, she said being asked personal question by local is like a verbal abuse. In another hand, a male informant two stated that questioned about marital status, unnecessary question or personal question, according informant 2, it is just funny. The same with informant 2, a male informant 3 also stated that he was questioned alot about marital status, the reason why he is Indonesia, or other chit chat by stranger, informant 3 , thinks that local is being so helpful of explaining everything despite of frequency of unnecessary chit chat by locals..

So, it concludes that each of the informants experience different kind of culture shock and has their own way of coping with culture shock that suit the problem and the personality. The range of the culture shock that experienced by the informants is so vary, but most of them stated that language was the hardest of all, the second locals habit and perception toward foreigner. Communication accommodation theory that used by 3 informants in coping with culture shock are mostly convergence. The convergence succesffulness in coping with culture shock can be seen from the interview result that most informant are trying to adapt and never face big problem that make them willing to leave for the country of origin.

The process of communication accommodation convergence that conducted by Mexican students are by learning Indonesian language and trying to speak it. The second convergence done

by Mexican students are understanding local culture and customs so then they can act more locally. Informant 1, 2 and 3 trying to learn local culture and customs from asking locals and reading from book or internet. Each of informant has their own way to learn local culture, such as informant one can gain better understanding of local culture through batik making and classmate, informant 2 stated that learning javanese traditional instrument and having Javanese friend help him better to understand local culture, in other hand informant 3 loves to travel around Indonesia. Informant 3 stated that during his travel, local help him so much especially in explaining local culture and customs.

Despite informant 1 show the divergence when she was rejected in the boarding house because she used to come late. Informant 1 didn't give up and move other place that suite to her and apply the convergence more to local till she felt more comfortable. Informant 2 also stated that he experienced divergence especially when he was so serious in the class or good at playing piano, informant 2 managed to cope this problem by being more flexible and explain more the local about the reason. Meanwhile informant 3 is an easy going young guy who always expect unexpected, he loves traveling and have travelled to Bali, Lombok, Sumatera, Sulawesi by himself. During his travel he said tried to act locally, eat what locals eat, speak like locals and gave up his old habit because according to him the way to cope culture shock is by emersing and do like locals do. Much of the informant 3 had done during his life in Indonesia for 10 months are the effort of total convergence.

Based on the interview, the 3 informants never experienced excessive accommodation. This factor of leading those 3 informants never experienced excessive accommodation as they had learnt Indonesian culture through the right way and right source. Another factor is the 3 informants used to think whether right or wrong before dealing with intercultural communication. The informants stated that they carefully act and speak in order not to offend the locals or friends. This factor led them to never experienced negative experience as the source of excessive accommodation.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

As specified by the interview conducted on April 20<sup>th</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, collected then analyzed, it concludes that the process of communication accommodation is found to be less complicated. At the beginning, the honeymoon phase encountered by the Mexican students is relatively short. This type of condition has a significant impact on the sooner culture shock experience. Language, culture, and custom highly contrastive to the country of origin are the formidable obstacles that have to be admitted. As the time goes, the foreigners who study in Indonesia eventually tackle the matter of culture shock down without a hitch.

Broadly speaking, there are three significant communication accommodation convergence processes used by the Mexican students in coping with culture shock in Surakarta such as approaches of language, culture, and art, as well as mental and moral support from the closest people (from family to friend). A language approach refers to a way to diminish misunderstanding frequently generated by learning and understanding Bahasa Indonesia. The approach of culture and art is often associated with how the foreigners respond to the local culture like delving into the culture of batik and Javanese musical instrument called *karawitan*. Meanwhile, the mental and moral support from the closest people is the most essential factor so that the process of communication accommodation in resolving the problem of culture shock is getting stronger.

Regardless of the culture shock problem experienced by the informants at the beginning of living in Indonesia, the Mexican students have a surprising thought that Indonesia deserves to be inhabited. Not only is the country safe but it's also convenient in terms of weather, foods, and mutual assistance values. The informants honestly utter that having counterparts from the same country helps the process of communication accommodation easier. In addition to that, the intense support from the locals who are amiable and welcoming literally makes the adaptation process of the Mexican people perform well.

Based on the interview, the 3 informants successfully do the communication accommodation process through convergence as most of them keep staying in Indonesia and almost finished their education. Despite informant 1 and Informant 2 also stated that he experienced divergence but finally they can solve the problem with their own way. According to informant 1 and 2, experiencing those negative experiences made them more careful. Meanwhile informant 3 is an easy-going young guy who always expects the unexpected, he loves traveling and has travelled to Bali, Lombok, Sumatera, Sulawesi by himself. During his travel he said he tried to act locally, eat what locals eat, speak like locals and gave up his old habit because according to him the way to cope with culture shock is by immersing and do like locals do. The 3 informants never experience excessive accommodation as they had learnt local culture in the right way and source. Also the 3 informants are so careful before doing something whether it is right or not. According to the 3 informants, long consideration is a must before dealing with intercultural communication.

The outstanding finding that will be useful for future research is about how friends from the same country of origin help a lot in dealing with all of the negative factors that lead to culture shock. All informants stated that being helped by a friend that comes from the same country of origin has a positive impact to cope with culture shock. Informant 1 who has been living in Surakarta for 2 years and informant 3 who has been living in Surakarta for 10 months stated similar positive responses about being helped by informant 2 that has been living in Surakarta for almost 4 years.



Informant 1 and 2 added the having informant 2 helped them to learn bahasa Indonesia, quite often informant 2 can explain better the specific term in Spanish and easy to understand than being taught by locals teacher or friends. Everytime informant 1 and 3 missed home, informant 2 always give them support as informant 2 is the role model of informant 1 and 3 to stay and to keep motivated. According to informant 1 and 3, everytime they meet informant 2 and speaking in their native language (Spanish), it gives them feel relieved and so positive. According to informant 1 and 3 being able to freely express in native language without thinking like expressing in foreign language Indonesian or English so positive and able to wash away longing of homecountry. According to informant 1,2 and 3 friendship keep the bond of from same origin of country in Indonesia through facebook to support each other.

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