

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher produced the research results, which are discussed in this chapter. It is very important that the discussion about the overall study results influences the outcome. The purpose of this discussion is to provide answers to the problem description and to draw conclusions from the relevant theoretical review.

#### **A. Findings**

Data for this research analysis were collected through in-depth interviews with nine participants (R1 to R9). The short-term international language teaching practice program in Thailand involves respondents as community teachers. This interview was conducted to gain a better understanding of their experiences during the program, including the difficulties they encountered and how they overcame those issues.

Before conducting the research by formally interviewing respondents, the researcher approached the respondents by conveying some of them in outline, what were the biggest challenges they experienced while in Thailand, from the results of the informal interviews, various research instruments were obtained to conduct formal interviews

Each respondent was interviewed at different times, Amara was interviewed on October 1, 2024, Ara was interviewed on the same date as Amalia, namely September 27, Salsa was interviewed on September 29, cte was interviewed on October 14, Vicka was interviewed on September 28, Annisa was interviewed on October 4, Melly was interviewed on October 6 and Santi was interviewed on October 7, 2024. Researchers conducted interviews using Indonesian, to make it easier to answer all questions fluently. After the interview, to ensure the accuracy of the data, the researcher collaborated with participants to discuss the research results via WhatsApp.

Two main questions focus this research. The first question discusses the experiences of Thai community teachers, such as how they adapt to different teaching environments and interact with international students. The second question examines the issues they face when teaching English to international students, such as cultural differences, language proficiency, and the strategies they use. It is expected that the information obtained from this interview assist in the development of similar programs in the future and provide deeper insights into the dynamics of teaching in a multicultural context.

## **1. The experiences of Thai community teachers**

Based on the results of interviews with 9 community teachers majoring in English education, there were 8 people who had carried out short-term international programs in 2023 and 1 person in 2024 who answered the interview. Each person is given the initials Amara, Ara, Amalia, Salsa, Ayu, Vicka, Annisa, Melly and Santi.

### **a. Students Engagements in Learning English**

A key element in making sure students stay engaged and meet their learning objectives is learner engagement. As told by Richards in (Rajabalee and Rennie, 2020) meaningful learning happens when students actively participate in the questioning process to develop critical thinking skills and allow them to clarify concepts they do not yet understand. In this situation, the teacher serves as a facilitator, helping students to formulate meaningful questions and boost their confidence in their ability to learn.

Based in the interviews, respondents observed differences in student engagement between Thai and Indonesian students. All participants agreed that Thai students showed higher levels of engagement and active participation.

“Their learning style may be the same, what is visible is that students in Thailand are more active and they like to ask questions”. (Amara, Script 1, line 101, interview data)

Based on the community teachers’ statements, it is seen that

although the learning styles of students in Thailand are similar, their active and curious nature is a prominent characteristic. This shows the need for teachers to adopt interactive teaching methods and provide more opportunities for students to discuss and ask questions. In line with that,

Ara explained:

“In terms of learning style, I feel that Thai students are more active than Indonesian students, not all students but many of them are more active when learning. Because every time we teach, they always ask questions and like to be taught”. (Ara, Script 2, line 149, interview data)

It can be concluded that students in Thailand show higher activeness in the learning process. This can be seen from their habits of asking questions and being enthusiastic about receiving teaching. Amalia added:

“They are really interested in our teaching style, so when we teach, they are curious and wondering, always asking questions if they do not understand”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 103, interview data)

It was seen that students showed high interest in the teaching style applied. Their curiosity and habit of asking questions when facing difficulties reflected their enthusiasm in learning. Several respondents emphasized the high enthusiasm of Thai students in learning.

“They are extraordinary, their enthusiasm for learning is high even though sometimes we have to repeat some instructions in activities several times because they are confused about what is meant.” (Salsa, Script 4, line 87, interview data)

It is seen that although students have high enthusiasm for learning, sometimes they still need further clarification to understand the instructions

well. This shows that although students are very enthusiastic, it is important for teachers to provide clearer explanations and ensure that students fully understand each step of the activity so that the learning process can run smoothly. Similarly, Ayu noted:

“There, learning is better than in Indonesia, maybe because the curriculum is different and more relaxed but also not too much difference because the culture is almost similar to Indonesian people and they are also polite. Their enthusiasm in learning is good, they often ask us if they do not understand”. (Ayu, Script 5, line 29, interview data)

Despite the differences in the more relaxed curriculum in Thailand, the learning atmosphere still shows high enthusiasm, similar to Indonesian culture, which also emphasizes politeness. This indicates that despite the differences in the curriculum structure, students' activeness in asking questions and their enthusiasm for learning remain factors that influence learning effectiveness.

“In terms of teaching style, it is actually not that different. Their response when we teach is that they are very active”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 25, interview data)

Although the teaching style did not differ much, the responses of students in Thailand showed a high level of engagement.

“It is clear that there is a big difference in teaching between Thai and Indonesian students. Thai students are more communicative. If they do not understand, they will ask”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 67, interview data)

“They are more active there, yes, from what we saw they were more active in asking questions and were not as noisy as the Indonesian

students”. (Melly, Script 8, line 48, interview data)

It was seen that Thai students have a more communicative and active nature in the learning process compared to Indonesian students. They are more open to asking questions when they do not understand the material and show calmer behavior in class. Finally, Santi highlights aspects of Thai students' learning preferences:

“They like to learn by collecting points and they are very active”.  
(Santi, Script 9, line 84, interview data)

Students prefer the way of learning by collecting points, which may refer to a reward system or achievement in learning.

This finding suggests that Thai students' willingness to ask questions and actively participate in class contributes significantly to their engagement. In contrast, Indonesian students often find it difficult to engage in the subject matter because they are too shy to ask their teachers. Respondents stated that although the teaching methods in Thailand and Indonesia are not much different, the higher level of enthusiasm and communication of Thai students makes them stand out. Despite the language barrier, Thai students show a strong desire to learn, as demonstrated by their active involvement in class activities.

#### **b. Interactive Teaching Approaches**

It has been demonstrated that the interactive teaching technique is a

highly successful strategy for developing a stimulating and fruitful learning environment. In order to enable students to be both active participants in understanding and processing information as well as passive listeners, interactive teaching places a strong emphasis on their active participation in the learning process. Making learning more enjoyable and less tedious is one benefit of interactive teaching.

Every interviewee concurred that interactive instruction works well in Thailand. For instance, the Amara said:

“They enjoy our way of learning, which often involves showing objects, then learning through songs and pictures.” (Amara, Script 1, line 99, interview data)

This implies that students prefer more participatory and visual teaching approaches, which might improve their comprehension of the subject matter even in the face of language hurdles. Ara also made a similar statement:

“For the difference, it seems not too obvious because they have some culture that is not really different from Indonesia, because they are Malay and we are still in the same ethnic group as Malay, we sometimes share games or brainstorming to students, so they like it and are enthusiastic”. (Ara, Script 2, line 140, interview data)

Because it can make students more engaged and active in the learning process, the use of interactive techniques like games or brainstorming is highly beneficial in boosting student interest. In addition to aiding in comprehension, this approach fosters a positive learning

environment and motivates students to collaborate and think critically. Amalia explains how the use of games makes students more active and engaged in learning:

“Actually, there is not much difference, but we were once noticed by the teacher that the students had a hard time learning English, so we used games and did not focus on lectures, so when teaching new material, we made games and they were also more active and enthusiastic in class when learning and paying attention”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 94, interview data)

By switching games for lectures, community educators adopt a more interactive style. This occurs because, based on the teacher's views, the lecture style is ineffective in helping students learn English. Students become more engaged and excited during the learning process when games are used as a teaching tool. This is crucial because interactive teaching methods, like games, not only engage students physically but also improve their comprehension and retention of the subject matter. Playing games allows students to learn indirectly while having fun, which enhances the effectiveness and enjoyment of the learning process. Salsa also provides its views on more interactive and practical learning:

“There is no difference in learning style, maybe because we are from the same ethnic group, so we are still part of Asia like students in Indonesia in general and they are more active and more enthusiastic when learning is not done using the lecture method.”. (Salsa, Script 4, line 83, interview data)

Even though most learning styles are similar, Salsa highlights that Thai students are more engaged and active when learning is not done



through lectures. This implies that students' involvement in class can be raised by a more participatory method that involves them directly. Meanwhile, Ayu explained that teachers in Thailand advised against teaching using the lecture method, because it would make students bored:

“They are more active and their method is more practical than lecture or theory” (Ayu, Script 5, line 61, interview data)

It is clear from the Ayu statement that a more practical and interactive teaching style can boost student interest. In line with the teacher's recommendation to remind them not to teach like in school, the utilization of techniques like games and group activities not only makes learning more engaging but also keeps students from becoming bored. Vicka also mentions the use of digital media, such as YouTube, to clarify the material:

“The teaching style is the same, using YouTube videos for example, so there is no significant difference, the only difference is that language is a barrier”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 74, interview data)

The Vicka statement claims that despite language hurdles, the utilization of interactive teaching techniques like YouTube videos demonstrates the commonality of teaching styles. Students can participate more actively in their education, have a more interesting experience, and improve their comprehension through visual aids because of this interactive approach. Annisa added that students in Thailand prefer fun and more active teaching methods in class:

“When it comes to teaching, students there prefer interactive things, like providing videos and we also make games so that the class is more enjoyable”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 63, interview data)

Students there are more interested in interactive learning strategies, according to the Annisa statements. It has been shown that including games and movies in the teaching process can increase student engagement and foster an enjoyable learning environment. This demonstrates the value of a strategy that blends instruction and entertainment to keep students interested. Melly also states that students are more engaged when learning is done in a less rigid manner:

“They like and are happy because we teach them not too seriously and as fun as possible so that they are not tense in class, they are also active in class”. (Melly, Script 8, line 46, interview data)

Based on the Melly statement, more relaxed and fun approach to teaching can make students feel more comfortable and involved. This method not only reduces tension in the classroom but also encourages students to participate more actively. Santi adds that students like to learn in a more fun, points-based way:

“They like to learn by collecting points”. (Melly, Script 9, line 84, interview data)

It is known that students are attracted to teaching strategies that include success or incentive systems, like point accumulation. Because of the competitive environment that motivates children to be more active and give every learning task their best effort, this strategy can boost their drive

to learn.

All things considered, interactive instruction utilizing media like games, films, songs, and images has been shown to be highly successful in raising student engagement in Thailand. When the teaching approaches are not overly strict, Thai students are very engaged and eager to learn.

### **c. Use of Technology in Classrooms**

Technology integration into the classroom is essential to improving the teaching and learning process in contemporary education. There are several advantages to using technology, such as increased student involvement and easier access to learning materials. When it comes to teaching English and Indonesian in Thai schools, technology is crucial to establishing engaging and dynamic learning environments. Particularly in larger classrooms, devices like projectors, LCD panels, smart TVs, and microphones are utilized to play instructional movies, present visual content, and promote efficient communication.

As explained by Amara:

“Their learning style is different only in the learning media, their learning media is not like in Indonesia if I saw while I was there and there is a role of technology because they also use projectors there just like in Indonesia so that makes it easier for us to teach, such as teaching Indonesian through songs then English through songs that really help”. (Amara, Script 1, line 102, interview data)

Amara emphasizes how useful technology is for teaching English

and Indonesian in Thai classrooms, including projectors. Teaching is made more approachable and interesting by adding multimedia components, such as songs, particularly when teaching languages. Through the use of projectors, instructional materials that are visually appealing and simple for students to comprehend can be presented, enhancing the effectiveness and interactivity of the learning process.

“For the facilities, there are projectors and LCDs. I think the school facilities are really good. They provide so many different facilities. The facilities are complete, there are laboratories and so on. Their facilities are very helpful and supportive when we teach there”. (Ara, Script 2, line 151, interview data)

Ara praises Thai schools for their extensive facilities, emphasising in particular the usage of LCDs and projectors. By giving students multiple methods to interact with the content, these technology tools not only enhance the teaching process but also aid in their learning. In addition to providing students with digital aids, the availability of laboratories and other resources improves the learning environment.

“For completeness, it depends on the class, there are some classes that do not have LCD, but there are special classes for students who want to learn English more deeply, or a kind of English program, there it is more complete, namely there is a TV and LCD”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 104, interview data)

Amalia provides insight into how the availability of technology varies among classrooms. There are specialized programs made for deeper language learning where technology like TVs and LCDs, is fully integrated,

even though some classrooms might not have these amenities. This demonstrates the value of resources that are specifically designed to fulfill the needs of language program participants.

“Learning facilities are also very supported and provided by the school, every school in Thailand is facilitated by the kingdom, both private and public schools. It can be said to be higher than our country maybe”. (Salsa, Script 4, line 89, interview data)

Salsa claims that substantial government funding for educational facilities is provided to Thai schools. Both public and private schools, which have access to cutting-edge instructional technologies, fall under this category. According to the statement, Thai schools may offer more technical support than those in certain other nations, giving both teachers and students the resources they need for efficient instruction.

“The facilities are okay and very complete, especially the most important thing is the microphone, because there is no need to shout when teaching” (Ayu, Script 5, line 65, interview data)

In larger classrooms, where it is essential for teachers to make sure that every student can hear well, Ayu highlights the value of microphones. This straightforward but crucial piece of technology improves the teaching process by facilitating improved communication and guaranteeing that every student can easily follow the course.

“The facilities are certainly very supportive, because this school is directly under the auspices of the kingdom, so any costs are from the kingdom, so to hold an event or anything they do not need to bother because there is already a budget, in the school I teach, they go from elementary school to high school in one school until they graduate.

Maybe it is different in cities in Thailand, but in the school I teach, the system is like that”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 82, interview data)

As stated by Vicka, schools that receive direct government support enjoy steady financing for instructional materials and activities, guaranteeing that technology is accessible. This makes it possible to smoothly incorporate technology into regular teaching procedures, improving the effectiveness and engagement of the learning environment.

“The facilities are because we teach at one of the largest schools or Islamic boarding schools in Thailand, so they are very complete and adequate and there are no difficulties with that”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 69, interview data)

Annisa talks about how they have access to extensive and well-equipped facilities because they teach at one of Thailand's biggest schools. Such resources increase the effectiveness of instruction by enabling teachers to establish a more engaging and cozy learning environment for their students.

“Everything is complete, when we teach, the technology is complete and supportive, so they are more comfortable learning with the completeness of the technology”. (Melly, Script 8, line 49, interview data)

In order to improve student comfort and engagement, Melly emphasizes the need to have comprehensive technology resources in the classroom. When the required technology is available, students can concentrate on their studies without being distracted by technical issues.

“For the facilities are quite good, because each teacher is equipped

with a kind of small microphone when teaching so that the whole class can hear. (Factors of crowded classes and many students)". (Santi, Script 9, line 84, interview data)

Additionally, Santi stresses the value of microphones, especially in large classrooms where it is critical to make sure every student can hear the teacher. This tiny but important piece of technology makes instruction efficient and available to all students while also assisting in the management of greater class numbers.

One way that technology supports the educational process in Thai schools is through community teachers, who raise the standard of instruction. In their experience, the educational resources available are quite extensive and very helpful in creating engaging and interactive learning environments.

The most widely used technologies are projectors and LCDs, which serve as primary tools for displaying educational materials. With this approach, students can learn the language by using visual material, such as music or videos. This increases student engagement in the learning process and makes the material easier to understand.

In addition, educational facilities like microfon are quite important, especially in large schools with many of students. Microfon enables teachers to teach without having to be strict, which results in more effective instruction and allows students to understand what is being taught. In

addition to LCD and microphone technology, the school where they teach also has a smart TV. The royal Thailand government provides support to schools, both domestic and foreign, including by offering appropriate teaching materials. This is very different from a few Indonesian schools that frequently have advanced technology.

From the researcher's point of view, this study illustrates how the use of technology in education may improve the quality of instruction and strengthen the role of teachers in creating innovative and engaging learning strategies. The ability to provide engaging facilities is not only related to the availability of technology, but also gives students the opportunity to learn in a way that is more modern and in line with current needs. This indicates how important it is to have a consistent and systematic technological environment to support education in Thailand and Indonesia.

#### **d. Living in Thailand Experiences of Cultural Adaptation**

Living in a nation with many cultures and social norms requires cultural adaptation. Despite the contrasts, community teachers' experiences teaching in Thailand reveal that there are many cultural parallels, particularly with regard to Islam, which facilitates their adjustment. Strong Islamic principles, including modest attire, the headscarf, and rigorous manners, have a significant impact on the cultural experience felt in Southern Thailand, particularly in regions where Muslims predominate.



The community teacher believed that their adjustment process was facilitated by the parallels in religious principles, particularly with regard to attire and social attitudes. Additionally, despite language barriers, the welcoming and accepting local community regarding cultural differences made the adaption process more pleasurable.

Southern Thailand is very religious, as seen in their dress, as Amara says:

“Maybe from the clothes, their clothes in Southern Thailand are mostly Malay clothes, so while in Thailand I was very happy when I saw them wearing Malay clothes, even though at that time I did not have Malay clothes but when I returned to Indonesia I thought of one Malay clothing, and for interesting things maybe the same, namely language and also clothes. At first I thought they did not wear hijab there, but it turned out that Islam there is very strong and they are mostly Muslim”. (Amara, Script 1, line 62, interview data)

Traditional clothing from southern Thailand, which resembles Malay attire, caught the attention of the Amara respondents. The use of hijabs by women and modest clothing that covers the body neatly are some examples of the strong Islamic values present in the local community. Amara initially believed that not many people in Thailand wore hijabs, but this experience made them feel connected to the local culture. Amara was inspired to wear the Islamic clothing they saw, which made this awareness a better experience. This shows that cultural adaptation not only involves the acceptance of new cultures but also appreciating and adopting practices that align with personal values.

Ara also stated that in Southern Thailand, students and the community highly uphold Islamic values.

“The Thai culture that i can take there is maybe the habits, their habits, so they have habits or customs because they are Islamic regions unlike other Thai regions, they are more aware of things that are less religious, for example they do not touch each other who are not mahram, even between teachers and students, even with students and teachers they do not greet each other and maintain boundaries, and then how they dress is more Islamic, for women their clothes are very polite, leggings, neat headscarves, it is really beautiful how they dress, and their clothes wear headscarves up to the chest and no hair is visible. The culture is not too different. Because they have the same as us, for example greetings, but what is interesting to me is that they like to interact with people, even though they are the same as Indonesians, they are more humble even with foreigners, even if we speak in Malay, they listen carefully, they really listen even though they are limited in language, then their culture is also they really like to hang out, they really like to travel, in Yala there are so many cafes, restaurants and many places that are suitable for those of us who like to hang out, in the middle of the night they are still having conversations” (Ara, Script 2, line 108, interview data)

Ara, like Indonesian citizens, provides a picture of the friendly and open society of southern Thailand, especially towards foreigners. They noted the habit of the community to highly respect guests and to be very interested in interacting despite language barriers. Cultural similarities, such as Islamic dress styles and friendly interaction principles, strengthen this familiarity.

Amalia was also amazed by the way the students and residents of Southern Thailand dressed in accordance with Islamic law. In addition, Amalia also gained knowledge about the culture of shaking hands in

### Southern Thailand:

“Yes, the most noticeable is because we serve in an Islamic school so we have to act like ustazah, we have to keep our clothes very long or tunic, not tight, thin or short clothes. They are also very friendly, they are not racist, then our culture is almost the same and they are very curious and open to foreigners like us, they are not ashamed to ask even though they have limitations in English but at least they try to interact with us, but what is interesting is that their culture is different from most Thais, I mean we know that in Thailand they use to have some hand sign like Buddha, like a Thai greeting, but in our area in Yala, they do not use that hand sign, because that refers to Budha culture”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 71, interview data)

Amalia shows that Islamic religious values greatly influence the dress code at the schools where they teach. Community teachers are expected to dress according to religious law, in a loose, long, and modest manner. Respondents also noted significant cultural differences in this area compared to other regions in Thailand. For example, the traditional Thai hand gesture, or wai gesture, is not used because it is considered part of Buddhist culture. The friendliness of the community and their ability to communicate with people who have language limitations are also commendable. The altered religious values and respect for the local community's beliefs strengthen the relationship between teachers and the local community today.

Salsa gave a different statement, he discussed Thai customs before the meeting took place:

“The most interesting thing about their culture is when they want to

have a meeting, if they want to have a meeting, they serve food or drinks first, when they have finished eating, then they have a meeting, then I am also interested in their class system, in the morning they are in a general class but in the evening or after noon, they are in a religious class and the ages are mixed. And we teach English in the general morning class, then teach Malay in the religious class or in the afternoon”. (Salsa, Script 4, line 67, interview data)

Salsa expressed their admiration for the custom of feeding guests before meetings or gatherings begin. This tradition demonstrates the hospitality of the community and their appreciation for guests. Respondents also highlighted the different education system, where students attend general classes in the morning and religious classes in the afternoon, with mixed age groups. This opened the respondents' eyes to the flexibility and uniqueness of the region's education system. This is similar to the boarding school in Martapura, where religious and general classes are scheduled at different times. Because they are part of the Asian family, Indonesia and Thailand have many similarities.

Ayu, like others, also said that people in Southern Thailand are very religious and will not respond if it is not an Islamic greeting:

“Their Islam is very strict, like when they say the Thai phrase "sawadekha" they do not want to reply, it should be assalamualaikum, that is what the older person said reprimanding them”. (Ayu, Script 5, line 72, interview data)

Ayu emphasizes the importance of Islamic values in southern Thailand, such as replacing the traditional Thai greeting "Sawadekha" with the Islamic greeting "Assalamualaikum." Respondents believe that strong

Islamic values, which are also seen in Indonesia, make adaptation in this environment relatively easy. However, respondents showed appreciation for cultural differences, such as accepting reprimands if they did not understand local practices well. This shows a process of adaptation, which includes embracing a new culture and appreciating different values.

Ayu explained that it was very easy to adapt while there because of the religious similarities:

“It was easy to adapt, because we did our short-term international program in southern Thailand, which is predominantly Muslim. The amazing thing is, there, Muslims definitely wear the hijab to show that they are Muslim, both male and female, and the men also wear covered clothing, whereas in our country there are still some who do not wear the hijab or anything”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 55, interview data)

Vicka believes that because Islamic values are an important part of daily life, adaptation becomes easier. They stated that regularly wearing Islamic clothing by men and women creates a comfortable and supportive atmosphere. Additionally, the respondents stated that they were impressed by the uniformity due to adherence to the dress code, something that is not yet fully implemented in Indonesia. This experience shows how shared religious values can aid the process of cultural adaptation by bringing community teachers and local residents closer together.

Annisa noticed that the way Southern Thai people shake hands is different from the way Thai people usually do, and Annisa also said that he

ended up buying more appropriate clothes when he was there:

“Then when we shake hands, we put our hands together, but it turns out we were reprimanded because it was similar to Buddha, so we respect that. In terms of customs too..”

“Southern Thailand is also more religious than Indonesia, in Southern Thailand they wear tunics or robes, so I have to buy new clothes to be more appropriate”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 48 and 79, interview data)

Annisa emphasizes daily habits, such as consuming a lot of ice during hot weather. This habit shows how the local community adapts to the environment. Additionally, respondents noted that people in southern Thailand are very religious, wearing clothes that are considered modest and Islamic, such as tunics and robes. They felt the need to buy new clothes that were more in line with local norms because of this experience. Additionally, the respondents demonstrated an awareness of the importance of respecting local culture, such as avoiding handshakes that are considered similar to Buddhist traditions. The physical and social adjustments they experienced during the program enhanced their experience.

In contrast to the others, Melly stated that students eat large portions and are not allowed to finish their meals, this is in accordance with Islamic teachings:

“They eat a lot, so if they do not finish their meal, that is not allowed. They have to finish it all and the portion must be really big”. (Melly, Script 8, line 33, interview data)

Melly shows that people in the local community must finish all their

food on their plates. This tradition shows respect for food as a blessing that should not be wasted. It is normal that in the boarding house, food should not be wasted. This is comparable to boarding houses in Indonesia, which might surprise Melly because he has never experienced a similar situation.

Pleased with the polite and warm behavior of the residents, Santi showed its admiration:

“The culture that can be taken is that the people there are very caring and happy to share. Honestly, while there, I often got free food from the people around me and their joy in welcoming and hosting guests from abroad or from other regions is very extraordinary. That is what makes me very amazed, especially among fellow Muslims, they are very kind and warm” (Santi, Script 9, line 70, interview data)

Santi emphasizes the hospitality of the southern Thai community, especially the custom of sharing food with guests. Respondents admired the generosity of the local community, who often offered them food for free. This shows that social values and togetherness are an important part of the local culture. In this case, cultural adoption involves the acceptance of highly supportive social norms, which makes community teachers feel comfortable.

The results of the respondents' experiences in adapting to Southern Thai culture show that, despite the cultural differences between Indonesia and Thailand, the shared Islamic values in the region greatly facilitated the adaptation process. The respondents also found that the Southern Thai

people are very friendly, open to differences, and maintain local religious and cultural values.

**e. Cultural Exchange**

Building respect, fostering understanding, and strengthening relationships between communities around the world are all made possible through cultural exchange. While working as a community teacher in Southern Thailand, particularly in Muslim-majority regions like Yala, Antasari State Islamic University has participated in several cultural exchange initiatives. This program offers a special chance to learn about Southern Thai culture and introduce Indonesian culture.

Apart from teaching, the community teachers also introduce and teach how to make sasirangan, as stated by Amara:

“I just teach, teach sasirangan; make sasirangan, then there are also friends of mine who teach Terbang or Rebana, but the language there is *Kompang*”. (Amara, Script 1, line 116, interview data)

Amara considered its role in teaching the local Thai people about Sasirangan, a traditional Indonesian craft. They also mentioned how they teach regional customs like *Kompang*, which highlights how cultural exchange is reciprocal. By sharing these habits, they introduce the Thai community to Indonesian practices while strengthening their ties to the local way of life.



Ara explained that they introduced the *behabsyi* culture and taught the Banjar version of the way to students there, and vice versa:

“There is one extracurricular activity that we participate in, namely Habsyi or in Banjar language, named Betarbang, so this extracurricular activity is also one of our KKN programs, so we share typical Banjar flying with Thai people and vice versa”. (Ara, Script 2, line 164, interview data)

Ara emphasised their participation in *Betarbang*, *Habsyi's* extracurricular activities. They engaged in a deep cultural exchange by learning about the Thai *kompang* culture and exchanging information on *Batarbang* Banjar.

Not only teaching about *Batik*, they also introduce *Sasirangan*, a typical Banjar cloth, and conducted radio broadcasts as explained by Amalia:

“We have other programs besides teaching, such as attending religious studies, then we also create a Sasirangan work program to introduce Banjar culture, there is also a radio to tell about our experiences while in Thailand”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 111, interview data)

As explained by Amalia, they engage in a variety of cultural exchange activities outside of education, such as going to religious studies and using the radio as a forum to talk about Indonesian culture. They can use this to raise cultural understanding of the Thai and Indonesian communities and to start a conversation that reaches a larger audience.

They also took part in events held by women’s religious study group

in Thailand, as Salsa said:

“Apart from school, we also do activities in the community, for example we are invited to attend a women's religious study group, then to the mosque radio station to share information about Indonesia, about campus and exchange information”. (Salsa, Script 4, line 99, interview data)

Through religious study and community service, Salsa shares its experiences promoting Indonesian culture. In addition to discussing cultural traditions, this interaction offers a forum for information exchange and the development of closer linkages between educators and the community.

Teaching BIPA is also things that community teachers teach, as stated by Ayu:

“We participate in other activities and it is not just teaching, we also hold activities to make sasirangan, learn to play rebana, and carry out BIPA to introduce Indonesian culture to the outside world”. (Ayu, Script 5, line 69, interview data)

Vicka stated that other things that community teachers do are accompanying students to study Islamic Fiqh and teaching at TPA to teach makharijul muruf and tajwid:

“English club, accompanying residents to Islamic jurisprudence studies, we also teach at the mosque like a TPA Kindergarten which teaches Tajweed, Makharijul huruf and so on”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 93, interview data)

Vicka explains how they teach religious studies and English in educational and religious contexts. They contribute to the local community's educational growth through these exchanges in addition to

learning about the religious culture of the area.

Another thing was also raised by Annisa:

“We visited them (Thai students) when they were making oil, if I am not mistaken, from cloves, making pots from bottles”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 73, interview data)

Annisa talks about their experience seeing native Thai students make clove oil in the old-fashioned way. This encounter is a perfect example of the cultural exchange in which educators broaden their knowledge of Thai customs by learning about local customs in addition to sharing their own.

“There are no extracurricular activities, but outside of teaching we have religious studies with the mothers there, oh yes, we also hold English camps for the students”. (Melly, Script 8, line 53, interview data)

Melly also talks about how they organized English camps for students and conducted religious studies with local ladies as part of their cultural exchange. These programs improved the educational experience for both teachers and students by facilitating skill development and cultural exchange.

More or less the same as before, Santi which carried out short-term international program in 2024 also held something similar to that in 2023:

“For extracurricular activities, there are none, because yesterday there happened to be an event or activity at school. But we did various activities, such as English fun Learning to make language learning more fun, Eco print, introducing batik to Thailand, there is also Muslimah Fun Day, an activity to introduce traditions in Indonesia every time we celebrate Indonesia's independence day”.

(Santi, Script 9, line 88, interview data)

Santi goes into detail on their participation in events like workshops on eco printing and batik and their planning of Indonesian cultural celebrations like Muslimah Fun Day. Through these events, the Thai community hopes to develop an understanding of Indonesian culture and make cultural interchange more engaging and pleasurable.

Based on the findings from the interviews conducted with the respondents, which provide an understanding of cross-cultural interactions and the experiences they have had. Cultural exchange is provided to community teachers. This program aims to introduce Indonesian culture, particularly Banjar culture, to the Thai community. Some respondents mentioned that traditions such as making Sasirangan cloth, playing traditional Banjar musical instruments like Terbang or Rebana, and organizing other cultural activities like Muslimah Fun Day are all important parts of introducing Indonesian culture to the Thai community.

But this cultural exchange is not one-way. By participating in local activities, community teachers gain a better understanding of Thai society's culture. For example, they saw Thai students making clove oil and pots from bottles as mentioned by Annisa, and they also talked about how to fly and play the *rebana*, or *kompang*, as mentioned by the Amara. This shows a tradition that not only introduces Indonesia to Thailand but also opens

new knowledge for community teachers about local cultural practices.

This cross-cultural activity addresses cultural differences and fosters closer relationships between community teachers and local residents. In addition, the dissemination of information about Indonesian culture through media such as radio expands the program's reach and enables cross-cultural interactions. In addition to sharing information, community teachers also help Antasari State Islamic University become more well-known globally, especially in Thailand.

The personal development of community teachers is greatly influenced by their participation in this program. Teaching and interacting with the local community, both inside and outside the academic environment, gives them the opportunity to enhance their skills and gain deeper knowledge. They enhance their ability to adapt and appreciate different cultures through various activities, such as religious studies, assisting the community in Islamic study programs, and teaching children at *TPA*. They certainly get benefit from the experience of teaching and interacting with Thai students, as well as with the local people and the extraordinary Southern Thai culture. Moreover, this cross-cultural activity allows participants to reflect on their own cultural identities. By conveying traditions such as *Sasirangan* and *Betarbang*, they not only introduce but also deepen and advance their culture.

According to researcher, cross-cultural activities during the program have a long-term impact on the local Thai community and the identity of community teachers. Cultural exchange is very useful for building harmonious relationships between cultures and raising awareness among people around the world. Overall, this program strengthens Indonesia's position in cultural practices and demonstrates that cross-cultural experiences have transformational value for them. It shows the importance of such programs in building more inclusive community teachers amidst global diversity.

**f. Personal Growth or Skill Development**

Participants' personal growth and skill enhancement, particularly in the areas of teaching and communication, are greatly influenced by the experience they obtain from short-term overseas programs. Community teachers need to adjust in novel and efficient ways when teaching in a foreign nation with a distinct cultural background. To interact with pupils from diverse backgrounds, they need to improve their language proficiency in both English and the local tongue. They also need to become more adaptable teachers.

Amara shares experiences regarding developing teaching skills:

“Because at that time I did this program (short-term international program) first then PPL so it really influenced me, maybe the

difference is in terms of language too, what differentiates the way of teaching in Banjarmasin and also the way of teaching in Thailand, in Thailand we mostly use objects so that the students there understand what we are conveying, well when I return to Indonesia I adapt it maybe to make them understand also using objects; learning media. Learning media that I can adapt from previous learning in Thailand”. (Amara, Script 1, line 72, interview data)

Amara shared that their teaching experience in Thailand taught them to use objects more as learning media, an effective method to help students understand the material. They felt they could bring this experience back to Indonesia, making it a useful tool in teaching in their home country. In other words, Amara improved in terms of teaching, from their experience, they were able to use effective methods to prepare for teaching.

Ara expressed a very strong agreement when asked whether they gained new skills or personal development during the short term international program:

“I think this is a good question, because when the end of this program we directly conducted the PPL, so we immediately carried out PPL, because previously we carried out KKN with a teaching program, so this developed and helped our teaching skills, especially we teach international students, so we can adapt our teaching methods during KKN to the teaching methods in PPL, so it is not too shocking. Sometimes there are those who are nervous, nervous and anxious, but because I taught during KKN, so I am not too nervous”. (Ara, Script 2, line 123, interview data)

Ara mentioned how their PPL was much aided by their KKN expertise. It was easier for them to modify their teaching strategies and lessen the anxiety that new teachers typically feel because they were already

used to teaching in an international setting.

Amalia explained that he felt that this short term international had a great influence on his development, especially in teaching:

“Yes, it is very developing and really has an impact on my teaching experience, because we as a foreigner and teach a foreigner in a foreign country, so that forces us to speak foreign or English, so I think I have one plus point from other teachers because we can teach a foreign language by english”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 80, interview data)

As described by Amalia, they had to actively use English while teaching overseas, which enhances their language proficiency. Their edge over other educators who might lack foreign language teaching experience stems from this.

Teaching experience gained while in Thailand, enhances development in terms of teaching as stated by Salsa:

“It is clear that my experience has become a new skill and can be applied when teaching again in Indonesia. The experience I gained there was very helpful in setting strategies for teaching different students”. (Salsa, Script 4, line 75, interview data)

When Salsa returned to teach in Indonesia, they acknowledged that their teaching experience in Thailand had equipped them with new abilities that were very helpful, particularly in creating lesson plans that catered to the requirements of various pupils.

Meanwhile, Ayu claimed that his ability to teach had improved:



“Teaching, yes, because we teach foreign students which may not be the same as teaching students in Indonesia, my teaching method has also become better by implementing practice rather than theory”. (Ayu, Script 5, line 55, interview data)

Ayu shared their experience that teaching international students makes them more focused on real-world practice and experience, which is an important difference from teaching in Indonesia which may be more theory-based.

Vicka said the impact of this program was that he became braver and more confident in communicating using English:

“Whether in self-development or teaching skills, for self-development it affects self-confidence, a little info, the English teachers at the school I teach, one from Bangkok and one from China, they do not understand Pattani Malay, as a result we chat in English, so every day we definitely chat, about what material, what to teach, it uses English, so because it is frequent, my skills are honed and I become confident. For the teaching method, because yesterday I taught English, I became braver. And also the adaptation”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 59, interview data)

Vicka described how her confidence and language proficiency increased as a result of their regular English-language encounters. Additionally, this experience increased their courage when teaching the curriculum, particularly when it came to teaching English.

Because he had to interact with local residents, Annisa revealed that he experienced development in terms of communication:

“During this program, I got a lot of positive things, especially communication skills, I am an ambivert, right, So I am not very good

at communicating with people I do not know, but when I am with friends, I am really chatty. So while I was there, my communication improved, Thai culture also influenced me a lot, if in Indonesia when they do not understand, they are definitely lazy and do not pay attention anymore, but the students there ask questions and really pay attention”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 54, interview data)

Annisa saw that the program had improved her communication abilities, which had previously been hindered by her ambivert disposition. Additionally, Annisa observed a difference in the way Thai students demonstrated interest in the learning and asked questions, which affected their teaching style.

Melly explained that he experienced an increase in English vocabulary. This was one of the factors that increased his confidence, Melly told that:

“Of course there is an impact, namely the increase in vocabulary that I previously did not know, now I know, because to teach we need a language that is easy for students to understand, for the skill, teaching students there with confidence, because students in Indonesia and Thailand are definitely different, in Indonesia we can teach mixed Indonesian, there we teach full English”. (Melly, Script 8, line 35, interview data)

Melly discussed how their time spent teaching in Thailand enhanced their vocabulary and enhanced their English-teaching skills. Another important factor was the necessity of using English for communication.

In contrast to the statements of other community teachers, Santi stated that his experience had an impact on his soft skills to do good to others:

“From that experience, it has more impact on soft skills, because I can care more and increase my awareness to do good to others regardless of ethnicity and tribe”. (Santi, Script 9, line 75, interview data)

Santi underlined that the program's emphasis was primarily on cultivating soft skills, like growing empathy and multicultural adaptation. The program offers a chance to develop empathy, widen perspectives, and hone interpersonal skills, which are critical when navigating multicultural environments. In addition to enhancing professional abilities, the experience develops a more accepting and receptive personality.

The respondents' experience in the short-term international program significantly enhanced their growth and skills. Respondents Amara said that their teaching skills have improved, especially in terms of using object-based learning media to make it easier for students to understand the material. This method is one of the changes that have been reused in teaching in Indonesia. In addition, the cross-cultural learning they experienced in Thailand also led them to focus on practice rather than theory in teaching.

This program also plays an important role in boosting the confidence of community teachers, especially through the intensity of communication in English. This habit makes them learn to use English when interacting with people around them, which gives them a lot of new vocabulary and gets them accustomed to using a foreign language. This experience provides

an additional advantage for some community teachers compared to other educators. This experience enhances the technical and soft skills of community teachers. They increase their self-confidence, communication skills, and openness to cultural diversity. Daily life in Thailand involves interacting with different students and colleagues, which changes the way they communicate from before.

The program also shows strong integration with post-PPL experiences. The teaching in the short program prepares participants to deal with PPL students. The strategies learned during the international program become valuable tools that enrich the way they interact with students from different backgrounds. Overall, according to me as a researcher, this cross-cultural experience enhances teaching skills and shapes the character and professional perspectives of the participants. They become more intelligent, flexible, and ready to face challenges in a multicultural educational environment. This program demonstrates how international experiences can broaden perspectives and influence the development of participants as educators and individuals in the long term.

## **2. Challenges faced by community teachers of Antasari State Islamic University**

This section presents the results of the second research question, which discusses the issues faced by community teachers in Thailand. These

challenges reflect various aspects of teaching in Thailand, as well as the unique experiences of community teachers. The following is the narrative and analysis generated from interviews with community teachers:

**a. Language Barriers**

One of the largest obstacles experienced by participants in foreign programs is language limitations, particularly for community teachers who are tasked with instructing in multicultural and multilingual settings. Teaching is based on effective communication, but interacting with students and delivering content can be challenging due to language barriers. Community teachers encounter particular difficulties in Thailand since Siamese or Thai is the primary language spoken there while Malay is a regional dialect. Teaching English, which is not a prevalent first or second language among students or the local community, is made more challenging.

Amara explains that the main challenge faced when teaching is the language barrier:

“The challenge faced there is teaching language. Indonesian and English, they also do not understand much. The Malay language there is also different from the Malay language we usually know. Teaching the students English is quite challenging because they tend to preserve their native language, which is Siamese. The Malay language there is starting to fade”. (Amara, Script 1, line 5, interview data)

The main obstacle, as stated by Amara, is that students in Thailand

do not fully understand English and Malay. Due to the dominance of Siamese, their mother tongue, the use of Malay is starting to decline. To keep the material up-to-date and understandable to students from different language backgrounds, teachers must find innovative ways to present it.

Language barriers can cause problems, one of which is miscommunication. Ara states:

“Language limitations, because maybe we come from Indonesian, that is why we have some differences in communication, especially when we first started, we did not understand Siamese Malay or Thai at all. So it is like limitations in communication because that is the first thing. Even though it is been a week, two weeks or three weeks from there, there are still language barriers, so sometimes it is like miscommunication or it is hard to express something, it is not just to the teachers or students there, but it is also hard to traders and people around, especially to older people who only understand or only speak Thai. So that is the biggest challenge”. (Ara, Script 2, line 2, interview data)

Ara emphasized that language challenges arise in everyday situations, such as when interacting with locals and traders, the same thing also happen in the classroom. Miscommunication still happens frequently even after being in the environment for a few weeks. This demonstrates that linguistic adaptation calls for patience and consistent work.

In addition to creating miscommunication, language barriers also complicate the communication process, Amalia stated:

“The biggest challenge is that I have to interact with the local Thai there, not like the academics, the teachers, students, but the sellers or ordinary local citizens in Thailand, because they can not really speak

English, even for Malay, they speak Thai more than Malay. Its hard to interact with local citizens in Thailand”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 2, interview data)

Amalia clarified that communicating with local communities outside of the classroom might be extremely difficult due to linguistic limitations. Local communities' limited proficiency in English makes communication more difficult and frequently necessitates greater effort to understand one another. This difficulty emphasizes how crucial it is to adjust and form bonds despite linguistic barriers.

Salsa gave his statement regarding the language barriers he experienced during the program, sometimes students did not understand what the teacher explained and vice versa, more fully Salsa explained that:

“Perhaps the most obvious challenge and can be considered the biggest challenge is communication, sometimes there are some things we want to convey but some students do not understand the meaning of what we want to convey, as well as the teacher, even though we mostly communicate using English, there are still many misunderstandings between us and the teacher. Then another challenge is the difference in teaching methods, the teaching habits/teaching techniques that we brought from Indonesia are something new for them, especially when we camped in Chana, the children there were really native Thai children who were boarding, and they did not understand Malay at all. So that was a big challenge for us”. (Salsa, Script 4, line 2, interview based)

Salsa claims that communication limitations affect relationships with local teachers as well as between community teachers and students. This demonstrates how language barriers impact many facets of the academic setting, including how easily people collaborate and share

information.

Slightly different from other community teachers' statements, Ayu highlighted vocabulary and grammar for students in Thailand:

“Many students have difficulty with vocabulary and grammar, maybe some of them still speak a mixture of Thai and English, basically their English accent is hard to understand” (Ayu, Script 5, line 2, interview data)

Ayu emphasizes how challenging it is to comprehend students with mixed Thai and English accents and language. Teachers must put in more work to adapt and ensure the lesson is not only comprehended but also applicable to the students.

Vicka told that the biggest challenge is about language difference, Vicka stated that:

“The biggest and most difficult challenge is the language difference, it is also an obstacle for students in learning English”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 2, interview data)

As stated by Vicka, the language barrier was the largest and most challenging obstacle he had to overcome. This is another significant barrier that students face when learning English.

Annisa explains that one of the factors that creates language challenges in teaching is that in Thailand, English is not a second language:

“So actually our short-term international program activities are not only teaching, there are many other activities, such as community activities such as attending religious studies, radio, etc. In terms of



challenges, it is more or less like teaching students in Indonesia, because many of them do not understand English there, especially since English is not their second language, many of them do not even understand the basics, so we have to explain from the beginning”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 2, interview data)

Significant difficulties that students encountered were noted by Annisa, particularly in relation to English language competency. Since English is not their first language, many pupils struggle to understand it. This implies that teaching languages must begin with the fundamentals. As a result, before introducing students to increasingly difficult content, community teachers must stress the value of developing a solid foundation in English.

Melly expressed similar concerns about the main challenge in Thailand, namely the language issue:

“As for the biggest challenge, there is not one. As for the challenge, it is the language difference between the students and us. As for the challenge from the school, there is not one either because the infrastructure is quite adequate”. (Melly, Script 8, line 2, interview data)

One of the biggest obstacles to foreign schooling is frequent language barriers. It is stressed in this context that language serves as a bridge to comprehending diverse cultures and ways of thinking in addition to being a tool for communication. It is challenging to communicate ideas, concepts, and knowledge when community teachers and students do not speak the same language. Both parties may become confused as a result of

this.

Santi revealed the same major obstacle as community teachers in Thailand, namely language differences, although Santi had tried to translate into Malay, there were still some students who still did not understand:

“The main and most impactful problem is language, because they use Siamese and Thai languages, when Nanda explains the lesson in front of the class using English, they still can not understand what Nanda is explaining, so Nanda uses translation to Malay, when it is changed to Malay, not all of them understand Malay” (Santi, Script 9, line 2, interview data)

Santi emphasized in the statement that the language barrier is the primary problem that most affects the learning process. Teaching Siamese and Thai-speaking kids in English presents a significant challenge for Santi as a teacher. This demonstrates how important language is for promoting comprehension and communication in the classroom.

Based on the researcher’s findings from the respondents, language difficulties have become the main issue for community teachers in Thailand during the short-term international program. These difficulties affect daily social interactions and classroom learning. Language differences become a major obstacle in teaching. Most students do not understand English well, which makes it difficult to convey the material effectively. The differences in dialects and cultural contexts between Thai Malay and Indonesian Malay remain an issue even when using Malay as an alternative. For example,

there are some students in certain areas who do not understand the basics of the Malay language, which complicates the task of community teachers to teach the language.

In addition, teachers often have difficulty understanding the students' English grammar. Due to this difficulty, they have to be creative and use visual media and translate materials so that students can more easily understand what is being taught. Language barriers are increasingly felt in social interactions outside the classroom. Participants experience difficulties in communication because the local community, such as traders or nearby residents, only use Thai or Siamese, instead of English or Malay. This is especially true for people who do not have a formal education background or who only use their local language.

Overall, the biggest obstacle in this experience is the language barrier. This challenge not only tests their language skills but also requires them to find innovative ways to adapt. This experience demonstrates the importance of being proficient in languages within a multilingual environment, especially in a teaching role in an international community. The community teachers gained better interpersonal skills as a result of the language barrier.

#### **b. Diverse Language Proficiency Levels**

The variation in students' language skills has a significant impact on the difficulties faced by teachers in Thailand's short-term international programs. The tendency of students to employ local languages like Thai and Malay in their daily lives is another indicator of these inequalities, in addition to their proficiency in speaking and understanding English. Teachers are put in a difficult position where they have to modify their pedagogical approaches to meet the requirements of a varied student body.

Thai students have varying levels of English proficiency, as Amara reveals

“The obstacle is the same as I explained above, which is the language. Understanding English and Indonesian subjects is quite difficult, especially since most of them already use Thai language, but there are also quite a few of them who can speak English, there are some people who can speak English. So their language proficiency levels vary, but predominantly, many cannot speak it”. (Amara, Script 1, line 9, interview data)

Amara emphasized that most pupils still speak Thai, even though some can speak English. This shows how difficult it is for teachers to close the gap between students who speak English well and those who do not.

Ara added:

“If the students' obstacles are seen from observation and also teaching experience there, it seems like understanding English is one of them, because as we know Thai people not only speak in Thai during the day, or speak Malay and Thai, they do not, what is it, like they are not aware that English is important, so sometimes even though we speak English to them, they only speak Malay or Thai, they do not respond in English. It's like they have difficulty

expressing themselves in English. Because maybe over there they do not prioritize English too much. Oh, and because they are very Islamic, the foreign language they most often learn is Arabic, so they emphasize Arabic more than English” (Ara, Script 2, line 12, interview data)

As indicated by Ara, a large number of students not only have difficulty understanding English but also lack confidence when speaking the language. This might be the result of a failure to recognize the significance of English in a global setting.

Amalia expressed its challenges in this gap in understanding levels impacting teaching:

“This... this really impacts our teaching, yes... because of the difficulties and imbalances in language, there are several students who don't understand the things we are talking about.” (Amalia, Script 3, line 20, interview data)

This claim demonstrates how language limitations can have a big impact on instruction. Students' varying linguistic proficiency makes it challenging to teach content consistently. To close the knowledge gap, educators must adjust by implementing techniques like translation, simplification, and visualization. This difficulty also emphasizes how crucial cross-cultural communication abilities are to establishing a productive learning environment.

Salsa stated that:

“The challenge for the students is also that they have different levels of understanding and skills in mastering the language, so we start

teaching them with simple material or learning first”. (Salsa, Script 4, line 22, interview data)

Salsa stresses how crucial it is to begin instruction at the very beginning in order to accommodate students' varying comprehension levels. This method gives every student the chance to follow the lecture without feeling behind. Demonstrating that educators must be adaptable and sensitive to the demands of every learner.

Ayu explained that another challenge community teachers faced is different levels of English proficiency of Thai students:

“The main challenge is the different levels of English proficiency, because when I was in Thailand, there were elementary school students, high school students, it was different, junior high school students, high school students were easy... and most of the elementary school students used their local language and even Malay, so it was difficult to teach, that is what made it difficult to teach the lesson effectively”. (Ayu, Script 5, line 6, interview data)

Ayu underlines that the difference in English proficiency levels between students at different levels of education is the next challenge. Elementary school students tend to rely more on their local language, making the learning process more difficult. Unlike in Indonesia, although there are differences in English proficiency levels, they still master basic English.

In line with Ayu, Vicka also said that language proficiency level is another barrier:

“Their level of English ability is different, and that is probably the main obstacle in teaching them the language” (Vicka, Script 6, line 7, interview data)

The Vicka statement affirms that a significant obstacle to instruction is disparities in English language proficiency. This implies that learning considerably less successful if there is no common grasp of the language being taught.

Furthermore, Annisa emphasized that because there are significant differences, he starts teaching his students with the basics:

“I explained earlier, because their habits towards English are diverse, so we have to start from the beginning, namely by teaching them basic English” (Annisa, Script 7, line 34, interview data)

Annisa emphasizes that students' attitudes towards English are diverse and frequently insufficient. In order for all pupils to understand the lectures, it is crucial that teachers begin with the fundamentals of English. This demonstrates the necessity of teaching gradually.

Melly states that there is a gap in the English language skills of Thai students:

“Well, the challenges we face with our students are also in terms of teaching them because some of them can speak English, some can not, and some can really do it” (Melly, Script 8, line 5, interview data)

Melly points out that another difficulty for teachers is the range of speaking skills among students. Teachers must discover ways to reach all students without excluding anyone from the learning process because some

students can speak English while others cannot.

Last, Santi told that:

“For the children it is the same, maybe about the language, so they can't grasp the material I teach 100%. Because the teachers there who teach English also mix it with Thai” (Santi, Script 9, line 7, interview data)

As told by Santi, students may become confused and find it more difficult to comprehend the material if Thai is used inconsistently in the classroom. The requirement for clearer, more targeted teaching strategies that emphasize using one language at a time is reflected in their incapacity to comprehend the content being taught. As a result, a major obstacle to learning during foreign programs in Thailand is the wide range of language skill levels among students.

As they have explained, during the short-term international program in Thailand, community teachers face additional challenges due to the variation in students' language abilities. These differences are evident in speaking and understanding English, as well as the students' tendency to use local languages such as Thai and Malay in their daily lives.

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languages such as Thai and Malay in their daily lives. In this situation, educators must change their teaching approach, starting with the most basic material so that all students can follow the lessons.

Overall, the differences in students' language proficiency levels are very challenging in the teaching process. Community teachers must develop flexible and innovative approaches to meet the diverse needs of students, ranging from the use of simple materials to adapting teaching methods based on students' understanding. This experience provide valuable lessons for educators in facing the dynamics of multilingual and multilevel classrooms.

### **c. Overcoming Classroom Dynamics**

Community teachers in Thailand's short-term international programs encounter several difficulties with classroom dynamics, mostly because of the high student population. There is less interaction between teachers and students in classes of forty to fifty, which may have an impact on students' comprehension and involvement in the learning process. It is crucial that teachers figure out how to get beyond these obstacles in this case so that every student may participate fully and comprehend the lessons being taught.

A comfortable school environment but with narrow classes is a

concern for Amara:

“The school environment is very comfortable, the school is big and there are also a lot of students, but it seems like the classrooms are a bit cramped, maybe because they are filled with a lot of students.... if it is a factor, it is quite influential, huh... eeee... more keee... it is hard to know whether all these students really understand, you know... I happened to have the opportunity to teach at Mahad Al Irsyad Lil Banat (Satree Islamvitya Mulniti School)”. (Amara, Script 1, line 14, interview data)

Although the school boasts plenty of students and a cozy ambiance, the Amara pointed out that the small classrooms may make it difficult for students and staff to engage. Since it is hard to tell who is truly paying attention to the instruction, it is challenging to guarantee that every student is understanding.

Ara Added:

“The only difference is that there are many students there and there can be a total of 50 people per class, different from Indonesia which is maybe only 30.. well, of course it has an effect, right? We do not know which students really understand and maybe they are not visible because with the many students, our focus is divided a lot”. (Ara, Script 2, line 24, interview data)

Even though the educational setting is not very difficult, Ara stressed that having a lot of pupils in one class can make it difficult for teachers to concentrate. It is challenging for professors to determine who in a class of fifty students truly understands the subject matter. This demonstrates that in order to guarantee that every student receives adequate attention, efficient classroom management is crucial.

Amalia explained that in Thailand, a school where she teach, the class is very crowded:

“Maybe the class is quite crowded, the classroom is probably too small to accommodate around 40 or 50 people in one class, umm.. the impact is probably because of the large number of students.. personal between teachers and students like asking if they understand is difficult besides that there are no really challenges in school environment”. (Amalia, Script 3, line 12,interview data)

Amalia revealed that it is challenging for teachers and students to have one-on-one conversations in crowded classrooms. Teachers find it difficult to assess each student's level of knowledge when there are a lot of them present. This suggests the need for instructional techniques that promote more candid dialogue and give students the confidence to voice their doubts or ask questions.

In Thai schools, it turns out that there is another obstacle that community teachers experience, namely classes with many students, as Salsa mentioned:

“School environment... ummm.. what is it.. it seems comfortable in my opinion... oh yeah, that is right, that is right.. the students are many and different, like schools in Indonesia usually are.. if that is the case, we often only ask the class as a whole, not individuals, so we do not know who really understands” (Salsa, Script 4, line 16, interview data)

This situation demonstrates how teachers may find it challenging to evaluate each student's comprehension due to the wide range of students. There is little opportunity for direct teacher and student interaction in

packed classrooms, which makes it challenging to determine who is truly knowledgeable about the material. This is consistent with research demonstrating that each student must actively participate in order for there to be positive classroom dynamics, and that difficulties occur when classes are too big to adequately facilitate these interactions.

Furthermore, Ayu explained that with classes having a large number of students, teachers there find a unique way to deal with learning:

“There are not any... eee... yes there are not any in the school environment... oh, it seems like the classrooms are crowded, so there is something unique, the teacher there uses a small microphone like that to teach the students, I do not know, maybe because the number of students is quite large. I see... because the number of students in a class seems to influence the teaching and learning process.. mmmm... maybe in terms of teaching we will not know. Well, who really understands it and who does not really understand it”. (Ayu, Script 5, line 14, interview data)

Teachers can ensure that all pupils, especially those seated at the back, can hear the explanation effectively by using small microphones. This illustrates how the teacher has adjusted to the crowded classroom environment. Nevertheless, difficulties in giving each student individualised attention persist despite technological advancements. Limited interaction can complicate and impede the learning process.

Vicka also stated:

“The students are probably quite a lot, yeah... well that is true, the class is really packed with students... yeah... mmm... in my opinion it does not really affect that much, but of course in the teaching

process there is an impact, maybe it is difficult for students to interact directly with the teacher... eeee... yeah... the rest is similar to Indonesia, comfortable and supportive for short-term program participants”. (Vicka, Script 6, line 9, interview data)

Some educators acknowledge that the quantity of students has an effect on the teaching process, even when they believe it has no personal bearing on them. Overcrowded classrooms can make it harder for students to engage with their professors and peers, which lowers learning effectiveness.

In line with the Ayu statement, Annisa stated that dense classes will make it more difficult for teachers to focus on many students:

“ Also, the class atmosphere is probably quite crowded because the number of students is quite large. To the point where the teacher uses a microphone to teach, eh.. how is it? Basically, the microphone is small so that the students at the back can hear what the teacher is saying. Maybe the factor of the large number of children is eh.. it has an impact, it is more difficult to give more attention to each student because of that”. (Annisa, Script 7, line 10, interview data)

This comment draws attention to a significant difficulty in overseeing a large class of kids. Several students may feel abandoned and become less involved in the learning process if they are unable to receive individualized attention.

In contrast to statements by other community teachers, Melly did not feel that the number of students impacted his teaching process, as Melly said:

“As for the school environment, eeee... it is pretty good, yeah... more or less the same as in Indonesia, so there is nothing really different, ooohhh... the number of students does not really have an impact on me at all”. (Melly, Script 8, line 8, interview data)

Melly stated that there was no significant difference in the environment in Thailand and Indonesia, even though the number of students was quite large, it did not affect Melly in the English teaching and learning process there.

In international schools in Thailand, community teachers face significant challenges related to the frequency of dense classes, as revealed by Santi:

“For the frequency of the class, it is quite dense and of course, we, as teachers, have to study extra, in Indonesia which is not too much, sometimes it is overwhelmed.. like that.. especially with this many students”. (Santi, Script 9, line 15, interview data)

The extra effort that educators must endure is reflected in this remark. Due to the high frequency of classes and the vast number of students, teachers must not only properly prepare their lesson plans but also adjust them to meet the unique learning needs of each student. This can be particularly difficult when there is little opportunity for direct teacher-student engagement. Teachers who suffer from this illness frequently feel overburdened. Being overburdened can have a detrimental influence on students' learning experiences and diminish the effectiveness of instruction.

As they have explained, the enormous number of students made it

difficult for community teachers to maintain control over class dynamics during the short-term international program in Thailand. There were classes with forty to fifty students, in contrast to Indonesian classes, which typically only have around thirty. There was less teacher-student interaction because of the huge class size. To make sure that every student genuinely comprehended the material being taught, this was very important. Teachers also found it challenging to provide each students with individualised attention because of this condition. The learning process consequently grew more intricate.

## **B. Discussions**

With an emphasis on their viewpoints and narratives, this study aims to investigate the experiences and difficulties faced by community teachers participating in a brief international program in Thailand. A discussion of the results, backed up with interviews, is presented in this section. A theoretical underpinning for the findings is provided by connecting a number of statements to pertinent theories. Because theories help explain the results and demonstrate the connections between various study components, researchers employ several ideas to bolster and validate their findings. Additionally, theories improve the research's meaning, dependability, and comprehension. Researchers can connect their work to existing knowledge and concisely justify the findings by

utilizing well-established ideas.

The format of this section is determined by the research questions, including: (1). What are the experiences faced by community teachers during a short-term international program in Thailand? (2) What are the challenges gained by community teachers during the program, particularly in terms of teaching language and adapting to a different cultural context? The following is a description and explanation of the two research questions mentioned above:

### **1. The Experiences of Community Teachers During a Short-term International Program in Thailand**

The study's findings were based on the experiences of students in the English department who participated in a short-term international program in Thailand. Eight of them started the program in 2023, and the last one started in 2024.

The study's findings provide insight into the challenges and experiences faced by community teachers throughout the program. In addition, this study indicates that the program helps students develop their ability to learn and adapt to Thai culture. Because of this, the educational process throughout the program must be tailored to the needs of the students



and the local context in which it is being conducted.

The interview results indicate that community teachers have difficulties in understanding the language, adapting their teaching methods to students who have different language proficiency levels, and addressing students' limited understanding of English.

However, this experience also teaches the community many things, especially about education, as they undertake pre-service teaching after this program. Several community teachers have expressed that they experience personal growth and skill development as a result of this program.

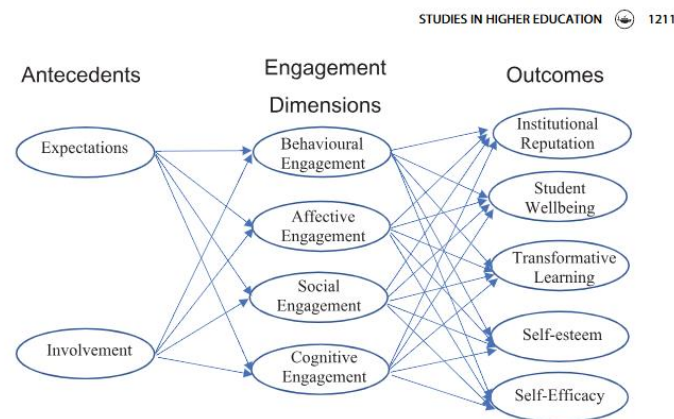


Figure 4.13 Student Engagement Dimensions

As stated by Bowden et al., (2021) student involvement involves a confluence of a number of factors, such as effort, perseverance, focus, attention, a readiness to think critically, and emotional reactions including curiosity, joy, boredom, and worry. Behavioral engagement, affective

engagement, cognitive engagement, and social engagement are the four interconnected characteristics that makeup student involvement in the educational context. Student engagement, as told by Phil and Al-Hoorie (2021), is the key to meaningful learning. Without active student engagement, learning cannot take place properly.

Based on the findings of community teachers' interviews, teaching in Thailand painted a different picture of student engagement. Despite language limitations, students demonstrated a high degree of involvement, as seen by their eagerness to hear what the teacher had to say. Additionally, if students believed that the teacher's explanation was unclear, they actively raised questions. Based on these results, the behavioral engagement dimension shown by their eagerness to listen the cognitive engagement dimension shown by their active questioning and the affective engagement dimension shown by their interest in the subject matter can all be linked to student engagement in Thailand. This supports the notion that students' active participation enhances their comprehension of the course material in addition to reflecting their willingness to learn.

Researcher interviews revealed that students in Thailand favor interactive learning approaches over lectures. The suggestion of Thai teachers, who advise Ayu as community teachers, to avoid using the lecture technique when teaching in class since they become bored easily, supports

this. Research regularly demonstrates that interactive approaches are associated with favorable student results, including increased levels of attention, interest in the subject matter, and pleasure, as stated by (Kiyasova et al., 2022).

Students are naturally excited about learning while listening to songs, which is what community teachers do to create an enjoyable learning environment. As Kumar et al., (2022) previously said, music can lower affective filters and promote a happy outlook by providing a calm learning environment. Numerous other scholars have examined and demonstrated the influence of music in fostering an environment that supports language acquisition (Griffie, 1988; Gardner, 1983; Domoney and Harris, 1993; and Speh and Ahramjian 2011). Also Jenisbaevna, (2024) explains how to use songs, poems, games, and problem-solving activities. These activities are focused on the needs of the students, so by doing so, you give them the opportunity to express themselves, have fun while learning, and use their minds. So it is not only limited to the use of songs, community teachers also use games during teaching and learning activities to make students interested and learning more interactive.

It is evident that students in Thailand enjoy interactive learning, where the focus is not just on lecturer methods but also on engaging activities like music, games, and visual media. According to the study, interactive

media not only increases student motivation but also makes learning more engaging. This leads to the conclusion of Khoirun Nisa (2023) that interactive teaching methods make students more motivated to learn and achieve learning objectives. By using an engaging learning environment, students can understand the material more easily and participate more actively in the learning process. Because of this, using interactive teaching methods in the classroom is crucial to creating an effective learning environment and encouraging students' active participation.

The findings of the interviews indicate that technology-based learning is well supported in Thai schools. According to the respondents, tools like projectors, LCDs, smart TVs, and microphones are particularly useful for establishing a dynamic and productive learning environment. Teachers can better deliver materials and boost student engagement with the aid of these technology resources. For instance, students can use visual resources like songs or films in an engaging fashion with the use of projectors and smart TVs. These resources increase students' involvement in the learning process by making it simpler for them to acquire a language through visual aids like songs or films. As stated by Mayer (2006), the multimedia principle states that people learn more profoundly from words and visuals together than from words alone. These elements can be integrated into instruction using technology such as projectors and smart TVs, which helps

students understand difficult ideas.

The effectiveness of education in Thailand is greatly influenced by government assistance, which gives schools all the tools they need, including technology-based curricula and microphones in classrooms. According to one reply, the kingdom fully supports school infrastructures since they improve student learning. Based on the data by Hilmin and Dwi Noviani (2023), Thailand's spending on education is about 20% of the overall state budget, which is equivalent to Indonesia's budget. However, Thailand's smaller population roughly 25% of Indonesia's, allows the Thai government to focus more on allocating resources and enhancing people's welfare, particularly in the area of education, resulting in higher-quality educational facilities.

As a result of interviews with community teachers, the great parallels in Islamic principles make cultural assimilation in Thailand, particularly in the southern region where most of the population is Muslim, very easy for them. The inhabitants of Southern Thailand strongly adhere to Islamic principles when it comes to attire. It can be seen that Muslims who live and settle in Southern Thailand dress like Muslims wearing robes or robes and Muslim women with typical Malay characteristics wear *baju kurung* and *hijab*, Asti Maulida (2024) stated. Based on one reply, the unexpectedly positive value served as a personal model for him to look like a true Muslim.

They not only dress differently than the typical Thai person, but they also greet each other differently. In accordance with Islamic traditions, one participant suggested that she use "*Assalamualaikum*" instead of "*Sawadekha*" when greeting others. Additionally, they disapproved of the widespread "wai" greeting in Thai, which they thought originated from Buddhist customs. Rather, the Islamic culture there places a strong emphasis on greeting one another. People who feel like they belong to a group are more likely to act in ways that fit the norms and stereotypes of that group, As told by Shih in (Charness & Chen, 2020). In Southern Thailand, community teachers observed that the locals firmly adhered to Islamic principles, such as the courteous and Islamic dress code and the usage of the greeting *Assalamualaikum* rather than *Sawadekha*. This affected the behavior of community teachers, who also adjusted to these practices to gain more acceptance from the local population. Put another way, a common religious identity facilitates cultural adaptation by fortifying the social bonds between community teachers and the local population. Respectful interactions and positive relationships are made possible by social identity, which promotes comfort and culturally appropriate behavior.

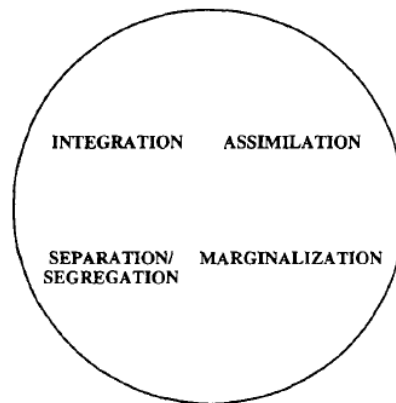


Figure 4.14 Acculturation by Berry

The result of the interviews shows that one of the key factors in fostering intercultural understanding and fostering the development of the community teachers' individual identities was their cultural interchange during the program in Southern Thailand. The program gave community teachers a chance to learn about Indonesian culture, particularly Banjar culture, as well as local culture. Berry (1997) stated that acculturation is the act of adjusting to two different cultures such that an individual can accept new aspects of their culture while retaining their cultural identity. As explained by Berry, there are four acculturation strategies. In this instance, the Indonesian community teachers employed the integration strategy, which taught them about the local Thai culture while preserving their Banjar cultural identity through activities like introducing Betarbang and creating Sasirangan cloth. This method can lead to cross-cultural partnerships that are courteous and harmonious.

Examples of cultural exchange include the introduction of *Sasirangan* fabric, traditional musical instruments like *Terbang* or *Rebana*, and other artistic endeavors. Community teachers participate in local activities including learning to play the Thai *kompang* and producing clove oil as part of this program. This offers fresh perspectives on Thai customs and abilities. It demonstrates how mutually beneficial contacts are an element of cultural exchange.

According to the researcher interview of all the community teachers, Short-term international programs have significantly impacted the professional and personal development of community teachers in Southern Thailand, particularly in terms of their teaching abilities and self-confidence. These cross-cultural teaching experiences help teachers feel more confident. overcoming obstacles like linguistic and cultural hurdles are a few instances. Bandura (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory stated that a person's confidence in finishing a task is influenced by direct experience. When a person successfully completes a challenging activity or difficulty, their confidence grows. Because they effectively taught foreign students, made English their major language of communication, and modified their teaching strategies to suit Thai students' needs, community teachers in this context felt more independent.

Speaking English on a daily basis gives them more confidence while



speaking with Thai students and the community, which is one of their competitive advantages as educators. Additionally, the program develops soft skills like flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and empathy for diversity in addition to technical competence. As a result, the program supports Bandura's theory that effective practical experiences boost self-efficacy, which influences one's capacity to finish novel activities. Community teachers are more prepared to take on the problems of global education because they are more self-assured, flexible, and innovative.

The short-term international program held by Antasari State Islamic University Banjarmasin improves teachers' self-confidence, teaching skills, and adaptability. This cross-cultural experience increases their independence, helps them speak better, and offers better interactive teaching methods. The use of educational technology such as projectors and LCDs also helps in more dynamic learning in Thailand. The similarity of Islamic values facilitates cultural adaptation, with community teachers maintaining Banjar culture while learning local Thai culture. Overall, this program shows that cross-cultural experience not only makes you more proficient in technical and soft skills but also gives you a global perspective and makes you more prepared to face the challenges of international education.

## **2. The Challenges of Community Teachers During a Short-term International Program in Thailand**

There are 4 things that affect English teaching, as stated by Hibatullah (2019) 2 which community teachers face when teaching in Thailand, the first is language barriers, which include problems in language skills and lack of exposure to English outside the school. Lack of exposure to English outside the classroom is a factor that worsens language barriers. Because English is not widely used in Thai society, students often feel no urgency to learn it. This is the background to the difficulty of community teachers in communicating with students and making them understand English.

Language barriers were a major difficulty for community teachers during the international program in Thailand. Individual learning and development take place through social contact, according to Vygotsky in (Arshad & Chen, 2009) that told about sociocultural theory, the primary means of expressing ideas and fostering comprehension is language. The learning and communication process is hampered when students are unable to grasp English or the Malay language that is used as a substitute. Many Thai students struggle to understand the teachings in the community teacher's experience because of their poor language proficiency. This results in poor classroom interactions and makes it challenging to effectively communicate the material. To overcome this challenge, community teachers must adjust by using a variety of tactics, such as using visual aids, interactive learning tools, or even translating materials into local languages. Learning can be

facilitated through educational tools that help students understand difficult concepts. Accordingly, a community teacher's adaptation is the most important factor in addressing language barriers and ensuring that the learning process continues even in the face of significant linguistic differences.

The disparity in students' language ability levels is another issue that the teacher community in Thailand faces during the international program, according to researcher-conducted interviews. Given that students from diverse linguistic backgrounds sometimes struggle to comprehend English-taught content, this is a highly complex challenge. Inequality in learning material mastery is another effect of this disparity.

Sociocultural Theory Arshad and Chen (2009) offer extremely pertinent advice in this regard. According to this theory, effective learning happens through social interactions fueled by assistance from more seasoned individuals, in this case, teachers. In order to help students grasp the content as best they can, teachers must gradually support them (scaffolding), beginning with the most fundamental concepts. Teachers can also support cooperative learning amongst students of varying skill levels, allowing more experienced students to assist less experienced ones. Additionally, this fosters social relationships that enhance their educational journey. Teachers can overcome the difficulties caused by variations in their students' language

competence levels by offering incremental help and fostering positive connections.

Another issue that the community teachers in Thailand encountered during a brief foreign program was the extremely high number of students in a single lesson. According to the notion of class size, teachers find it more challenging to provide each student the specific attention they need when there are more students in the class (Achilles, 1999). This is made worse by the cramped classroom, which makes for an uncomfortable learning atmosphere. Furthermore, the student engagement theory demonstrates that in large classes, student interest tends to decline. In Thailand, community teachers frequently complain that they are unable to speak with each student individually and can only speak with the class as a whole. As a result, it is challenging to gauge how well each student comprehends the subject matter.

This supports the findings of Fredricks et al., (2004) study, which showed that students in big classes become disengaged when teachers do not pay enough attention to them. Based on the findings of the community teachers' study, they are forced to employ a generalized teaching strategy under these circumstances, which is ineffective in addressing the requirements of specific students. The cognitive stress theory states that a large number of students influence both professors and other students. The idea that a high cognitive load could lower the quality of instruction is

explained by Sweller and Paul Chandler (2009). It took more work to teach material and make sure kids comprehended the lesson in large courses, according to community teachers. This led to stress, which affected both the well-being of the teachers and the quality of their instruction. One adaption was the employment of assistive technology, like tiny microphones. This was just a partial answer, though, as microphones were unable to adequately solve the difficulties associated with teaching in big classes. In general, community teachers found it difficult to better control their teaching because of the dynamics of huge classes in Thailand. These results are consistent with ideas that demonstrate how class size influences student involvement, classroom management, and interaction quality. These encounters aid teachers in comprehending and resolving comparable problems in subsequent classroom settings.

Last but not least, this program significantly boosts community teachers' self-confidence, particularly through the intensity of English-language interactions. They acquire a lot of new vocabulary and become acclimated to speaking a foreign language as a result of this practice, which forces them to learn how to communicate with others in English. Compared to other educators, this experience offers certain community teachers additional benefits, like enhancing their soft skills. Self-assurance, communication abilities, and tolerance for cultural differences are all

improved by this program. As a researcher, I believe that this cross-cultural encounter enhances teaching abilities and molds participants' personalities and professional viewpoints. In a multicultural learning atmosphere, they grow smarter, more adaptable, and better prepared to take on difficulties.

Their growth as teachers was influenced by the challenges they faced, particularly in their capacity to supervise large and heterogeneous classes. These difficulties forced educators to be more innovative and adaptive in their teaching, which enhanced the educational experience of the students. Although burdensome, these experiences also provided them with opportunities to improve their communication skills, self-confidence, and awareness of cultural diversity, which helped shape their personalities and professional perspectives as better teachers.