Cultural Adaptation of Indonesian Diaspora in Thailand's Social Contexts

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ABSTRACT

As a long time friend of Indonesia, Thailand is among the countries of choice for Indonesians to live overseas. This study aims to explore the Indonesian Diaspora's perceptions regarding cultural differences between Thai and Indonesian and cultural adaptation that they experience while interacting with Thai. The study utilizes Kim's Stress-Adaptation Growth model to explain phenomenon in the intercultural interaction between Indonesians and Thai. This is a qualitative study with nine participants consisting of two Thai citizens of Indonesian descent, and seven Indonesian residing in Thailand: four workers, and three university students. The selection of participants used a purposive sampling technique. Data were obtained through interviews and document reviews and analyzed with thematic analysis. The results of the study showed participants' perspectives and adaptations in relation to Thai rules, norms, and customs; religious aspects; sexual attitudes and behaviors; interaction in academic space; and language issues. Even though participants experienced various cultural differences, they did not report any significant stress in adaptation process. As this study is mostly about Indonesian living in urban Thailand, it is important that future research in this topic can cover other regions of Thailand, particularly the rural one, to get more comprehensive features of intercultural interaction between Indonesian and Thailand.

Keywords*: Cultural adaptations, Indonesian diaspora, stress-adaptation growth model, ASEAN, Thailand and Indonesia relationship.*

INTRODUCTION

Building relationship with people from different backgrounds is encouraged in different religious teachings. Muslims, for example, are encouraged by the Qur'an for establishing connections with different people. *Al Hujurat* verses in the Qur'an explain that God creates human being with differences in terms of culture, nations, and tribes, to enable them to recognize each other. The verses encourage Muslims to believe that God creates differences for a purpose. One of the purposes is to know each other, to connect with each other.

Currently, thousands Indonesians live in Thailand either as permanent citizens or temporary residence. They are part of the eight millions Indonesian Diaspora, which is Indonesians by birth and ancestry who live outside of Indonesia (Muhiddin & Utomo, 2015). Living overseas requires diaspora and local people to understand each other's culture and to broaden their understanding by viewing cultures from various perspectives (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). Intercultural communication is crucial in the development of intergroup relations and intercultural connection (Collier, 2015). The favorability to build intercultural connection are determined by factors, such as communication skills, cultural knowledge and awareness, and open-minded towards ambiguity (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002).

To build intercultural connection between diaspora and local people, the Diaspora needs to make cultural adjustment. The cultural transition from the country of origin culture to the host country culture needs to address three areas of adjustments, which are individual aspects, work related aspects, and environmental aspects (Holtbrügge, 2008). The

adjustment is not a simple process. Therefore, it requires Diaspora to develop intercultural competence (Collier, 2015). Central to the intercultural competence are cultural knowledge and awareness, communication skills, and tolerance for ambiguity (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). These may help to prevent misunderstanding during the Diaspora and local people interaction. The misunderstanding may occur because of gaps in knowledge, linguistic levels, perception, and degree of cooperation (House, 1997).

Numerous studies about Indonesian-Thai connection in macro-level have been done in areas such as education (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017), trades (Barmeyer & Franklin, 2016), and religions (Brazal & De Guzman, 2015). In micro-level, intercultural interaction between Indonesians and Thai's has not yet been researched as much as the Indonesians' relation with Malays, Saudis, or with those from English speaking countries (Muhidin, 2013; Muhidin & Utomo, 2015). This study explored cross-cultural adjustment process in the intercultural interaction of Indonesians living in Thailand. It seeks to explain Indonesian experiences in the adaptation process, how they compare the culture of Thai People and that of the Indonesians during the interaction, and how they respond to any differences or gaps that they find between the two cultures in order to have smooth transition into Thai culture.

This study may be useful for both decision makers and Indonesian Diaspora to enrich current understanding about developing intercultural competence of Indonesians living overseas. To get comprehensive understanding about the topic in this study, the researchers will start with explaining the history of Thailand – Indonesia connection. The understanding of the current relations between the people of Thailand and Indonesia will never be complete without regard to the history of relations between the two parties in the past.

UNDERSTANDING THAILAND-INDONESIA CONNECTION

The History of the Connection

Indonesia and Thailand have built long history of connection. The close relationship between the two countries is enhanced by geographical, cultural, religious and historical proximities. It was indicated that the connection between people of the two countries might have occurred long before the Srivijaya empire (Munoz, 2016). However, it was in the Srivijaya era (7th to 13th centuries) that the connection between ancient Indonesians and Thai's became increasingly significant (Yuliana, 2009).

The early connection between people of the two countries was mostly commercial. The Srivijaya, an ancient Indonesian kingdom, controlled international sea trade around the Melacca Strait and built wide trade relations with those from China, India, Middle East, and states in the Malay Archipelago, including Thailand (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016; Rajani, 1974). The contact between the two countries was also marked by competition for influence. The kingdom of Siam, which was an ancient Thai Kingdom, was specifically mentioned in the history as an important cause of the diminution of Srivijaya's influence as a formidable sea power in the 13th century (Coedès, 1968).

Other than the trading relation, religious bonding became one of the powerful reasons for the past relationship. Two main religions, Islam and Buddhism, were at the center of the connection (Munoz, 2016). Buddhism, in particular, provided cultural dimensions to the relationship maintained by Srivijaya with Siam (Howard, 2014). At the same time, by following the trade routes, Islam expanded in Southeast Asia through mainly Buddhist regions. Around the 14th centuries, a King from Palembang, Indonesia, Parameswara Dewa Shah, seized the throne of Singapura before he was beaten, either by the Siamese or the Majapahit (Miksic,

2013). Parameswara, who was also known as Muhammad Iskandar Shah, ran away and then built an Islamic kingdom in Malacca (Holt, Holt, Lambton, & Lewis, 1977).

Islam in Thailand grows in two ways. The first one originated and developed in the local area known as the Greater Patani (Aphornsuvan, 2003). Since approximately the ninth century, people in this area grew with its own distinct history and culture, the history of Malay-Muslims (Yusuf, 2007). Currently, this population mostly lives in Thailand's three southernmost provinces. The Malay-Muslims consist of 80% of the whole Muslims of Thailand. The other one was from those coming to Thailand from various places such as Persia, Arab, and Asia (Aphornsuvan, 2003). This is why Islam in Thailand shows ideological separateness in their religious practices in the north, south and central regions (Brown, 2013). Such Islam diversities are unique in Thailand and cannot be found in Malaysia or Indonesia.

Current Connection
Indonesia-Thailand diplomatic relations started in March 1950 (Yuliana, 2009). The relationship become closer after the foundation of ASEAN on 8 August 1967 where five nations, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore agreed to "bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity" (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2007). Currently, Indonesian Embassy in Thailand recorded around 3,600 Indonesians live in Bangkok (Nugraha, 2016) and 1,585 persons of who are listed as aged more than 17 years old by Indonesian General Election Commission (PPLN Bangkok, 2018).

Indonesian-Thailand relationship cannot be separated from the fact that Indonesia is a Muslim majority country. The majority of Thai's were Buddhist. Budhists were 93.33 percent of Thai population, followed by Muslims in the second place, which were 5.27 percent of the population (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2016). Most of Thai Muslims are of Malay origin living in the southern area of Thailand, which is directly adjacent to Malaysia. Around the mid-13th century CE, the area was part of the Islamic Kingdom of Patani built by Sultan Ismail Shah (Syukri, 1985). The Southern area was also a trade route from the Middle East, enabling the acceleration of the spread of Islam by Islamic merchants. The relationship between Indonesians with Muslims from the southern area was quite close. In *Kampung Jawa*, Indonesian Muslims live with other Muslims with Malay descent, mostly from the Southern Thailand.

On several occasions, the religious and ancestral bonding between Indonesians and Malay Muslims has helped in reducing the conflict in the southern region of Thailand (Wardhani, 2007). On Wednesday, 28 April 2004, there was an increased tension between Thai Muslim in the southern area and the Thai government and various parties involved to reduce the tension. Even though it was argued that ethno-religiosities, Thai Buddhism and Malay Islam, may be the root of the clash (Yusuf, 2007) and the southern Thailand people are highly likely to prefer Malaysia to Indonesia to be the peace mediator (Wardhani, 2007), Indonesia was still an important peacekeeper for its own experience in using the third party for finding peace solution in Aceh conflict (Tempo.co, 2007). The Indonesian institutions involved to reduce the tension in southern Thailand were not only from a government body but also from organizations such as Muhammadiyah (Tempo.co, 2008).

The majority of Muslims with Indonesian origin living in the city of Bangkok are of Javanese descent (Yusdani, 2016). They have settled down there for years. They are scattered around an area called the *Kampung Jawa* and have a mosques named "*Masjid Jawa*" or Java Mosque. Even though the people in *Kampung Jawa* are mostly of Javanese descent, but it is very rare that they are able to speak Javanese. They mostly do not speak Indonesian as well.

Javanese Muslims around the Java Village (*Kampung Jawa*) in the City of Bangkok practice Islam similar to the one practiced by the Javanese ones in Indonesia. Their rituals still follow the Javanese's *abangan* (Geertz, 1976): performing *slametan* (celebration for good things), *yasinan* (reciting the *YaaSin* verses of the Qur'an), and celebrating other festivals. They utilize *Masjid Jawa* to teach Qur'an lessons for elementary school children: the girls wear headscarves, and boys wear white caps, the lessons were facilitated by an *ustadz* (an Islamic teacher) who also acts as the *imam* (leader) of the mosque.

The significance of Javanese Muslim community in Bangkok and in Thailand as a whole cannot be separated from a man named Erfan Dahlan, an Indonesian, residing in Thailand since 1934 (Yusdani, 2016). His house, which is not far from the *Kampung Jawa* Mosque, is still well preserved. The age of the house is almost a hundred years, with a small, but nicely arranged courtyard. Several plants beautify the views of the house from outside.

Erfan Dahlan married a woman who was the daughter of the imam of the *Kampung Jawa* mosque. Erfan Dahlan himself is the fifth son of an Indonesian national hero, Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan. KH Ahmad Dahlan, was also an Indonesian Islamic reformer, the founding father of Muhammadiyah, a prominent Modern Moslem organization in Indonesia. During his life, Erfan Dahlan preached to Muslims in the area. He died in 1967, left a wife and ten children. One of his children is Prof. Dr. Winai Dahlan, a founder of National Halal Center in Thailand. Erfan Dahlan's family plans that his heritage house will be made into a museum of Islamic history in Thailand. Erfan Dahlan's family may be a good example about the successful adjustment of Indonesian into Thai culture.

Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model
Studies on intercultural communication have been extensively done in areas such as cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, sociology of language, and communication science (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). They utilized various theoretical approaches to explore intercultural relation phenomena. This study used the Stress-Adaptation Growth model developed by Kim (2001) to explain phenomenon in the intercultural interaction between Indonesians and Thai.

In Kim's (2001) theory, the adaptation process looks like a spiral. If someone is in a situation that is different from their old cultural patterns, to some extent, they will experience stress because it makes them confused. Sometimes, negative stress can trigger defensive responses where people may try to keep their old habits, and reject the new culture. Nonetheless, they may start to adapt by changing their behaviour. This will gradually leads to adaptation and adds to personal growth.

According to Kim (2008), there are two factors involved in the adaptation process: individuation and universalisation. Individuation is the ability to see that everybody is a unique individual, not a categorical stereotype. Oppositely, universalisation is the ability to see that there are common things among various cultures and ethnicities. Universalisation enables someone to find complementarity and agreement beyond differences and contention (Young Yun Kim, 2008).

It is not clear yet how the adaptation process will trigger a stress especially because Thai and Indonesian cultures are somewhat similar. In a study that involved Australian and New Zealand students who studied in countries that shared seemingly similar European culture, it was showed that even though the students faced unfamiliarity, they did not experience significant challenges in the new country (Shannon, 2015). Our study tries to explore Indonesian diaspora's experience in their adaptation towards the differences and the similarity that they found in their interaction with the Thai's. Using Kim's stress-adaptation-growth model, this study considers that someone's intercultural capability grows with challenges that they experience in a new environment (Kim, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study with eight participants: two participants are Thailand citizens of Indonesian descent, three Indonesian workers, and four Indonesian students. All the participants have been in Thailand for at least a year. Participants were selected by using a purposive sampling technique.

Due to limited time for the data collection and participants' tight work schedule, data were collected based on the participants' availability. Three participants were available for interviews, one interviewed through emails, and five were available only for a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Interviews were conducted around two hours each in various places, such as participants' office or houses, restaurants, campus, and in a gym. The interviews were all in Indonesian language. Document reviews were also done for getting additional information. Documents were taken from related written data from the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok, informants' personal documents, and reports on local newspapers.

For triangulation, participants were given the opportunity to read the summary of the interview and the FGD data and were invited to provide responses toward the summary. The responses were used in the data analysis. This study uses thematic analysis. In the report, for confidentiality reasons, numbers are used instead of names for referring to participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collection was done from June until November 2018. Interviews and an FGD were carried out from 18 to 23 October 2018 and were audio recorded for transcription. The participants' details were as follow:

Table 1: Profile of participants.

Informant Number	Place of Origin/ Nationality	Age Range (years)	Gender	First Language(s)	Marital Status	Occupation/ Employment status/ Place of Work	Length of Stay Range (years)
1	Sumatera/ Indonesian	30-40	Male	Indonesian	Married	University student	Less than 5 years
2	Sulawesi/ Indonesian	30-40	Male	Indonesian	Single	University student	Less than 5 years
3	Java/ Indonesian	30-40	Male	Indonesian	Married	Teacher	Less than 5 years
4	Sulawesi/ Indonesian	30-40	Female	Indonesian	Married	Teacher	Less than 5 years
5	Java/ Indonesian	30-40	Male	Indonesian	Married	Teacher	Less than 5 years

6	Sumatera/ Indonesian	30-40	Male	Indonesian	Married	University Student	Less than 5 years
7	Nusa Tenggara/ Indonesian	40-50	Male	Indonesian	Married	Government Office	Less than 5 years
8	Java/ Thai	50-60	Female	Indonesian and Thai	Married	Government Office	More than 5 years
9	Java/ Thai	70-80	Female	Indonesian and Thai	Married	Retired	More than 5 years

The documents from which the data were gathered were selective and fragmentary. The documents tended to show positive aspects of the intercultural interaction. No documents specifically cover the topic in this study. Nonetheless, these documents were helpful especially to understand background information for the study and important information that was not directly related to the study but still useful in understanding the topics.

Data from the documents were analysed together with interview and FGD data. Themes were generated from the two sets of data. The result of analysis was reported to explain Indonesian Diaspora's points of view of cultural differences and the way the Indonesian Diaspora in Bangkok adapt to the differences based on Kim's (2008) model.

This study found that there were five things that participants saw as important in their adaptation process. The things were first about Thai rules, norms, and customs; religious related aspects; sexual attitudes and behaviours; interaction in academic space, and language barriers.

Local Rules, Norms, and Customs
Understanding local rules, norms and customs is important in cultural adjustment. Participants saw that there were differences and similarities between Thai's' and Indonesians' rules, norms, and customs. To understand and to adjust to Thai culture, participants appeared to make generalization. This phenomenon, which is called universalisation in Kim's (2008) model, helped them to reach complementarities and agreement with differences between Indonesian and Thai culture.

> It was not rare to see they smiled at a stranger whom they met during shopping, or in a bus. They replied with a soft answer when asked, asked permission before interrupting a conversation. Thai merchants were often seen to thank a customer who bought things in their shop. I can say that these are things you can see in Indonesia but here you can see them more frequently (Participant 1).

> The Thai's were discipline and adhered to government regulation. This was not something quite often seen in Indonesian cities. They avoid littering anywhere other than into rubbish bin... Buses will only get passengers on and off at bus stops. In Indonesia, public transports stop anywhere they want and that triggers traffic congestion, people can smoke almost everywhere, sometimes Indonesian smokers smoke in areas such as hospital corridors

especially when security officers or hospital staff were not around (Participant 4).

Participants noted that Thai people are respectful. Different from what they found among Thai's, respectful manner was no longer obvious among Indonesians. This was also found in Saidek and Islami's (2016) study that explored the fading of Indonesian good values Even though the differences did not appear to trigger stress; participants admitted that they needed to be more aware about their behavior while in Thailand's public space.

> When you are in a bus, you can see young people giving their seats to monks, old people, pregnant mothers, and children. They are happy to stand in the bus, holding on to the rope provided for standing passengers. We need to be very much aware of these here. It is shameful to not prioritize children and old people when queuing up (Participant 4).

Another form of being respectful was recognized as a new thing by Indonesians living in Thailand. Participants reported to learn that Thai's show great respect to their King. The King, for Thai's, is a symbol of pride and has a popular portrayal as "a quasi-divine figure that embodies virtues" Fong (2009, p. 673). The form of respect for the king is shown by paying homage to the king's statue. In various places, such as shopping centers, axle crossroads, the front yard of government offices, and airports, there are statues and images of the king. Each time the Thai's look at or pass over the King statues or images, they will pause for a moment and give respect by facing and bowing to the King's symbols.

The way that Thai's show respect to the King may not be familiar to everyone. This seemed to be fascinating not only for Indonesians but also European as appeared in Love's (1996) study. People from other countries are not required to show respect in the same way. However, participants admitted to respect Thai's taboo about the King. They all reported to avoid doing certain things such as to fold paper money or to step on falling coins because they learnt that Thai's did the same thing for respecting the king picture on the money.

> This is very different from what we do with our money, but we do not want to be in trouble because of our ignorance (Participant 2).

Religious Aspects

As a country that is predominantly Buddhist, Buddhism is the main religious feature seen in Thailand. Participants' experience of living with people who have different religions triggers a range of feelings from being uncertain, appreciating, to the feeling of accepted by the Thai's. In those range, there seemed participants' extra effort to adapt. However, they mostly denied feeling significant stress during the adaptation process. A participant highlighted his experience surrounded with monks while waiting for a bus.

> I am not sure what we should do when we meet a group of monk. In Indonesia, we usually shake hand when we meet an Islamic scholar; sometimes we kiss their hand while handshaking. I tried to remember what happened in the movie when someone meets a monk, I was not sure, so I just stood and smile (Participant 3).

Talking about religious aspects, most participants seemed interested to talk about religious tolerance that they experienced in Bangkok. For participants who were born or have lived for years in Thailand, they reported that they felt well accepted by the locals even though they were not Buddhists. The friendship between Indonesian Muslims with the Thai Buddhist was built very strong. For participants who came later, they admitted to already have background knowledge before coming to Thailand. Most of the knowledge was from media. That made them surprised because some of their prior assumption was different from what they experienced.

> It is different from what is seen in the newspaper. Media shows scary things. We still are able to be a good Muslim here. Can you believe it, there are 200 mosques in the city of Bangkok! In our country, we have people who want to stop voicing azan (azan is Islamic prayer call). Here, there is no prohibition to voice azan through a microphone (Participant 7).

> Yes, this is a Budhists' majority country but we can hear azan from the mosque here (Participant 4).

> I've never heard any conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in Bangkok. I live here since I was born. What I know is that the government is very helpful for Muslim community (Participant 8).

> Indonesian Muslims in *Kampung Jawa* have mingled very closely with local residents. We do not have any issues in our interaction. We help each other, just like anyone else with their neighbours in Indonesia. We are so close. If my neighbour finds that I forget to close my front gate, they will help me to close it (Participant 9).

In general, participants do not feel to do much effort to adjust with the locals especially if they are able to speak Thai's. However, in one exceptional case, it was found that a woman participant decided not to wear hijab when she did her work because she felt not wearing hijab eased her to connect with Thai government official. She seemed reluctant to explain much about her struggle before making the decision. This may suit Kim's (2001) model where fear of refusal can trigger adaptation by changing behaviour:

> Currently, Thai government has allowed Muslim women to wear their Muslim attire in government office. I have been working in a government office since I was 25, when hijab is not yet widely worn. I did not wear it when working. This is not an easy decision but that makes it easier to connect with Thai official (Participant 8).

Other participants showed another feature of Kim's (2001) model, where negative stress can trigger defensive responses. The defensive response shows through someone's effort to keep his or her old habits. Participants felt the need to increase their adherence to Islamic teaching because it helps them to maintain their identity in a country where Islam is not a dominant religion.

> It is not easy to live abroad. For me, it is important to pay attention to religious rituals, sholat is the source of my emotional strength. This is a non-Muslim majority country. If we don't try to be a good Muslim here, we can be easily carried away with their permissive culture (Participant 6).

Participant 8 and 9 showed another form of maintaining their previous belief. They lived in the same as some Muslims in Bangkok and felt the need to stay different from their fellow Muslims.

> Here in *Kampung Jawa*, almost everyone likes to do "*selamatan*". People in this house, we are not Muhammadiyah because we do not know much about Muhammadiyah, but we follow our father message, do not celebrate "*selamatan*". If you really want to celebrate something, just give charity to an orphanage or invite orphans to eat here (Participant 9).

Even though participants appeared to maintain their Muslim identity, they still try to connect with the local in religious celebration. Participants found that religious celebration can be a good moment to connect with the Thai's. Even though they admitted to enjoy the festival, they were aware that some aspects of the festival may not be acceptable in Indonesia but they still involved in the festival:

> In April, Thai's hold New Year celebration with Songkran festival. They will wash Buddha statues, offering food for monks, releasing birds and fishes, and playing water war. I realized that playing with water would not be acceptable for Indonesians because we may see that as wasting water. But this is the time for people to gather, it is so attractive for both: local and tourists. It's a favourite for almost everyone (Participant 1).

Participant 8 explained that Thai government's attention to Muslims was increasing. They provided financial assistance for the construction and maintenance of mosques. In various places the government provide surau (small Islamic praying rooms) to carry out prayers in congregation. The Thai Ulama assembly must officially issue halal labels for food. There must be no illegal halal label, because it will be punished under the law.

Sexual Attitudes and Behaviour
Sexual attitudes and behavior are among the big differences between Indonesians and Thai's. While religious and cultural regulation about sex and sexual relationship is very strict in Islam and in Indonesia, Buddhism in Thailand seemed to ignore prostitution issues by not banning it and by permitting Buddhism's merit-making concept to be used to justify it (Avila, 2008). Rampant prostitution, sex trade, and utilizing women as visual icons in beauty contests and state rituals are part of everyday facts in Thailand (Van Esterik, 2000).

> We saw sexual things are very open here and we have to be mindful when traveling with our child to those places. I am actually worried, but I think they have to learn different reality. In Pattaya, there is one road, approximately five hundred meters long, with stores and restaurants on the roadsides. We

can see scantily clad, Thai-looking women throw jokes at each other. Or, a pair of young, Thai looking men walking down the road in the midst of souvenir sellers, kissing each other lips in front of other visitors. How will we explain that to the children? This is something that we have to deal with here (Participant 4).

Indonesian families coming here with teens, if they plan to school their children, they should be aware that there is no special regulation about extramarital sex for Thai students. We don't have it either in Indonesia, do we? But our culture, our society, religions, no, no place for extramarital sex! (Participant 5).

The impact of extramarital sex has made the Thai government being vigilant especially because of the high incidence of underage pregnancy and AIDS (Unicef, 2015; Van Esterik, 2000). The issues are predicted to increase as a large study involving almost three thousand sexually reproductive age Thai's showed the decline in age of first sexual encounter, changes in the first sexual partner type, and the increasing acceptance of premarital sex among young generations (Techasrivichien et al., 2016). Although sexual contacts are not prohibited, students are not allowed to get pregnant. If a student gets pregnant before marriage, she will be expelled from the university or school. This, Unicef (2015) stated, added more issues because teen mothers being forced out of school were often left without support, and suffered from stigma from peers, teachers, and parents of other students.

The frequency of adolescent pregnancy in Thailand was quite high. Unicef (2015) showed that the number of baby born to adolescent mothers aged 15-17 registered in 2013 were more than 5,000 babies. Factors influencing the high frequency of adolescent pregnancy which ranged from insufficient awareness about where and how to access contraceptives, early sexual experiences, access to technology, Western media portrayal of sexually active adolescents, sexual abuse, drugs and alcohol, peer pressure, migration to urban areas, economic hardship, sex workers, economic status, physiological changes and differences in ethnic cultural norms between medical professionals and clientele (Unicef, 2015).

Indonesians may have known much about the sexual activity facts about Thai. However, they may not be aware about how those facts will interfere people sphere in Thailand. They seemed to approach the sexual fact in similar ways: curious and secretly. For example, to prevent the unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, Thai government prepared a kind of automatic sale box (appearing like an ATM) for male contraceptives in several strategic places, such as shopping centers and other public places. Participant 4 expressed her astonishment when, for the first time, she saw the male contraceptive sold in a public toilet.

I know Thailand is so open about sex. I just cannot help my curiosity. I saw a box, what is that? Male contraceptive (RECOILED)? I went closer and read the instruction. Suddenly, a woman came in and it shocked me (LAUGHING) I know she realised my reaction and that made me more embarrassed. I was thinking what if she thought that I tried to buy one? What if this or that? I secretly look at her, but she looked like she did not care. So I went to the sink, washed my hand, and went away as soon as possible (Participant 4).

Participants were asked about their response in a situation such as standing close to same sex couple kissing each other or seeing sexual transaction when visiting tourism sites. Feelings triggered by the situations were various: 'uncomfortable', 'embarrassed', 'sorry for the people who do that', and 'disgusted'. However, participants reported similar reaction to deal with their own feeling: pretending they did not see a thing. A participant recounted:

> I sometimes feel awkward to stand so close to someone wearing so minimal clothes. I am afraid that I make a mistake, like showing too obvious that I am embarrassed, or any emotions. You know, we rarely see someone wearing that kind of dress in Indonesia and if it is in Indonesia, someone, if it is not we, will try to guide them to dress properly. But here, I should not do anything. I looked at others, what they do in that situation. Mostly, you will be fine when you pretend not to be aware of anything (Participant 3).

> I just let things go. If I want to know more, I sometimes try to find a safe place, sit there and watch what people do (Participant 7).

Interaction in Academic Space
There was close interaction between Indonesian and Thai students. This was a bit different from the student interaction reported in other studies. Studies in Australian (Mak, Brown, & Wadey, 2013; Shannon, 2015) and Spain (Sánchez, 2004) settings reported that differences in worldview, culture, and language were barriers to social contact between local and international student groups and that local students showed a low inclination to interact with their international peers. Based on participants' experiences, Thai students and educators showed positive attitude towards international students. Student participants felt that international students such as those from Indonesia are expected to perform much better than Thai students.

> Students from oversea are regarded and hoped to be more knowledgeable and more skillful than local students, especially about English. Some local students not quite good at English, they mix it with local accent and dialect. That may be why, for some students, it is not easy to speak English very well (Participant 6).

> We are used to a lively discussion in our class when we are in Indonesia. Sometimes, lecturers seemed to hope that we are helpful in the class. I mean, helping others to learn more by being very active. Thai's tend to be shy to speak in the class. Maybe they afraid of making mistake or they are not confident with their English (Participant 1).

> Thai students are quiet. Compared to them, we are very loud. They speak with a low voice, very soft. We can easily miss it (Participant2).

Student participants did not find many difficult issues to adapt with Thai academic atmosphere. They found that making friends with local students was very helpful to get smooth transition to the new country. They easily get along with local students. Indonesian

students were often invited by local students to eat out together, visit shopping centers, and play in tourism sites.

> It is good to have Thai students as friends. They are very helpful; teach us many things about Thailand better than learning it on our own. I think we learn better when we adapt faster. Thai friends help us to adapt (Participant 1).

There is one potential pitfall identified by student participants. When asked if they have concerns regarding academic atmosphere in Thailand, the student admitted:

> Thailand is a kingdom, traces of feudalism is still obvious here. The caste system is somehow still alive in the society. For example, a lecturer, we call them "*ajarn*". They are the highest caste after royal family and monks. Local students understand this very well. They pay high respect to *ajarn*. They are so reluctant to ask questions to *ajarn*, let alone debate them. If we have a problem with *ajarn*, we can say that "our fate on campus has ended" even though the one who is wrong is the *ajarn*. But not all *ajarn* like that. Ajarn who graduated abroad is usually more egalitarian (Participant 6).

The reluctance of local student to debate lecturers may not only because of understanding the caste system. Browell (2000) highlighted that Thai's will not openly question or criticize because they are concerned about respect, harmony, and dignity. It is inappropriate for Thai's to show anger, temper, impatience, and rude behaviour.

Language Issues
Language, especially oral language, is an effective communication tool for conveying messages to others. Therefore, in intercultural communication, there is a need to master the language of others or to find a way to understand to each other. There were sixty-two ethnic languages recognised by the Royal Thai Government (UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2011) but, in general, the Thai's use Thai as an official language (Premsrirat, 2014). The use of English is also encouraged in Thailand especially in academic interaction (Fitzpatrick, 2011), high-ranking officials, and business people engaged in tourism and export-import business (Royal Thai Government, 2015). The many kinds of languages used are at the same time a challenge and an opportunity for Indonesian Diaspora to connect with the Thai's.

Language issues faced by those living away from their country either they are students (Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer, & Lee, 2011), workers (Masgoret, 2006), and spouses or families who accompany the sojourners overseas (Yeh et al., 2008). It was found as a trigger for socio-cultural adjustment related stress for the sojourners and their family (Pedersen et al., 2011; Yeh et al., 2008), therefore it is important that the expatriates such as the Indonesian Diaspora to find the solution for language barriers. Mastering the host country language is important, at least for helping with daily activities. To facilitate communication with local residents, there appeared struggles on both Thai's and Indonesians to find ways to understand each other.

It is not easy to learn Thai language, but mastering simple and useful words is really helpful. "Basic language" is a solution (Participant 4).

Yes, learning the language for daily conversation is important. We can use it, for example, to ask the price of goods, ask direction to a particular place, and so on (Participant 3).

Both Indonesian and Thai's tried to help each other to overcome language barriers by using any ways possible: words or tools. This was specifically obvious in markets or shopping centers. Indonesian visitors and Thai sellers tried to find the most effective way to communicate even though they use very limited words.

If I want to buy something and I don't know its name in Thai, I will just point to the thing that I want to buy and the seller will reply to me by showing the price that they write on their calculator (Participant 2).

We can bargain the price. If you don't agree with the price, you can write the lower price that you want on the seller calculator. That is how the bargaining occurred (Participant 1).

In other places such as on the Thai streets, asking for the direction can be complicated. Participants told stories that they would first try to ask in English. If none seemed understood, then they tried Thai. After all the efforts did not seem to work, they would try to ask by pointing on the map, or the road sign. Sometimes, as the participants admitted, the final effort seemed more helpful.

Trying to adjust does not only mean that Indonesian Diaspora try to learn Thai's language and cultures. The opposite ways, to some extent, also occur. The Thai's also learn Indonesian language, especially those in the market. Participants noticed the phenomenon as interesting and fun.

When we passed by the Thai stalls, they offered their merchandise in Indonesian language saying "*Murah, murah!*" ("Cheap price, cheap price"). Some tried longer words such as "*Bapak, Ibu, ayo belanja sini, harga murah*" ("Sir, Madam, come on, buy something here, our price is cheap"). Sometimes, I find it comforting and funny (Participant 2).

Participants 3 and 7 told stories that Thai sellers often tried to attract Indonesian visitors by converting the price into Indonesian Rupiahs. They were heard shouted, "*Ayo belanja, murah, dua puluh ribu rupiah satu!*" (Come on buy from us, it's cheap, twenty thousand rupiah each). Even though they cited the price in Rupiah, the buyer should pay in Baht. Converting the price to Rupiah may have been seen attractive, as the Indonesian buyer would be able to easily confirm that the price was cheap, because they could directly compare it with Indonesian price.

The Indonesian Diaspora who were born in Thailand and live there most of their life show that the learning of culture and language is not only about Indonesians learn Thai culture and language. It also means that Indonesian Diaspora learn about Indonesian

language and culture. Interviewee 7 and 8 said explained that they tried to learn about Indonesia because they were born in Thailand and they knew very little about their country of origin. Their parents encouraged them to work in Indonesian government office in Thailand to help reconnecting them with Indonesian culture and root.

In the far south, Kelantan-Pattani Malay is the primary language of Malay Muslims. Most of the participants particularly stated that Thai citizens from the southern area were an important part in their cultural adjustments. This was because they speak Malay. Malay and Indonesian languages share many similar words and people from the two countries are able to understand each other. The connection may also be enhanced because of the same religious beliefs and the proximity of the two cultures.

> It is good that we have someone from the Southern Thai region. He can speak Malay, Indonesian, English, and Thai. He speaks Indonesian very well because he studied in Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. We are really helped to get him in the office because he can minimize language and cultural barrier in our work and activities Participant 7.

At the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok, a number of local staff was recruited. Many of the staff is from the southern Thailand. They are mostly able to speak Indonesian. Their presence is helpful because they are able to handle the embassy guests both from Indonesia and from Thailand. They also provide information and assistance in various activities that the embassy needs to involve and contribute in Thailand.

The other way where the language similarities with the southern Thai's were seen important is the participant tends to choose restaurants or food stalls run by the Malay descent Thai's. Participant 2 said that he did not choose them merely for halal food. It is more because he found that communicating was easier with the Malay descent Thai's. He preferred to eat in Malay restaurant especially if it was around praying time.

CONCLUSION

The closeness of history, culture, geography, and religion seem to help in cultural adjustment of Indonesian Diaspora in Thailand. This is evident from insufficient indication that excessive pressure is experienced by Indonesian Diaspora to adapt to Thai culture. Indonesian Diaspora seemed to be quite efficient in understanding and responding to Thai rules, norms and customs; aspects related to religions; Thai sexual attitudes and behavior; and ways to communicate with the locals in various settings. However, it seems that potential pitfalls in certain settings such as traces of feudalism in the academic field or interfaith friction that can trigger misunderstandings, still need to be anticipated wisely. There needs to be balanced and comprehensive information about Thailand so that Indonesian citizens who visit Thailand can adapt faster and more suitably.

Implications

This research may provide insight to the people from both countries about the cultural adjustment of Indonesian Diaspora in Thailand. The information from this study may be helpful in promoting deeper understanding about the struggle to adjust and to adapt to a different culture and environment. For Indonesians, it may help to be well prepared before moving to Thailand; for the Thai's, it may increase their willingness to help their Indonesian fellows to experience smooth transition in Thailand; and for governments of both countries,

the information may be used to inform policy regarding increasing mutual understanding between the countries and their people.

Limitation
This study has several limitations. Several participants seemed to show more on positive sides of cross-cultural interactions. Obstacles found during the interaction did not mention much despite the effort to explore the issues. It is suggested for future researchers in this topic to allow more time in data collection to reduce such limitations. Even though participants have different characteristics in terms of ages, gender, occupations, and ethnicities, the study result may not be generalizable to other cross-cultural interaction due to its small sample size and single study site, which was in a metropolitan city of Thailand. To address this limitation, future research need to be in larger scale and in multiple places, both urban and rural areas in Thailand.

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