

Muhammad Arinal Rahman (SZTE): Investigating the Cross-Cultural Academic Writing Adaptation of Indonesian PhD Students in Hungary

Non-native English speakers in English-medium programs are expected to adapt to Anglophone academic writing styles to succeed as global researchers (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Kramsch, 1998). Access to these academic writing conventions is one of the most problematic areas, especially when moving into academic traditions that are different from the ones they have been brought up with (Hall, 1995).

This paper discusses how such shifts in academic writing conventions reflect broader linguistic and cultural adaptation processes, thus making relevant contributions to the fields of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. The current study explores how Indonesian PhD students in English-medium programs in Hungary navigate academic cultural shifts, particularly the changes in academic writing.

This qualitative study employs narrative inquiry through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two Indonesian PhD students, Bagus and Doni (pseudonyms), who are pursuing degrees in pharmacy and education, respectively, at the University of Szeged in Hungary. The selection of participants from different fields highlights the potential variation in disciplinary writing conventions and adaptation processes (Duff, 2008). The interviews addressed their experiences with academic and cultural adaptation in their writing practice. The transcripts were analyzed using narrative analysis techniques, focusing on their personal writing trajectories and strategies (Bruner, 1987; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The findings show that Bagus and Doni faced challenges in shifting from the verbose and indirect writing style prevalent in Indonesian academia to the more direct and clear Anglophone style. Institutional support, including writing workshops, guidance from supervisors, and collaborative peer review, emerged as a critical facilitator of this transition. Both students implemented new strategies, such as beginning their manuscript writing process from the methodology or literature review section, not merely from the introduction section as they had done before, and maintaining a logical flow in their writing. This not only improved their writing skills but also increased their confidence as researchers on a global scale. This would mean that such adaptation processes reflect more extensive cultural and academic identity changes beyond writing strategies (de Certeau, 1984; Pavlenko, 2003).

The study proposes that universities accepting international students provide writing workshops that are sensitive to the academic conventions set by their respective cultures. Such findings give way to further insight into cross-cultural academic writing adaptation and afford implications for institutions regarding ways of linguistic and cultural support for international students within an Anglophone academic setting (Relph, 1976).

Keywords: academic writing, cultural transitions, Indonesian PhD students, Hungary, narrative inquiry, cross-cultural adaptation.

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