PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FOREIGN NATIONALS' COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE AS A MEDIUM OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION AT EASTON PARK APARTMENT

Nurul Huda[1*], Engkus Kuswarno[2], and Ilham Gemiharto[3]

Master Program in Communication Science, Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Padjajaran, Jl. Raya Bandung-Sumedang KM 21, Jatinangor, 45363, Indonesia

[a]E-mail: nurul24014@mail.unpad.ac.id
[b]E-mail: engkus.kuswarno@unpad.ac.id
[c]E-mail: ilham.gemiharto@unpad.ac.id

(*) Corresponding Author
nurul24014@mail.unpad.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research examines communication experiences of foreign nationals as a medium of cultural adaptation at Easton Park Apartment Jatinangor, a local residential facility not designed for international communities. Employing Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology approach emphasizing subjective meaning construction within the everyday lifeworld, data were collected through in-depth interviews with six informants from England, Kenya, Ethiopia, Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh, complemented by observation and documentation. Data analysis followed Creswell's phenomenological stages including horizontalization, theme formation, textural-structural description, and identification of experience essence. Findings reveal that awareness of differences emerges through language barriers, communication style variations, and unfamiliar social norms, which informants interpret as challenges triggering active learning through translation technology, smiles as universal language, independent Indonesian language learning, and participation in local cultural practices. Indonesian hospitality serves as a crucial factor reducing alienation, while mutual understanding occurs through gradual meaning negotiation. Intersubjectivity primarily forms in spaces such as mosques, churches, markets, and food stalls rather than within apartments whose individualistic structure inhibits spontaneous interaction. These findings suggest that residential facilities hosting international residents should incorporate communal spaces and design features that facilitate spontaneous cross-cultural interaction beyond individual dwelling units.

INTRODUCTIONS

Living in a country with a different culture requires individuals to reinterpret their everyday experiences. For foreign nationals residing in Indonesia, the process of cultural adaptation involves not only behavioral adjustment, but also the formation of new awareness about how they interact, communicate, and understand the social environment around them. This experience becomes more complex when they live in local housing that was not designed with the presence of international residents in mind, thus creating unique challenges in making sense of every cross-cultural interaction they experience. The experiences of foreign residents reflect more than just technical language barriers, they represent a process of subjective meaning-making when individuals face social and cultural realities different from their usual practices. When a Kenyan resident reported a maintenance issue, staff could not clearly explain in English about the next steps, causing frustration. A Chinese resident found that most administrative documents are only available in Indonesian, making it very difficult to complete requirements without help from local friends. Another Kenyan resident noted that while apartment staff are friendly, they do not really understand when asked questions in English, creating confusion in communication.

Cultural adaptation experiences are also manifested in seemingly simple everyday situations. At local housing such as Easton Park Apartment, every daily situation can become a new learning space when someone faces different social and cultural norms. In this context, the ability to understand messages, interpret behavior, and adjust responses becomes part of the adaptation dynamics itself. The diversity of interactions between foreign residents and local communities often raises potential misunderstandings when individuals have not been able to manage, adapt, or understand existing differences. This is reflected in an incident experienced by a Kenyan resident at Easton Park Apartment. A foreign resident experienced a misunderstanding when ordering food through an online food delivery service. When the order received was incorrect, he complained to the motorcycle taxi driver. The driver explained that the error came from the restaurant and suggested that complaints be submitted directly through the application. Both tried to communicate with the help of Google Translate, but the limitations of automatic translation made the messages conveyed less accurate in capturing the intentions of both parties. Differences in communication styles and cross-cultural interpretation further complicated the situation. For the foreign resident, a firm tone of speech was a form of affirmation of consumer rights, while for the local community, such communication style could be perceived as harsh or confrontational. As a result, tension occurred which developed into a debate in front of the apartment lobby. Security officers who tried to mediate faced difficulties due to language barriers and cultural context differences, so the resolution efforts were not effective. This incident shows that the way individuals interpret tone of speech, action intentions, and expectations in interactions is a subjective and cultural interpretation process (Kim, 2012; Ting-toomey, 1999).

Easton Park Apartment is a vertical housing located on Jalan Raya Jatinangor, Sumedang Regency. This strategic position makes it a housing choice for both local and international students and workers active in the Jatinangor education area (Mulyana, 2016 ; Tuti Karyani et al., 2006). According to Fahri, the Building Manager, the majority of residents from the beginning have been students, because this apartment was initially designed to support student housing needs, including foreign students. He stated that generally students are dominant, but now there are also many visitors and working people. This geographical context is relevant because it creates intense cross-cultural interaction between foreign residents and local communities within the radius of daily activities. The intensity of cross-cultural interaction in this area generates diverse communication experiences for foreign residents in their daily lives. Through experience, individuals obtain knowledge that underlies awareness and forms meaning, so that this awareness and meaning encourage individuals to take certain actions or behaviors (W. R. Putri et al., 2023; Schutz, 1976). Experience is connected to a phenomenon and can refer to communication events (W. R. Putri et al., 2023). Communication experience results from interaction between individuals containing messages and producing a process of sharing meaning through certain symbols, where events considered important will become the most remembered experiences and have a special impact on the individual (A. W. Putri & Kartika, 2022).

Previous research shows that communication experiences are categorized based on characteristics and meanings obtained. Positive communication experiences are marked by acceptance, motivation, and support that arouse confidence, while negative communication experiences include rejection or misunderstanding that hinders social interaction (A. W. Putri & Kartika, 2022). In the context of Easton Park Apartment, every interaction whether successful or experiencing obstacles can become a medium where foreign residents experience awareness of differences, interpret obstacles faced, and negotiate mutual understanding (reciprocity of perspectives) with staff and local communities in their cultural adaptation process. The phenomenon of cultural adaptation at Easton Park Apartment attracted researcher's attention because this housing records the highest number of foreign residents compared to other apartments in Jatinangor, and will continue to increase along with the increasing number of foreign nationals coming to Jatinangor (Table 1). Based on information from Agung as Building Manager, foreign residents come from various countries such as Japan, Korea, China, England, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Timor Leste, and Papua New Guinea. This diversity forms a complex cross-cultural interaction landscape within a single housing space.

Table 1. Number of Foreign Nationals in Jatinangor Apartments Year 2021-2025

Apartment	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
Taman Melati	0	0	0	1	2	3
Skyland City	0	0	3	6	1	10
Pinewood	2	2	4	12	6	26
Louvin	0	0	0	1	1	2
Easton Park	4	3	12	24	11	54

Source: (Researcher's Data, 2025)

Interestingly, the development orientation of Easton Park Apartment for the local market creates a unique situation, where foreign residents must interpret and negotiate the experience of living in an environment that was not designed with the assumption of their presence. All administrative procedures, information provision, and housing management services use the same standards as other local housing, without special adjustments to the presence of international residents. The adaptation process often involves efforts to understand communication methods, service procedures, and administrative rules that are generally designed with local user assumptions. This phenomenon shows a gap in understanding that needs to be explored phenomenologically, such as how foreign residents interpret their experiences when faced with language differences, service systems, and social habits in daily life. Behind these difficulties, foreign residents experience a deep meaning-making process toward their new environment. Anxiety, frustration, and feelings of alienation they experience are part of the experience of awareness of differences, moments when familiar social symbols disappear and are replaced by signs they have not yet understood. The variation in adaptation levels among them also shows that this experience is very personal and influenced by the proximity of their home culture to Indonesian culture. Culture shock theory explains that the loss of familiar communication symbols causes psychological tension that requires a process of reinterpreting the new social environment (Maizan et al., 2020; Oberg, 1960). The book The Psychology of Culture Shock also confirms that cross-cultural adaptation is a cognitive and affective transformation in understanding different cultural realities (Ward et al., 2001).

Previous research on foreign-born university presidents in the United States identified the phenomenon of living in two worlds, where they experience life between two or more cultural realities simultaneously (Johnson et al., 2023). Participants in that study described how they straddle multiple identities, where they must continually negotiate between identity as a foreigner and the demand to become part of the local community. At Easton Park Apartment, foreign residents likely experience similar duality, they live physically in Indonesia but psychologically are still tied to their home culture, creating a unique awareness experience of being here but coming from there. In phenomenological perspective, the cultural adaptation experience of foreign residents is a manifestation of subjective

consciousness when facing new social and cultural realities (Purwaningsih, 2016; Zaidah et al., 2023). Through direct communication experiences, both verbal and nonverbal, they construct meaning about how they feel, interpret, and give meaning to interactions, challenges, and acceptance in daily life. The phenomenological approach allows researchers to access the essence of lived experience through in-depth description of how individuals experience a particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In the context of this research, phenomenology helps reveal the experience, awareness, and meaning underlying the cultural adaptation experience of foreign residents in local housing environments.

The experience of foreign residents at Easton Park Apartment reflects a broader trend. Data from the Directorate General of Immigration of the Republic of Indonesia recorded a 7.28% surge in foreign national arrivals to Indonesia in the first semester of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, reaching 5,086,765 people (Direktorat Jenderal Imigrasi, 2024). This increase has implications for increased demand for long-term housing (Albuquerque et al., 2024), making understanding of foreign nationals' cultural adaptation experiences increasingly relevant in the subjective meanings they construct as individuals living in local housing. The phenomenon of foreign national cultural adaptation in Indonesia is increasingly receiving public attention. For example, in 2024, expatriates working in Tanjung Balai Karimun reported difficulties understanding local social values and norms, such as prohibitions on drinking alcohol or living with the opposite sex without legal marital status, requiring a self-learning process to adapt to the new environment and be accepted by the local community (Maulana & Perkasa, 2024).

Several phenomenological studies abroad have also explored similar experiences. Research on Chinese students in the United States found that communication difficulties stem not only from language limitations, but also from differences in expectations about social interaction styles and ways of expressing needs (Zhou et al., 2008). Meanwhile in Indonesia, academic studies on foreign nationals are still limited and generally focus on legal or employment aspects (Ramadani, 2020). Meanwhile, a systematic review by Pitriyani et al (2024) shows that most research on foreign students in Indonesia highlights culture shock, academic adaptation, and language barriers, while aspects of foreign nationals' daily life and experiences in housing and social interaction in local communities are relatively rarely studied. In cross-cultural adaptation literature, there are four adaptation strategies based on two dimensions: the extent to which individuals maintain their home culture, and the extent to which they participate in the new culture. The four strategies are (1) integration, when individuals maintain their home culture while adopting the new culture, (2) assimilation, when individuals abandon their home culture to fully adopt the new culture, (3) separation, when individuals maintain their home culture and reject the new culture, (4) marginalization, when individuals lose both cultures (Sam & Berry, 2006). Yun Kim offers a more dynamic perspective through integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation, which views adaptation as an ongoing communicative process in which individuals gradually develop competence to function in new environments (Kim, 2012).

This study extends cross-cultural communication research beyond institutional campus settings to examine non-institutional residential lifeworlds. While existing scholarship predominantly focuses on international students within university environments with structured support systems, this research investigates foreign nationals in local apartment complexes lacking institutional scaffolding for cultural integration. This shift is theoretically significant as non-institutional residential contexts more accurately reflect the everyday realities of long-term migrants, expatriates, and working professionals who must navigate cultural adaptation independently. By foregrounding the residential lifeworld as the primary site of intercultural encounter, this study addresses a critical gap in understanding how cultural adaptation unfolds organically where individuals lack formal institutional mediation and rely entirely on spontaneous interpersonal communication and self-directed strategies.

This research uses Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology as a philosophical foundation to understand cultural adaptation experiences of foreign nationals at Easton Park Apartment. Social phenomenology emphasizes how meaning is constructed in the everyday social lifeworld through intersubjective interaction (Schutz, 1976; Walsh et al., 1967). Schutz emphasizes that communication is the main process in forming shared meaning, where individuals mutually construct understanding about social reality. For foreign nationals at Easton Park Apartment, communication

experiences become important moments when they realize their position as strangers, understand their knowledge limitations, and negotiate meaning with others who have different cultural patterns. Based on this background, the purpose of this research is to explore in depth the communication experiences of foreign nationals as a medium of cultural adaptation at Easton Park Apartment.

Method

This research employed a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was chosen to explore the lived experiences of foreign residents in cultural adaptation at Easton Park Apartment. The study is grounded in Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology, which emphasizes that meaning is constructed through interaction and negotiation in everyday life, with reality understood as a result of intersubjectivity arising from reciprocal relationships between individuals and their social environment (Walsh et al., 1967). Data were collected through three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted in English with six foreign national residents selected purposively based on criteria: (1) officially registered residents of Easton Park Apartment, (2) having experienced direct interaction with management, staff, or local community, (3) representing diverse backgrounds of country, culture, duration of stay, and age. The six informants consisted of residents from London (1 month),

Kenya (1 year), Ethiopia (1 year), Pakistan (2 weeks), China (3 months), and Bangladesh (2 weeks), comprising four males and two females aged 21-38 years, including five students and one tourist. All interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. Second, passive participant observation was conducted to understand social context and intercultural interactions in public areas such as lobby, laundry area, gym, and canteen. Third, documentation included administrative data, promotional materials, and photos of resident activities. Data analysis followed Creswell's phenomenological stages: (1) organizing and preparing data through transcription, (2) reading all data to gain overall understanding, (3) horizontalization by identifying significant statements, (4) clustering meanings into themes, (5) composing textural description (what was experienced) and structural description (how it was experienced), and (6) identifying the essence of experience. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation by comparing information from informants with different backgrounds, and technique triangulation by combining interviews, observation, and documentation. The research was conducted at Easton Park Apartment Jatinangor, Sumedang, West Java, from July to December 2025.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Context and Informant Profiles

This phenomenological study examined the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of six international residents at Easton Park Apartment, Jatinangor: Hugh (UK), Mwangi (Kenya), Bett (Ethiopia), Kamran (Pakistan), Yan Yi (China), and Parvez (Bangladesh). Easton Park, operational since 2015, is a 22-floor vertical housing located near Padjadjaran University, housing 14 TIAS scholarship recipients from various countries. Despite its strategic location and adequate facilities, the apartment lacks formal support systems specifically designed for international residents.

Physical Comfort vs. Social Isolation Paradox

All informants acknowledged the apartment's adequate physical infrastructure, describing it as *"comfortable"* and *"peaceful."* However, this material comfort did not translate into holistic living satisfaction. The vertical housing structure inadvertently fostered individualistic living patterns that significantly limited social interaction. Hugh noted *"not many people around,"* while Kamran observed residents were *"very much limited to themselves."* Bett critically reflected that *"rooms are very individualistic"* and warned that *"loneliness will consume you,"* recognizing the

psychological implications of isolating residential design. This finding aligns with Schutz's phenomenology (Walsh et al., 1967), where physical comfort does not automatically create meaningful social worlds. The apartment functions as a social world with high anonymity levels, preventing the formation of we-relations essential for intersubjectivity. This finding resonates with previous research demonstrating that absence of communal spaces in international student housing reduces social networking opportunities (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018; Selvitopu, 2020)

Language Barriers as Learning Catalysts

Language barriers emerged as a universal initial challenge, yet no informant surrendered to this difficulty. Instead, linguistic limitations triggered active learning processes and adaptive strategy development. Mwangi reframed the barrier positively: *"The beauty of having language barrier is that I chose not to see it as a problem, but as a challenge to learn and grow."* Informants employed multiple strategies: digital translation tools (Google Translate, ChatGPT), language learning platforms (Duolingo, YouTube), non-verbal communication through gestures and smiles, and direct practice in daily contexts like markets. Yan Yi, as an Indonesian Language major, demonstrated the fastest mastery, conducting her entire interview in Indonesian. These findings support Kim's Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural (Kim, 2012), where communication competence development is central to successful adaptation. Previous studies confirm that language barriers constitute primary sources of adaptation stress for international students (Abdul Rohman et al., 2023; Falavarjani & Yeh, 2018; Selvitopu, 2020)

Smiling as Universal Communication Strategy

Smiling functioned as a universal language transcending linguistic barriers and serving as the primary medium for building social connections. Mwangi explained the reciprocity mechanism: *"smile at me and I smile back… that's how we understand each other."* Bett observed that *"whenever you smile, they smile back even if they don't know you."* This reciprocal smiling created positive social atmospheres and reduced psychological distance with local communities. Parvez integrated smiling as part of his holistic respect approach: *"I always smile and respect their culture."* In Schutz's framework (Walsh et al., 1967), smiling creates we-relations, direct face-to-face moments enabling mutual recognition despite verbal communication limitations. This aligns with communication literature emphasizing that gestures and social affection play strong roles in bridging language limitations (Arifin & Abuisaac, 2018). However, the characterization of smiling as "universal" warrants critical examination. While all informants reported positive reciprocity through smiling with no instances of misinterpretation, this uniformity likely reflects two converging factors: the Indonesian cultural context where warmth and hospitality *(ramah-tamah)* are deeply embedded values that welcome expressive nonverbal communication, and the sample composition primarily from cultures with relatively expressive communication norms (Kenya, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, England). The absence of informants from high-context, reserved communication cultures such as Japan, Korea, or Northern European countries—where smiling toward strangers may carry different pragmatic meanings—represents a methodological limitation restricting claims about smiling's universal efficacy. The consistent positive experiences thus reveal more about the specific Indonesian receptiveness to smiling and the cultural compatibility between informants and host community rather than confirming smiling as a truly universal communication strategy across all cultural configurations.

Local Hospitality Reducing Alienation

All six informants consistently described Indonesian people as exceptionally friendly, kind, and helpful. Hugh noted locals were *"quite friendly,"* greeting and saying hello spontaneously. Mwangi emphasized that *"security guys have been very friendly despite language barriers."* Bett's experience in Bandung exemplified extraordinary hospitality when a stranger offered a free city tour, buying her water and spending hours showing her around. This prompted her exclamation: *"how are people so nice? Oh, my God"* and led to deep emotional attachment: *"I really feel like I belong to this place."* This consistent positive reception created what Schutz terms intersubjective

understanding (Walsh et al., 1967), where friendliness functioned as shared meaning constructed through repeated social interactions, significantly reducing culture shock and alienation feelings. Previous research confirms that host community friendliness and social support are key elements in enhancing psychological safety, comfort, and successful adaptation of international students (Lertora & Starkey, 2017; Selvitopu, 2020)

Learning Local Social Practices

Adaptation involved learning and appreciating local cultural habits differing from home cultures. Hugh learned new practices like salim (hand-kissing gesture for elders) through his Indonesian wife. Bett appreciated Indonesia's respectful language system, specifically mentioning address terms like *"Kak," "Kang," "Abang," "Mas"* as reflecting cultural respect. Mwangi demonstrated social mimicry by observing and imitating the bowing gesture while saying *"permisi,"* later understanding its cultural meaning as politeness expression. These experiences represent what Schutz calls reciprocal typification (Walsh et al., 1967) forming new typifications through repeated observation and interaction, producing mutual understanding. Literature confirms that social mimicry constitutes a common adaptation strategy among newcomers facing cultural ambiguity (Arifin & Abuisaac, 2018; Lertora & Starkey, 2017).

Technology's Central Role in Adaptation

Digital technology played fundamental roles in overcoming communication barriers and accelerating language learning. Google Translate emerged as the most dominant tool used consistently across informants. Kamran described his multimodal approach: *"I just use gestures and Google Translate."* Parvez adopted AI technology: *"I use Google Translate and GPT Chat to communicate."* Beyond immediate communication, informants utilized learning platforms like YouTube, Duolingo, and ChatGPT for independent language study. However, Yan Yi acknowledged technology's limitations, noting difficulties with local dialects and technical vocabulary that translation tools couldn't fully bridge. This demonstrates that technology serves as a stock of knowledge extension (Walsh et al., 1967) but cannot completely replace authentic language mastery or capture cultural nuances. Previous research on expatriates emphasizes that pre-departure preparation and initial expectations influence culture shock intensity (Abdul Rohman et al., 2023), though Easton Park residents generally lacked formal orientation about local housing life.

Spirituality Building Social Connectedness

Spirituality and religious practices played significant roles in forming social connectedness. For Muslim informants (Kamran, Parvez), religious similarity with Indonesia's Muslim majority facilitated connection. Parvez described an emotionally touching moment: *"After prayer, people beside me shook my hand. It was very touching. We don't do that in my country. It gave me a warm feeling, and I felt connected."* For non-Muslim informants like Bett (Christian), finding a church in Bandung created belonging: *"finding a church in Bandung made me feel like I belong."* Religious institutions functioned as social worlds providing ready-made typifications and established relevance structures (Walsh et al., 1967), enabling newcomers to directly understand behavioral patterns, norms, and meanings without building everything from scratch. Religious spaces created communal we-relations that dissolved anonymity more effectively than the apartment environment. Research confirms that environments with clear social structures—communities, organizations, or religious institutions prove more capable of reducing anonymity, providing social support, and facilitating shared meaning construction (Arifin & Abuisaac, 2018; Muzychenko & Morozova, 2025; Widianti, 2025).

Food as Cultural Meeting Ground

Food served as an important medium for cultural encounters. Some informants found similarities between Indonesian and home cuisines, creating familiarity in foreign environments. Parvez noted *"foods are almost the same—fish, chicken, rice, vegetables,"* while Mwangi and Kamran actively maintained culinary traditions (cooking Ugali, Chapati, Biryani) as ways to preserve cultural identity and create home feelings. Others appreciated Indonesian culinary differences. Hugh enjoyed *"spicy food… different ingredients and flavors."* Bett enthusiastically listed favorites: *"ayam geprek, nasi goreng, seblak,"* while Yan Yi mentioned *"bakso, masakan Padang, dan bumbu Indonesia."* Mwangi philosophically reflected: *"food brings people together,"* recognizing food's social function in creating human connections. In Schutz's framework (Walsh et al., 1967), food functions as a symbolic bridge

connecting biographically determined situations from the past with present experiences, enabling individuals to maintain meaning continuity. Research on immigrants confirms that maintaining culinary practices helps preserve identity and reduce homesickness (Ilgaz et al., 2025; Lertora & Starkey, 2017).

Gradual Adaptation Process: From Discomfort to Habituation

Adaptation unfolded as a gradual process requiring time and continuous adjustment. Hugh described his temporal experience: *"after a couple of weeks... I was more acclimatized"* and emphasized *"over time, the longer I've been here, I just get more and more used to the way it works."* The adaptation process typically followed phases: (1) Initial Shock (weeks 1-2): disorientation, anxiety, maximum communication barriers; (2) Active Adjustment (weeks 3-8): active learning, exploration, trial-and-error; (3) Progressive Habituation (months 2-4): gradual habituation, reduced anxiety; (4) Comfortable Integration (months 4+): sense of belonging, improved communication, future projections.

Table 1. Temporal Phases of Adaptation Process

Phase	Duration	Characteristics	Examples from Informants	Dominant Coping Strategy
Initial Shock	Weeks 1-2	Disorientation, anxiety, maximum communication barriers	Hugh: *"not acclimatized"*; Parvez: *"scared of height"*	Translation technology, smiling, passive observation
Active Adjustment	Weeks 3-8	Active learning, exploration, trial and error	Mwangi: *"kept wondering why they bend"*; Bett: *"challenging"*	Gesture mimicry, market language practice, joining local communities
Progressive Habituation	Months 2-4	Gradual habituation, reduced anxiety	Hugh: *"more acclimatized"*; Parvez: *"it's fine now"*	Established routines, initial social networks
Comfortable Integration	Months 4+	Sense of belonging, improved communication, future projections	Bett: *"I belong to this place"*; Mwangi: *"fantastic experience"*	Active participation in local life, meaningful relationships

Source: Research Data Analysis, 2025

This phased pattern confirms Schutz's phenomenology (Walsh et al., 1967) that understanding changes occur gradually through stock of knowledge reconstruction, relevance structures adjustment, and new typification formation as direct experience increases. This aligns with Kim's Integrative Theory describing adaptation as a stress–adaptation–growth spiral (Kim, 2012) and previous research identifying phases of culture shock, recovery, and adaptation (Widianti, 2025).

Biographical Backgrounds Shaping Adaptation (Because-Motives)

Following Schutz's concept of because-motives (Walsh et al., 1967) informants' past experiences shaped their adaptation approaches. Mwangi's receptive Kenyan culture predisposed him to view interactions positively. Muslim informants (Kamran, Parvez) brought Islamic practices and social values as shared interpretive schemes facilitating recognition of meaning structures in Indonesian contexts. Hugh, from individualistic British culture, brought different taken-for-granted knowledge about privacy and comfort, experiencing less tension with apartment individualism but requiring adjustment when entering Indonesian family social worlds. Yan Yi's pre-existing intrinsic motivation toward

Indonesian language and culture meant language barriers weren't perceived as burdens but as continuations of long-held personal interests. These biographical differences confirm that adaptation follows different temporal and biographical dynamics for each individual, consistent with research showing cultural proximity and value similarity play large roles in reducing meaning dissonance and accelerating adjustment (Falavarjani & Yeh, 2018; Selvitopu, 2020).

Future-Oriented Goals (In-Order-To Motives)

In-order-to motives (Walsh et al., 1967) were clearly manifested in informants' actions. Academic success was the most explicit motive for five student informants, adaptation aimed at completing studies successfully. Language mastery served instrumental purposes: functional communication, reducing misunderstandings, expanding social networks. Building sense of belonging motivated active engagement in local daily practices, markets, fitness centers, and religious/cultural spaces. Smiling strategically aimed to create social reciprocity and reduce psychological distance. However, not all goals were fulfilled. Parvez's unfulfilled desire to play football with locals due to language limitations exemplifies unsuccessful in-order-to motives, creating anxiety when projected acts cannot be realized due to structural communication barriers. This relates to Lee's push-pull framework (Lee, 1966), where material pull factors (location, security, facilities) attracted international residents but proved insufficient for holistic satisfaction without meaningful social interaction opportunities (Abdul Rohman et al., 2023; Selvitopu, 2020).

Constructing Shared Meanings Through Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity, the process where individuals mutually understand and share meanings through social interaction (Walsh et al., 1967) was most evident in how international residents interpreted local hospitality. Consistent positive descriptions across all informants demonstrated that friendliness wasn't merely personal experience, but shared meaning formed through repeated social interactions. Simple gestures like greetings, smiles, or unsolicited help functioned as recognition affirming international residents' presence in Jatinangor's social space. In Schutz's framework, greeting creates we-relations, face-to-face moments enabling direct mutual presence and initial connection building. The spontaneous altruistic help Bett received in Bandung exemplified pure we-relations, where two previously strange individuals shared lifeworld experiences directly and authentically, creating significant emotional impact. Understanding these interactions requires considering high-context versus low-context cultural orientations (Hall, 1976). Indonesia as a high-context culture relies on implicit communication, gestures, and situational context, while informants like Hugh from low-context Britain emphasize explicit verbal communication. Yet findings show this difference became a space for intersubjective learning rather than insurmountable barriers.

Stock of Knowledge and Typification Development

International residents actively expanded their stock of knowledge through experience accumulation. Mwangi's market experiences showed how spontaneous interactions such as listening, interpreting, attempting speech which gradually built new knowledge stocks. This aligns with Schutz's view (Walsh et al., 1967) that everyday experiences form "new layers" in knowledge stocks through repeated actions and interpretations. Informants developed multidimensional knowledge: linguistic knowledge (basic vocabulary, address systems, dialect variations), body knowledge (bowing gestures, salim, smiling), culinary knowledge (local food names, cooking methods, water gallon systems), spiritual knowledge (local prayer practices, worship locations, communal rituals), practical knowledge (transportation systems, campus locations), social-relational knowledge (politeness norms, respect for elders), and technological knowledge (translation apps, learning platforms).

Table 2. Typology of Stock of Knowledge and Accumulation Process

Knowledge Type	Specific Examples	Accumulation Method	Adaptation Function	Prominent Informants

Linguistic Knowledge	Basic vocabulary, address systems (*Kak, Mas, Kang*), dialect variations	Formal learning, market practice, technology	Functional communication, showing respect	Yan Yi, Mwangi, Bett
Body Knowledge	Bowing gesture, salim (hand-kissing), smiling as communication	Observation, mimicry, family guidance	Participating in cultural practices, non-verbal communication	Mwangi, Hugh (via Rara)
Culinary Knowledge	Local food names (*ayam geprek, seblak*), cooking methods, water gallon system	Trial and error, market exploration, self-cooking	Cultural nutrition, identity maintenance, cultural exploration	Bett, Yan Yi, Mwangi, Kamran
Spiritual Knowledge	Local prayer practices (handshaking after salat), worship locations, communal rituals	Direct participation, observation	Spiritual connection, sense of belonging, community	Parvez, Kamran, Bett
Practical Knowledge	Transportation systems, water gallon usage, campus/facility locations	Direct experience, trial and error	Daily functional independence	All Informants
Social-Relational Knowledge	Politeness norms, reciprocal typification, respect for elders	Social interaction, local explanations	Social integration, avoiding misunderstandings	Bett, Mwangi
Technological Knowledge	Google Translate, ChatGPT, Duolingo, YouTube	Self-directed learning, digital exploration	Accelerating learning, compensating language barriers	All Informants

Source: Research Data Analysis, 2025

This typology demonstrates that developed knowledge stocks were multidimensional, not limited to cognitive-verbal knowledge—body knowledge proved equally important, especially in high-context cultures like Indonesia (Hall, 1976). Previous research confirms that intrinsic motivation and deep cultural interest significantly strengthen adaptive resilience and reduce cross-cultural stress (Muzychenko & Morozova, 2025; Selvitopu, 2020)

Institutional Support Limitations and Implications

Research revealed significant institutional support limitations. Building manager Fahri stated no policies or services were specifically designed to accommodate international residents' needs. This absence created situations where international residents relied entirely on individual agency and personal resources to overcome adaptation challenges. No formal orientation, multilingual services, community building activities, buddy systems, or cultural sensitivity training existed. While Anggi from FISIP Unpad mentioned informal coordination mechanisms between apartment management and faculty when problems arose, reliance on spontaneous coordination and individual goodwill cannot sustain long-term or scale up. This created gaps between high individual-level openness and low institutional-level openness. Research demonstrates institutional support importance in facilitating cultural adaptation, social support from institutions significantly smooths international student adaptation (Selvitopu, 2020), buddy systems and orientation programs effectively reduce culture shock (Febrina Maharani & Misnawati, 2024), and

cultural sensitivity training for staff enhances international guest satisfaction (Shefali & Mungantiwar, 2024).The findings underscore differences between physical integration (residing in same apartment, using same facilities) and social integration (meaningful interactions, sense of belonging, mutual understanding)—the latter does not occur automatically despite the former.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study reveals that communication experiences serve as the primary medium for cultural adaptation of international residents at Easton Park Apartment, Jatinangor. Through in-depth analysis of six informants from the UK, Kenya, Ethiopia, Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh, the research addresses three key questions. First, awareness of 'difference' emerges through language barriers, divergent communication styles, and unfamiliar social norms, becoming the starting point for learning and self-adjustment within Indonesian cultural contexts. Second, communication barriers are interpreted as challenges triggering active learning through translation technology, smiling as universal language, independent Indonesian language learning, and participation in local cultural practices. Third, the process of building mutual understanding occurs through gradual meaning negotiation, with informants from high-context cultures adapting more easily than those from low-context cultures. Intersubjectivity forms primarily in spaces like mosques, churches, markets, and food stalls that provide more intense face-to-face interaction opportunities.

The research also uncovers a paradox: despite Easton Park Apartment providing adequate physical comfort, the vertical housing structure creates individualistic living patterns limiting spontaneous inter-resident interaction. From Schutz's phenomenological perspective, adaptation involves stock of knowledge reconstruction, new typification formation, and relevance structures negotiation through communication that bridges different lifeworlds. The collective experience essence demonstrates that cultural adaptation is a dynamic process involving temporal, biographical, and intersubjective dimensions. These findings confirm that adaptation success is determined not solely by physical infrastructure quality, but by individuals' ability to develop effective communication strategies and the availability of social spaces enabling meaningful interaction. With open attitudes, flexibility, and support from local community hospitality, the adaptation process can proceed positively even without specific formal support.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge. Prospective international residents should prioritize mental preparation, basic language learning, and active community participation. Housing management should develop simple multilingual services, informal orientation programs, communal interaction spaces, and coordination systems with educational institutions. Local government and stakeholders need to develop pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, transform local business services with visual aids and bilingual staff training, and provide bilingual information boards at strategic locations. Future research should conduct comparative studies on formal versus informal support systems and explore digital technology's role in contemporary cultural adaptation processes. This study has limitations including the limited number of six informants and the specific context of Easton Park Apartment in Jatinangor's educational area, which may not be fully generalizable to other housing contexts. Nevertheless, these findings contribute importantly to understanding international resident cultural adaptation dynamics in Indonesia and open opportunities for more inclusive practice and research development in the future.

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