Exploring undergraduate student perception of international student mobility program
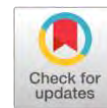
Ani Susanti [a, 1], Bambang Widi Pratolo [b, 2,*], Khusnawati [c, 3]

[a, b, c] Department of English Language, Universitas Ahmadi Dahlan, Jl. Ringroad Selatan, Kragilan, Yogyakarta, 55191, Indonesia
[1] ani.susanti@pbi.uad.ac.id; [2] bambang.pratolo@pbi.uad.ac.id*

* corresponding author

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

International Student Mobility Programs (ISMPs) have become increasingly popular among university students. This study explores the perceptions of undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program at a private university in Yogyakarta Indonesia who have participated in ISMPs, focusing on the advantages and challenges they experienced. Adopting a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the participants. The findings reveal that ISMPs provide substantial benefits, including enhanced language proficiency, expanded professional and personal networks, cultural exchange, and self-development. However, participants also reported notable challenges, such as language barriers, differing cultural norms, unfamiliar study materials and assignments, and time zone adjustments. These insights offer valuable guidance for prospective ISMP participants, enabling them to anticipate and address potential challenges while maximizing the program's benefits. Moreover, the findings underscore the need for educational institutions and policymakers to develop targeted strategies to optimize the ISMP experience, ensuring students achieve meaningful academic and personal growth through these programs.

How to Cite: Susanti, A., Pratolo, B. W., & Khusnawati. (2024). Exploring undergraduate student perception of international student mobility program. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal, 7*(3), 164-177. https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v7i3.6794

1. Introduction

International exchange opportunities are becoming increasingly prevalent as social issues are shared among countries in the context of globalization (Thampi, 2021). In recent years, universities have increasingly adopted international mobility programs to achieve internationalization, secure international accreditation, and prepare graduates for global careers (Roy et al., 2022). According to data published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2011), approximately 3.7 million students left their home countries to study abroad in 2009. This number has continued to rise, with UNESCO (2019) reporting over 5.3 million international students in 2017 (Migration Data Portal, 2020). This data indicates that a growing number of students participate in student mobility programs at least once during their studies. These programs range from independent trips to faculty-led trips, and can be short-term (a few weeks) or long-term (half-year or full-year) (Geyer et al., 2017). Notably, the movement of exchange students predominantly occurs from the West and North to the East (Stewart & Kim, 2021).

According to UNESCO (2013), the increasing trend in international student mobility is driven by push and pull factors that encourage outward and inward mobility, respectively. Over the past two

decades, academia has evolved rapidly into a business industry, impacting student mobility as a means to enhance quality of life (Javed et al., 2019). To enrich students' education and development, many universities offer international learning opportunities in response to their internationalization goals and government agendas (Bell et al., 2021; Miles et al., 2019; Zuchowski et al., 2019). Institutions allocate considerable funds and resources to encourage participation in international mobility programs. Additionally, there is significant student interest in these programs, with an increasing number of students choosing to study abroad (Emirza et al., 2021). Various reasons motivate students to join these programs, including personal growth, independence, cultural exchange, career development, studying with an international curriculum, and building international networks (Doyle et al., 2010). Studying abroad provides students with a learning experience in a new environment that promotes continuous growth. The benefits of international student mobility include academic achievement, intercultural development, language learning, career impact, and personal growth (Dwyer, 2004).

The primary motivation for mobility programs is the perception that being connected to global networks and collaborating with international students and scientists enhances the capabilities and productivity of home students and scientists (de Sandes-Guimaraes et al., 2020). International student mobility programs promote academic collaboration (Gunn et al., 2020). Outcomes associated with international mobility include students' agency and self-efficacy (Petrovich, 2004), personal growth and maturation, increased intercultural awareness, professional development, and enhanced language proficiency and communication skills (Hvalič-Touzery et al., 2017). Improving the quality of education influences cognitive abilities. Beyond self-development, intercultural development, and global competence, student mobility programs also affect student-teacher perceptions of education. For example, student teachers who participated in the Intercultural Dialogue for Global Leadership and Citizenship in Early Childhood Education Exchange (GLC-EC) program reflected deeply on early childhood education in both their host and home countries (Richardson et al., 2013). Similarly, another study revealed that student mobility influenced self-perceptions of English Foreign Language teachers and was a strong factor in career development as teachers (Wang, 2014).

Despite the growing interest and perceived benefits, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of the specific advantages and challenges faced by participants in these programs. Existing literature primarily focuses on the general benefits of international student mobility but does not delve deeply into the nuanced experiences of students from diverse educational backgrounds and regions. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the perceptions of undergraduate students regarding the advantages and challenges of participating in international student mobility programs.

In Indonesia, two International Student Mobility programs are part of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy: International Credit Transfer and Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards. The International Credit Transfer program provides opportunities for Indonesian students to study at partner universities abroad, with credits taken at the host university being recognized by the home university (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan, 2021). Meanwhile, the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA) allow Indonesian students to participate in the learning process at reputable universities worldwide in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture (DGHE, 2021). To enhance the growth and justifiability of student mobility programs as a key aspect of the educational experience, it is essential to understand students' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of these programs. Therefore, this research aims to explore the advantages and challenges of international student mobility programs as perceived by undergraduate students.

2. Method

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, employing a narrative research design to explore the individual stories and experiences of participants. The narrative approach is particularly suited for examining the social and cultural dimensions of the study, as it emphasizes the interpretation and understanding of community perspectives to generate new insights and theories. The study was conducted within the English Education Study Program at a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, which actively participates in student mobility programs initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, such as the International Credit Transfer (ICT) program and the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA).

The subjects selected for this study are seven students who have participated in one of the international student mobility programs. Data collection techniques in this study involve interviews. Researchers employed interviews to obtain in-depth data regarding students' perceptions of the international student mobility programs in which they participated. In this study, two interviews were conducted in person, and five interviews were conducted online via voice call through WhatsApp. Semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect responses from the students in the international student mobility programs.

After data collection, the researchers processed the data and determined the research findings. The next step involved member checking to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data. The final step was to analyze the collected data. In qualitative data analysis, there are three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3. Findings and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews with 7 subjects (hereinafter abbreviated as A1 to A7), the researcher collected some data that showed various international student mobility programs that participants follow. The program is divided into three categories; are International Credit Transfer, Exchange Spring, and Indonesian International Student Mobility Award.

The first program is International Credit Transfer. International Credit Transfer is a program that provides opportunities for Indonesian students to study at partner universities from other countries and credits taken at the host university will be equalized at home universities (Direktorat pembelajaran dan kemahasiswaan, 2021). The international credit transfer program gives students an opportunity to study for one semester in another country. The program is from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, so this program is fully funded. In this study, there are two periods of the international credit transfer program. Both of the programs took place online, due to the corona pandemic period. The first period took place in the odd semester of 2020, which was attended by participants E and F. The second period took place in the odd semester of 2021, which was attended by participants A and C. All participants of the international credit transfer program studied at the same study program at a public university in Malaysia (Site 1).

The second is Student Exchange Programme Spring Semester. Student Exchange Programme Spring Semester is a program that provides opportunities for students from Indonesia to study for one semester a university in Malaysia (Site 2). The program period followed by the participants in this research lasted from April - August 2021 and was carried out online, due to the corona pandemic period. Students of English Education Study Program who take part in this program are participants B and G.

The third is Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA). IISMA is a program that provides opportunities for Indonesian students from universities in Indonesia to participate in the learning process at any reputable university in the world that has a collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture (DGHE, 2021). The program gives students opportunity to study for one semester in another country. The program is part of the policy of Merdeka Learning Merdeka Campus (MBKM) from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, so the program is fully funded. The program period takes place in the odd semester of 2021 and the learning process was carried out by face to face. Student of English Education Study Program who take part in this program are participant D. The host university where participant D studied for one semester is a university in Spain (Site 3).

The research finding in this study will be divided into 2 parts, these are the advantages and the challenges.
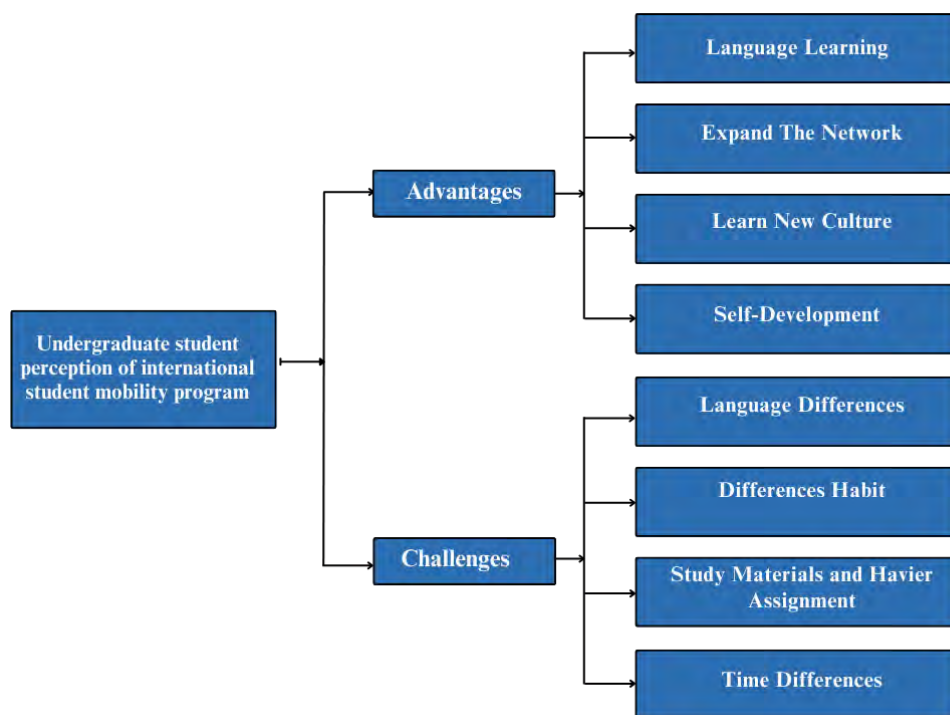
Fig. 1. Classifying of advantages and Challenges variable

3.1. The Advantages of the International Student Mobility Program

Based on the results of the interviews, participants mentioned several advantages of participating in international student mobility. It can be divided into 4 categories; they are Language Learning, Expand the Networks, Learn New Culture, and Self Development.

1) Language Learning

Language learning is a process of developing communication skills in a second language or in a foreign language. One of the advantages that students get after participating in the International Student Mobility program is to improve their English skills. Studying at a host university that uses full English during the teaching and learning process in the classroom is a supportive place to improve English language skills.

A2 talked about the environment supports students to learn and practice the English skills they have learned in class. it helps them improve their english speaking skills:

"…it's like my friends in the class (host university) are already good at English, so we have to, like it or not, we have to speak in English…" (A2)

In addition, another factor that supports the process of improving English skills is that the classmates where students study have good English skills, so they inevitably have to use English when communicating. A1 talked about having friends in the class who already have good English skills can motivate participants to improve their English skills as well.

"… just be more motivated, so that my English can be more advanced, so I can use it, you know. Because Malaysians (classmates) are not shy about speaking English… after mixing with them, (I) become more confident to speak English…" (A1)

Studying with classmates who have good English skills makes students feel more motivated to improve their English skills. Classmates at the host university have the confidence to communicate using English also make students who take part in the international student mobility program more confident to use English when communicating. the same as A1, A7 said that if you take part in the international student mobility program, you will improve your English skills.

"…as a place to hone English skills too, …at there (host university) they speak full English, so like it or not, we have to adapt to the learning system there…" (A7)

The teaching and learning process in a classroom that uses full English is a suitable place to hone the English skills of students who take part in the international student mobility program. Even though they participate in the international student mobility program in a country where English is a second language, they still feel that their English skills are improving. A5 talks about participants using English more often when at the host university being another reason.

"I think it's pretty good because it's more often (speaking in English) than using Malay, so (I) speak English more often when I'm with people there (host university classmates). So, for me, it has an effect. My thesis also discusses slang language. So, what is it, I think that slang can really improve our ee (English) language skills." (A5)

The use of English more than Malay during the teaching and learning process at the host university can improve students' English skills. In addition, the use of slang when communicating with students there also helps improve students' English skills. A5 also said that the teaching and learning process in class through discussion also helps students improve their English skills.

"The benefit (of the program) is. of course, to improve English skills, especially in speaking, because like it or not, we have to speak English in discussion forums, in learning forums in class, right?. so it's very different from ours (home university). If we are, we don't have discussions. We study in Indonesian, and there are no discussions outside the class that speak in English. So yeah, our speaking skill is much lower than theirs" (A5)

The teaching and learning process with discussion requires students to actively interact in the classroom. It also helps to improve foreign language skills, especially speaking skills. There are discussions forum outside the classroom that uses English at the host university also helps improve students' speaking skills. At home universities, the teaching and learning process uses Indonesian more and is coupled with no discussion forums outside the classroom. So, the English language skills of students at home universities are lower than at host universities. In addition, besides improving English skills, A4 as a student participating in the international student mobility program in Spain, also feels that one of the benefits is being able to learn a new language, that is Spanish.

"…for courses in Spanish. I mean, it's like Spanish Speaking and Spanish Grammar, it's full Spanish, not using English." (A4)

Learning Spanish courses like Spanish Speaking and Spanish Grammar are using Spanish and it makes A4 learn a new language besides English. In addition to Spanish class, A4 also uses Spanish when communicating with local residents.

2) *Expand the Networks*

Expand networks is a way for people to make friends to add and expand their relations. Having extensive relations will certainly provide benefits in the present and in the future. A6 said that expanding relationships can be done in various ways, one of which is by participating in the international student mobility program.

"And the other benefits besides speaking, of course, this is networking, right. So, it's like we have friends there, something like that" (A6)

Another benefit of participating in the international student mobility program apart from improving English is expanding relationships. By participating in the international student mobility program, participants will make friends at the host university. A5 said that in order to getting friends, participants can also expand relationships with lecturers at the host university.

"Yeah it is, first of all, I got new connection, because from that activity, actually there was a lecture who were still chatting (with me) after a few months (I finish the program), but now we're not, and then there are a few friends of my classmates. Sometimes we're still give comments for each other on our Story (WhatsApp) even. The connection is good, you know. As long as when we are there we can, what's that? We can open with other people, we can. We can be accepted by them…" (A5)

Even though he is no longer a participant in the international student mobility program, the relation he has with lecturers at the host university are still established. The relations with students at the host university are also still good. As long as the participant can mingle and open up with students at the

host university, then their friendship can be established well. Expanding relations means making a friend also with students from other countries who are at the host university.

> "The benefits I get apart from academics. Well, apart from academics, I can expand my network. I mean, networking is making friends. I made more friends, so I met a lot of people, for example Spaniards, Americans, Africans. So, I met a lot of people from different cultures and made friends…" (A4)

Making friends with students at host universities who come from other countries will expand networking. Then making friends with students from other countries such as Spanish students, American students, African students and others will expand their networking with people with different cultures. A1, A3, and A7 also said that by participating in the international student mobility program they could add friends from other countries and expand their networking.

3) Learn New Culture

Learning new culture means studying the system of cultural values, habits, and other things that exist in other groups or in other places. Studying other cultures can increase intercultural awareness and tolerance for other people's habits that are different from our environment.

> "…so I met a lot of people, for example Spaniards, Americans, and Africans. So I met a lot of people from different cultures and made friends. Then I know, I can be (aware), because participating in that (program) I become more aware of the other people cultures. So, I can, improve my interculture skill..." (A4)

Meeting other students at the host university who came from various other countries with different cultures made A4 become more aware to other cultures. In addition, participating in the international student mobility program can improve their knowledge about the culture of other countries, which will increase the sense of intercultural awareness. Learning a new culture does not only focus on the arts that exist in an area but also on the habits carried out by them.

> "…then I learn about the culture, the culture when they are in class. like what they are, their habit when there is a task. if we are, usually we cram the task, right. If they are, after the class is over, they want to work in groups right away, because there (host university) there are more group assignments than individual assignments. So, after that class, we immediately worked in virtual groups, and then we worked on it, and discussed it. so that's before the deadline has been done. learn their habits while studying…" (A5)

Observing and studying the habits of students at the host university. Their habits such as when doing assignments, the way they work in groups when getting group assignments, and the habits they do when studying. A1, A6, and A7 also said that participants learned a new culture when participating in the international student mobility program.

4) Self-Development

Self-development is a way that a person does to improve his abilities, self-awareness, skills, and potential. Everyone has a different increase even though they follow the program or have the same activity. One of the benefits of participating in the international student mobility program is that it can increase self-awareness.

> "…Self-reflection, so I can imagine between Indonesia and there (host university). So, I can be more disciplined, because there it's like being on time… then being active in class," (A2)

Studying at a host university with a new learning environment makes A2 motivated to be more disciplined, and active when studying in class.

> "Yeah, it's more in the energy (to learning). Well, the point is, the people there are really brave. So yeah, I have to be braver to express my opinion, even if it's wrong..." (A2)

New habits that are carried out in order to adapt to the habits of students hosted by the university can increase self-awareness. Students at the host university have a brave nature, it makes C motivated to be brave too. become more courageous when expressing opinions, even though the opinions expressed are not true. In addition, while studying at the host university, participants become aware of the learning system at the host university.

"…First of all, it definitely adds to my experience, right, because we have new experiences to be able to study in a different atmosphere, like we usually speak Indonesian freely, right. Finally, we are told to adapt in a new environment like that. Then the second one, I came to know about what learning there was like, …" (A3)

The new experience of studying abroad with a different atmosphere makes students learn to adapt to the habits of the host university, such as the language used in class and the teaching and learning process in class. Other participant, A7 also agrees that participating in international student mobility gives her the knowledge about how students and lecturers at the host university communicate and the learning process there. Beside that while participating in international student mobility program, participants can also get new perspective about education from other country.

"…And you can get another perspective on education…there is a system that might be in the future, if we, for example, we become educators, then what we think is good from there, maybe we can use it for us later or we can also give suggestions for our own majors…" (A1)

Provides a new view of education that is used at the host university. This system can be a reference when you become a teacher and can be applied in the future. learning in a new environment will also increase knowledge.

"This is one more benefit, what is it? add to our knowledge. There is a course which require us to analyze a foreign culture. So, we were there for one semester, apart studying English, we also learned a little about international relations. …, the culture in South Korea, how did the Korean wave come to be like that, and it turns out that the politics are very influential. there is a name called digitization... they seem to be very focused on the creative industry and so on, so apart from English we learn other things, such as International Relations as well" (A5)

Studying for one semester at a host university provides new knowledge for A6. Not only learning English A6 also learns about the culture of other countries and new knowledge too. Participating in a international student mobility gives students a new experience too.

"…learn the habit while studying and just add experience. it's like I've studied abroad, even though it's online. It still makes me feel proud of myself." (A5)

Learn the habits of students at the host university when they study, gave him new experiences, and made A5, feel proud for himself because he had participated in an international student mobility program even though it was online.

3.2. The Challenges of the International Student Mobility Program

Based on the results of the interviews, participants mentioned several challenges while participating in international student mobility. It can be divided into 4 categories; they are language difference, difference habit, study materials and heavier assignments, and difference time.

1) Language Difference

The language differences that will be discussed in this section include the differences in the language used at the host university and at the home university and the differences in language levels. As explained earlier, generally the language used during the teaching and learning process is English. based on the results of interviews with students who take part in the international student mobility program, the difference in language levels is one of the challenges during the teaching and learning process at the host university.

"Oh well, I had culture shock before. I was in a culture shock because yeah, actually it's not that different, but there they use full English…" (A7)

Although the learning system used at the host university and at the home university is similar, at the host university the language used when studying in the classroom is full English. The use full English while studying at the host university made the participants has experience a culture shock at the beginning of the program.

"... because (I) need to adapt right. The first adaptation is English, because we are at UAD yeah, sometimes we mix language, sometimes Indonesian, sometimes English, then suddenly we are expected to be like natives, English native speakers. So that was the first, I was a bit surprised..." (A7)

At the host university sometimes when learning in classroom the students use two languages or mixing languages. The change in the language that used during the teaching and learning process at the host university made A7 surprised because of the difference in the language used.

"…it's back to the language problem, in UAD when study we use English but it's not really full English. Then, for example, if we don't understand, we can still ask our friends in Indonesian, but there we can't. it's really full English. Sometimes I still have to be digested again, like it's meaning true or not..." (A1)

The use of full English at the host university is a challenge for the participants. When they come across a new word or phrase, they must try to digest it in order to understand the meaning of the information being conveyed.

"…I feel insecure actually, because their English is better than mine, I feel like that. So, I need like an adjustment again. Because in Malaysia, English has become a second language. for us, we are (English) still a foreign language. Then once when we studied, we were asked one by one. like "what language do you use at home when you have a conversation with your parents?" and all of them say they use English. Even if not with both, well they use it with one of them, either with his mother or with his father." (A1)

The determination of English as a second language in Malaysia also affects students' English mastery there. A1 said that his classmates at the host university used English when conversing with their parents at home. One of the factors causing this difference in English mastery is vocabulary mastery.

"If it's me, it's more into the limited vocabulary. So, when (I) spoke it wasn't as fluent as them, because of course, their English was a second language, right, if we, we were a foreign language. so surely their vocab is more fluent. what else? I think, that's all." (A6)

The limited vocabulary causes the ability to speak to be limited as well, and cannot convey information optimally. A6 feels that his limited vocabulary mastery causes his speaking skills not as fluent as the students at the host university. A3, who participated in the international student mobility program in Malaysia, felt something different.

"Fortunately, I didn't have any difficulties with that one because the discussion was still in the realm of material, and because the material only contained, in one semester we were only told to study 1 novel. and each student must get one chapter. It's just a digit, so it's easier for me to interact with them and the lecturers because all they're talking about is the novel, …" (A3)

The use of full English when the teaching and learning process is not an obstacle. For her, as long as the topics discussed are still in the realm of lecture material, she can follow them. She explained that the material to be discussed in class had been informed so that it became easier for her to interact with other students, even though they used full English.

"There is no difficulty, because every time there is a difficulty... because for example, if I say that I don't know the language (the meaning of a certain word), they will definitely explain it to me right away." (A3)

When A3 finds it difficult, a classmate at the host university will help her. Then when there is a phrase or a word that she doesn't know the meaning of, a classmate at the host university will immediately explain it. A4, as another participant who took part in international student mobility in Spain, he also experienced language problems.

"If there are challenges or difficulties, because of the program that I am participating in, I go there directly, not online. So, the only problem is the language barrier. Because there (Spain) is not an english speaking country, so whether I want it or not, I have to learn Spanish. I talked in Spanish while I was there, when I chatted with local people." (A4)

participating in the international student mobility program in Spain directly made him constrained by language differences. Studying in Spain as a country that is not an English-speaking country made him experience the language barrier and that made him learn Spanish in order to communicate with local residents there.

2) Difference Habit

Based on the results of interviews with participants, one of the challenges faced by students when participating in the international student mobility program is the difference in culture and habits.

"…well, maybe it's because of the difference in culture. Even though we are the same, it's almost the same (the culture) Indo and Malay. The only difference is in the habits, like in Indo, like what I said earlier, assignments are given tomorrow and are collected next week. In this case, we already know all the duties. But it's like the task is more difficult. It's like there's no compensation for any convenience, for example, let's say we have a paper assignment. In Indonesia, maybe 2 pages are too many. There (the host university) for example is asked to make 5, so it has to be 5… then you have to use the format that already exists, so there's already a format for collecting assignments… if we (at home university) we might just be given a name". (A2)

There are some differences in student habits when at a host university and at a home university. One example is in assignments. A2 feels that the task he gets at the host university is more difficult. The format for the collection of tasks has also been determined, although it looks easy, but adjusting to the specified format takes some time to do it.

"Yeah, be honest when it's like what? Honestly, it's different. It's not like, for example, when we watch Upin Ipin, we should still be able to understand, but it seems like it's really different. when we talk to people there and they still mix their language with English. it's really not like what it was (I thought before), it can be said that the Malay language is only a little bit." (A3)

Even though Indonesia and Malaysia have similar cultures. But A3 feels that there are some differences. The Malay language they use is also different from what he usually watches in the Malaysian series, Upin Upin. If in the Upin Ipin series the language used is Malay, in the learning environment students speak using 2 languages or mix languages between English and Malay.

"…but for the Cross Culture course that (I explained) earlier. we talked about various cultures, right, we talked about the culture there. so sometimes I feel like I don't understand but I'm asked to give feedback, for example." (A3)

Another challenge that A3 felt was when discussing the culture that existed in the host university country and was asked to provide feedback. Sometimes she does not understand the topic being discussed but is asked to provide feedback.

3) Study Materials and Heavier Assignment

The heavier study materials are also one of the challenges felt by students who take part in the international student mobility programs.

"... and other challenges in material differences. maybe in Indonesia it's not too heavy like that (the task). If it's here, it's really heavy, and it can't be bargained" (A2)

The differences material. A2 also feels that when studying at a home university the tasks given are not as difficult as when studying at a host university. in addition to a more difficult task, A2 feels that the given task cannot be bargained.

"…the tasks are very different…, the tasks are very different. Like heavier, and harder". (A2)

The form of tasks that are very different, heavier, and harder than when studying at a home university is one of the challenges faced when participating in the international student mobility program.

"for another challenge, maybe how to understand this, understand the task. because the task is very different with when in Yogyakarta. Then it's like the one in Indo (the task), because in Indonesia, we're just, we're just like being given a question, or maybe being told to understand, or being told to write a paper but it's not as complicated as that. if there it has to be detailed, the writing of the paper must have something like the opening, the opening is different (with the one at home university), the content and closing must be as detailed as possible. It's like that, if it's in Indonesia, we're sure, we're definitely just collecting the contents. but if it's there, we have to be really careful about what we're doing. and then there must be additions for an oral presentation, every time there must be something like being told to make a paper. we seem to be asked to make an oral presentation and it's definitely different from the content of the paper". (A3)

The different types of assignments at the host university make A3 try to understand the assignments that are received and that is one of the perceived challenges. If at home university, the task that is usually done is to answer some questions that given by the lecturer or students are asked to understand a topic or write a paper. The paper that was written was not complicated as that, but at the host university, when there is an assignment to write a paper, there must be an opening, the content, and closing. every part in the paper must be as detailed as possible and you can't just write the content without understanding it. Every time there is an assignment to write a paper there will be an additional task, namely an oral presentation. when presenting a paper, students must understand the contents of the paper that has been written. So that when doing oral presentations students must be able to explain it clearly using their own understanding.

"No, but you have to keep the contents the same, you can't just copy and paste it..." (A3)

In oral presentations, students are not allowed to just copy and paste or only read the contents of the paper that has been written, but students are required to explain it according to their understanding. Other participant D, also felt that the tasks at the host university were more difficult.

"It's heavier there, much heavier there. because there the tasks demand us to write more and talk more, and to look for more references." (A4)

Students are required to write more, to speak more, and to look for more references when doing assignments.

4) Time DIfference

Another challenge felt by students was the time difference. The international student mobility that students participate in takes place online and there are time zone differences between host universities and home universities. Host university one hour earlier when compared to the time at home university. This time difference is one of the challenges that students feel while participating in the international student mobility program.

"…At first it was because of the time difference, yes, even though it was only an hour, but it felt like sometimes (I) forgot that…" (A1)

The time difference between the host university and the home university sometimes causes participants to forget that there will be a class at the host university.

"It's one hour faster than Indonesia, when I used to, I was having a bit of trouble because it was at the same time as my lecture at UAD. So, for example there, for example, it's 1 o'clock in Malaysia, right, the class is 1 o'clock in Malaysia, but in Indonesia it's 12 o'clock. Well, sometimes I'm here at 12 o'clock, It's still class, right, it's not over yet, so sometimes I'll ask the lecturer for permission first." (A7)

The time difference also causes other challenges because sometimes at the host university the lecturers have not finished delivering the material, but the class at the home university has started, sometimes vice versa. so that students who take part in the program sometimes do not follow the class until it is finished because they have to go to another class. Although the time difference between the host and the home university is not an obstacle for some of the other participants.

"...no, it wasn't be a problem." (A5)

The time difference between the host university and the home university is not a problem for A5.

"It's just that, for example, there is a morning class, so (I) have to get up really early." (A5)

The time at the host university is one hour earlier so that if there is a class in the morning, participants have to wake up early to be able to take class.

"No, because they start (not too early), at them at 7 am. They start (the class) there at 7 am, here at 6 am, so it's still very affordable. Unless they start at 7am and here it's 5pm, but it's not" (A5)

At the host university, classes start at 7 am, at that time at home university it is already 6 am so F feels that the time difference is not a problem, because the time difference is not really a time difference.

3.3. Discussion

In this study, 5 interviews were conducted online using voice calls because the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, so the researchers could not see directly the participant's responses and expressions when answering interview questions. But even so, the things that researchers want to learn can still be done online. The researcher also asked the participants again to make sure the statements they made were correct and after the data was processed, the participants do member checking, so the participant know the results of their interview. It was do to make sure that the result was still valid.

The findings identify language learning, expanded networks, cultural exchange, and self-development as key advantages of ISMP participation. These benefits resonate with existing literature, which underscores that international mobility programs foster personal growth, intercultural awareness, and career development (Doyle et al., 2010; Dwyer, 2004; Sandes-Guimaraes, 2020). Enhanced language skills, particularly in English, were a consistent theme among participants. This outcome is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of immersive environments in improving language proficiency (Hvalič-Touzery et al., 2017; Enkhtur, 2024).

Moreover, participants reported forming new relationships with peers and faculty from diverse cultural backgrounds, contributing to an expanded professional and social network. Such networking opportunities are widely acknowledged as a critical advantage of mobility programs, offering students long-term benefits in both personal and professional spheres (Bell et al., 2021; Heirweg, 2020). Additionally, exposure to different cultural practices and academic settings enhances students' intercultural competence and adaptability, as emphasized by Zuchowski et al. (2019).

Self-development was another significant advantage. Participants noted improvements in self-discipline, critical thinking, and adaptability, reflecting the findings of Petrovich (2004) and Roy (2019), who highlighted the role of international programs in fostering self-efficacy and agency among students.

Despite the numerous advantages, participants encountered notable challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, unfamiliar academic practices, and time zone adjustments. Language barriers, a common challenge for international students, have been similarly reported in studies by Khanal and Gaulee (2019) and Breznik (2024). The need to communicate and study in a non-native language created initial hurdles but also served as a catalyst for linguistic improvement.

Cultural differences, particularly in academic habits and classroom practices, posed additional challenges (Radjaban & Humanika, 2024). For instance, participants noted stricter assignment formats and higher expectations for academic rigor, echoing findings by Miles et al. (2019) regarding the demanding nature of international academic environments. The contrast between collaborative learning styles abroad and more traditional approaches at home universities required significant adjustment.

Time zone differences, especially for online programs, were another obstacle. While minor for some, these differences affected scheduling and occasionally conflicted with home university commitments. Stewart and Kim (2021) noted similar logistical challenges in their study of student mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings of this study underscore the need for educational institutions to provide targeted pre-departure training and ongoing support to address these challenges. Institutions should focus on equipping students with linguistic and cultural skills, as suggested by Khanal and Gaulee (2019). Furthermore, host universities can play a critical role by fostering inclusive academic environments that consider the diverse backgrounds of international students.

Policymakers should also take note of these findings to design mobility programs that maximize benefits while minimizing barriers. Initiatives such as structured mentoring, peer support systems, and flexible academic requirements could enhance the overall experience of ISMP participants (Bell et al., 2021; DGHE, 2021; López-Duarte, 2023).

4. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussions that have been presented, then the researcher concludes that the advantages and the challenges of international student mobility program. There are four advantages of participating in the international student mobility program. Those are language learning, expand the networks, learn new culture, and self-development. Then there are several challenges that students feel while participating in the international student mobility program, namely language difference, difference habit, study materials and heavier assignments, and time difference. To other researchers who want to conduct similar research, it is suggest investigating how participants in the international student mobility program solve the problems they feel and how participants adapt to the habits of the host university. This study relied on a small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of ISMPs on students' careers and personal development, as well as the role of institutional policies in shaping these experiences. Comparative studies across different regions and disciplines would also provide broader insights into the effectiveness of mobility programs.

Declarations

Author contribution	:	Ani Susanti was responsible for the entire research project. Bambang Widi Pratolo revised the manuscript based on the feedback from the reviewers. Khusnawati participated in the data collection, transcription and analysis.
Funding statement	:	This research is funded by LPPM UAD through contract number: PD-364/SP3/LPPM-UAD/V/2021
Conflict of interest	:	The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Ethics Declaration	:	We as authors acknowledge that this work has been written based on ethical research that conforms to the regulations of our university and that we have obtained permission from the relevant institutes when collecting data. We support ELTEJ Journal in maintaining high standards of personal conduct and practicing honesty in all our professional practices and endeavors.
Additional information	:	No additional information is available for this paper.

REFERENCES

Bell, K., Cash, B., Boetto, H., & Thampi, K. (2021). International study abroad programmes: Exploring global south student perspectives, reciprocity and sustainability. *Social Work Education, 40*(4), 492–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1711881

Breznik, K. (2024). Analyzing countries' performances within the international student mobility program over time. *Annals of Operations Research*, *342*(3), 1925-1943, ISSN 0254-5330, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10479-023-05436-w

De Sandes-Guimaraes, L. V., Ribeiro, A. T. V. B., Axel-Berg, J. H., de Rosso Manços, G., & Plonski, G. A. (2020). the impact of international student mobility programs on Brazilian students' perceptions of entrepreneurialism. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 24*(2), 249–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319842345

DGHE. (2021). *Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards*. In Directorate General of Higher Education.

Direktorat pembelajaran dan kemahasiswaan, K. (2021). Petunjuk Teknis Penyaluran Bantuan Pemerintah Program Transfer Kredit Internasional Tahun 2021.

Doyle, S., Gendall, P., Meyer, L. H., Hoek, J., Tait, C., Mckenzie, L., & Loorparg, A. (2010). An investigation of factors associated with student participation in study abroad. *Journals.Sagepub.Com, 14*(5), 471–490. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315309336032

Dwyer, M. M. (2004). More is better: The impact of study abroad program duration. *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study*, 151–165.

Emirza, S., Öztürk, E. B., & Şengönül, A. S. (2021). The quality of international mobility experiences, general self-efficacy and job search self-efficacy: A time-lagged investigation. *Current Psychology, 40*(4), 1580–1591. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01394-3

Enkhtur, A. (2024). Exploring an Effective International Higher Education Partnership Model Through Virtual Student Mobility Programs: A Case Study. *ECNU Review of Education*, ISSN 2096-5311, https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311241232691

European Commission. (2018). Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+programme (2014–2020). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018SC0040

Geyer, A., Putz, J., & Misra, K. (2017). The effect of short-term study abroad experience on American students' leadership skills and career aspirations. *International Journal of Educational Management, 31*(7), 1042–1053. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-10-2016-0203/FULL/

Gunn, C., Friedrich-Nel, H., & Johansen, S. (2020). International Student Mobility in Radiography: Agency and Experience. *Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences, 51*(2), 299–306. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmir.2020.02.003

Heirweg, S. (2020). Study Abroad Programmes for All? Barriers to Participation in International Mobility Programmes Perceived by Students with Disabilities. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, *67*(1), 73-91, ISSN 1034-912X, https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2019.1640865

Hvalič-Touzery, S., Hopia, H., Sihvonen, S., Diwan, S., Sen, S., & Skela-Savič, B. (2017). Perspectives on enhancing international practical training of students in health and social care study programs — A qualitative descriptive case study. *Nurse Education Today, 48*, 40–47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2016.09.013

Javed, B., Zainab, B., Zakai, S., & Malik, S. (2019). Perceptions of International Student Mobility: A Qualitative Case Study of Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Educational Development, 6*(2), 269–287. https://doi.org/10.22555/joeed.v6i2.2340

Khanal, J., & Gaulee, U. (2019). Challenges of international students from pre-departure to post-study: A literature review. *Journal of International Students, 9*(2), 560–581. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i2.673

López-Duarte, C. (2023). International mobility **in** higher education: students' attitude to international credit virtual mobility programs. *European Journal of Higher Education*, *13*(4), 468-487, ISSN 2156-8235, https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2022.2068637

Maskur, R., Sumarno, Rahmawati, Y., Pradana, K. C., Syazali, M., Septian, A., & Palupi, E. K. (2020). The effectiveness of problem based learning and aptitude treatment interaction in improving mathematical creative thinking skills on curriculum 2013. *European Journal of Educational Research, 9*(1), 375–383. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.9.1.375

Migration Data Portal. (2020). International students. Migration Data Portal.

Miles, D., Harris, N., & Dhephasadin Na Ayudhaya, P. (2019). Stepping Forward to Learn: Thai Students Reflect on Hosting Australian International Exchange Students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 23*(2), 217–233. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318797177

OECD (2011). (2011). Education at a Glance 2011.

Petrovich, A. (2004). Using Self-Efficacy Theory in Social Work Teaching. *Journal of Social Work Education, 40*(3), 429–443. https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2004.10672298

Radjaban, R.Y., & Humanika, E. S. (2024). Students' perceptions and challenges in using writing outlines to write an exposition. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal, 7* (2), 79-89. https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v7i2.11662

Richardson, R., Research, J. M.-U. J. of E., & 2013, undefined. (2013). International Student Mobility Programs and Effects on Student Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs about Education and Their Role as Future Educators. *ERIC, 1*(3), 240–246. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2013.010314

Roy, A. (2019). Outcomes of international student mobility programs: a systematic review and agenda for future research. *Studies in Higher Education*, *44*(9), 1630-1644, ISSN 0307-5079, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1458222

Roy, A., Newman, A., & Lahiri-Roy, R. (2022). Antecedents of short-term international mobility programs: a systematic review and agenda for future research. *Globalisation, Societies and Education,* 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2022.2076657

Sandes-Guimaraes, L.V. de (2020). The Impact of International Student Mobility Programs on Brazilian Students' Perceptions of Entrepreneurialism. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *24*(2), 249-268, ISSN 1028-3153, https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319842345

Stewart, W. H., & Kim, B. M. (2021). Commitment to academic exchanges in the age of covid-19: A case study of arrival and quarantine experiences from the republic of korea. *Journal of International Students, 11*(Special issue 2), 77–93. https://doi.org/10.32674/JIS.V11IS2.4110

Thampi, K. (2021). Internationalization of social work education in India through student exchanges: challenges and prospects. *Social Work Education,* 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2021.1919071

UNESCO. (2013). *The International Mobility of Students in Asia and Pacific*. UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000226219

Wang, D. (2014). Effects of study abroad on teachers' self-perceptions: A study of Chinese EFL teachers. *Citeseer, 5*, 2014. https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.5.1.70-79

Zuchowski, I., Miles, D., Howard, E., Harris, N., & Francis, A. (2019). Sustaining quality learning abroad opportunities in Australian schools of social work. *International Social Work, 62*(2), 980–993. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872818757590