CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problems

When people go abroad, it is sometimes difficult to communicate both verbally and nonverbally. This is further compounded by the sheer number of languages spoken globally, according to Wilken (2018) it is estimated to be around 7,000 languages. While English enjoys widespread use, fluency remains limited across many countries, creating a communication barrier for countless individuals, including international students. If communicating orally with them who don't speak English well, it will be extremely difficult because of the two people's lack of fluency in English. Then gestures take over to communicate (verbally), but come again because of the differences in cultural roots, these two elements create misinterpretation, ambiguity, miscommunication, and lead to ethnocentrism as explained by Bili (2020:152-154).

According to Bili (2020:152-154), all of those cultural issues are triggered by not just cross-cultural, but also cultural and psychological factors. The urge to connect, especially while studying abroad, is the first step towards experiencing the place. Gaining a grasp of a language's cultural background can also assist in forming more genuine and meaningful connections with native speakers (Karlık, 2023:7). Furthermore, Karlık stated that beyond just being able to communicate in the language, people can develop a deeper connection and understanding by having an interest in the culture and customs of the people who speak the language. But these things will not run smoothly because of the linguistic challenges.

Linguistic challenges in cross-cultural communication are not a new phenomenon. Effective communication is impossible when parties fail to understand each other. According to Yue (2022:2-13), cross-cultural communication refers to the capacity to engage and interact proficiently with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This requires mastery of cultural knowledge, accurate language expression, and adaptability to cultural situations. The exchange of messages, values, norms, and behaviours between people from different cultures can create complex challenges due to differences in language, beliefs, values, and mindsets. Consequently, Yue (2022:2-13), clarified the

necessity of employing clear, objective, and value-neutral language to prevent any biassed or emotive language that could lead to misinterpretation. This will help to create a more inclusive and respectful environment where everyone feels heard and understood.

The linguistic challenge is a major challenge for international students in cross-cultural communication, as it can hinder their full ability and potential to connect (Nazir & Özçiçek, 2022:213-218). As explained by Bili (2020:152-154) language has a dual role in guiding or limiting cross-cultural communication in intercultural contexts. On the positive side, people with similar linguistic backgrounds, such as international students from Indonesia and Malaysia, Russia and Ukraine, or Argentina and Uruguay, typically find it simpler to understand each other because they share language roots. This language resemblance can lead to deeper ties, more mutual comprehension, and more efficient interaction exchanges. Meanwhile, Bili explains more that on the negative side, international students from various linguistic origins encounter major obstacles when they do not speak the same language, especially in environments where English is the dominant language. Communication hurdles can occur, resulting in misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and difficulties conveying thoughts or ideas effectively. Language difficulties can impede meaningful international connections, necessitating more work and approaches to overcome (Bili, 2020:152-154).

According to Zhang & Zhou (2021:19), when people encountered situations that provoke feelings of shyness and anxiety, particularly when interacting with someone from a culturally different background, they frequently chose to avoid verbal communication or to limit the necessity of the exchange, with the intention of ending the conversation as quickly as possible. The avoidance behaviour combined the cultural stereotypes and prejudices that might worsen this communication issue, limiting their capacity to properly express their thoughts and feelings. In such instances, nonverbal communication usually prevails as individuals use body language, facial expressions, and gestures to express messages (Bili, 2020:152-154). However, without a common understanding of these nonverbal cues, there is a risk of misinterpretation or misunderstanding, especially in different cultural contexts where ethnocentrism may influence perception. Finally, the inability to communicate vocally or

nonverbally may result in a complete breakdown of communication, emphasising the significance of creating inclusive and understanding communication environments. This may result in emotions of isolation and frustration, along with a diminished sense of pride and achievement in their language learning efforts (Nazir & Özçiçek, 2022:213-218). International students are more likely to experience distress as a result of the acculturative process, which can have a detrimental impact on their mental and psychological well-being. This may result in the emergence of mental health issues, including emotions of despair and anxiety. (Akhtar & Kroener-Herwig, 2019:119-124).

Consequently, linguistic challenges are a huge issue for international students, affecting many aspects of their academic and social lives (Ali et al., 2024). These challenges lead to stressors, which play an important part in their overall adjustment to the new campus atmosphere. Communication and adaptation abilities are inextricably related to language problems, which frequently serve as primary stressors (Akhtar & Kroener-Herwig, 2019:119-124). Many students struggle during lectures, feeling down and unable to comprehend academic material, which leads to feelings of frustration and incompetence (Nazir & Özçiçek, 2022:213-218). A study by Talwar et al. (2022:23-30) stated that linguistic challenges cause students to believe they are missing out on important material during lectures owing to their level of proficiency. This problem causes loneliness because they have no one to communicate with or seek support. The inability to communicate thoughts, express ideas, or answer questions effectively during lectures exacerbates stress, making the adjustment process even more challenging for international students (Talwar et al., 2022:23-30).

While international students face linguistic challenges in both academic and social environments, in the digital age, artificial intelligence is constantly evolving and developing, providing transformative solutions that reduce the stress associated with language differences and pave the way for more accessible communication platforms that facilitate seamless cross-cultural exchange (Wang, 2023:1525-1544). Today's technology, which includes Artificial Intelligence (AI), is proving to be an invaluable tool in overcoming linguistic challenges for international students (Hohenstein et al., 2023:5487). Additionally, a machine translator according to Garg & Agarwal (2019) is a subfield of computational

linguistics that seeks to facilitate the automatic translation of text from one language to another through the use of computing devices. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, machine translation can be quite useful for someone who would like to better understand a foreign language that they weren't familiar with before (Reidina & Yuliani, 2020:36-47).

The potential of AI-driven machine translation tools to address the linguistic challenges common to international students has shown that these systems can significantly improve translation quality and cultural context, making it easier for students to connect with locals and head cross-cultural communication challenges (Dirghangi et al., 2022:1165-1669). As well as addressing immediate communication issues, integrating AI and technology will create a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students, helping them achieve academic and social success (T. Wang et al., 2023:11). By using machine translation tools and communication platforms, students will be able to access real-time language support to improve their participation in academic debates, peer-to-peer communication and social interaction (Calefato et al., 2010:257-264) and also help them translating unfamiliar words (Sujarwo, 2020:234)

Previous studies have explored the impact of linguistic challenges of international students' experiences abroad. For instance, Dirghangi et al. (2022:1165-1669) examined the use of artificial intelligence technologies for translation, Alasmari (2023) investigated the role of linguistic challenges in cross-cultural communication. Similarly, Karakas (2023:216-228) identified the capability of AI technology to facilitate effective cross-cultural communication. Although these studies provide valuable insights into different aspects of the international students' experience, this research aims to integrate all three elements into a comprehensive framework. By doing so, it is essential to address the gap in the literature by exploring how to advance cross-culture communication and linguistic challenges for Indonesian students abroad that can be mitigated through artificial intelligence (AI)-based machine translation tools. This research introduces a new approach to addressing verbal communication challenges and could be a solution to solve the problems in the global community in cross-culture settings by employing the use of artificial intelligence as a tool. While AI has been primarily utilised for tasks such as

writing in non-verbal contexts (Salvagno et al., 2023:75), its potential for facilitating direct verbal communication has yet to be fully explored faced by the global community.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research aims to investigate the challenge of cross-cultural communication faced by Indonesian students abroad from different host universities, particularly those in English-speaking countries and non-English-speaking countries, and how they engage more effectively in social interaction with the role of artificial intelligence, specifically machine translation technology. This research is focused on using the potential of artificial intelligence technology to create a more inclusive and accessible social environment, ultimately benefiting the lives of Indonesian students abroad by enhancing intercultural understanding and appreciation among them. This research significantly contributes to the areas of cross-cultural communication, linguistic challenge, and artificial intelligence, establishing a basis for future research and development in these fields.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do Indonesian students abroad adjust their communication style to overcome cross-cultural communication?
2. How does artificial intelligence (machine translation technology) contribute to Indonesian students' convergence or divergence in overcoming cross-cultural communication?

1.4 Research Time and Site

NO	TYPE OF ACTIVITIES	MONTH			
		SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	Preliminary Research	███			
2	Proposal Preparation	███			
3	Development of Thesis	███	███		
4	Data Collection		███	███	
5	Data Processing and Analysis			███	
6	Revision and Finalisation			███	███

7	Submission of Thesis				

Table 1.1 Research Timeline

The research location in this research is an online meeting through Zoom Meeting and/or Google Meet.