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Fantasy Theme Analysis of Culture Shock in the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* Student Community

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Abstract

Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology created a program called *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* (PMM), which allows students to take courses outside their study program and campus for one semester. The exchange process then brings together students from various cultural backgrounds, creating cross-cultural interactions. Interestingly, even though there are cultural differences, fantasy themes can be formed, becoming a common understanding among the students involved. This research uses a qualitative approach with Symbolic Convergence Theory, which is analyzed using the Fantasy Theme Analysis method. Direct observations were carried out on the second batch student community of the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* program at the Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) and continued with an in-depth interview process with 13 community members. The result is that six fantasy themes and their symbolic cues are formed in phases of culture shock. One of the fantasy themes succeeded in forming a rhetorical vision of the Nusantara Module activities in the recovery phase.

Keywords: *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka*, Nusantara Module, Symbolic Convergence Theory, Fantasy Theme Analysis, Culture Shock Phase, Rhetorical Vision

1. Introduction

Since 2020, the Indonesian Government has issued the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* policy through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, which allows students to take courses outside their study program and campus for one semester (Bureau of Cooperation and Public Relations, 2020). One of the programs launched is *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka*, where students can take courses at other universities outside their home island. The exchange process then brings together students from various cultural backgrounds in one place. Existing cultural differences can influence the communication process (Neuliep, 2016; Nuraeni et al., 2022). However, what is interesting is that even though there are cultural differences, fantasy themes can be formed, becoming a common understanding among the students involved (Elsakina & Yohana, 2016; Song, 2015; Wu, 2021).

Bringing together students from various cultural backgrounds follows the objectives of the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* program. Students are expected to be able to build cross-cultural understanding and friendship. During the three years it has been implemented, the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* Program, abbreviated as PMM, has been attended by around 38,000 students from all over Indonesia (Doddy, 2023). We can see that tens of thousands of intercultural communications have occurred by looking at those numbers.

Stewart L. Tubis, quoted by Liliweri (2002) in Lubis (2019), stated that intercultural communication involves interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Liliweri (2002) added that culture in this statement indicates differences in lifestyle patterns implemented and inherited by a community group that lasts through various generations (Lubis, 2019). However, an individual who encounters or is in a new culture may only be able to accept a culture different from their origin after some time. Kohls L. Robert (1984) argues that individuals may feel confused and anxious because they have a different lifestyle in a new environment. These situations are known as culture shock (Shen & Chen, 2020).

Students who take part in the PMM program feel culture shock from other students of different cultures and the environment on the new campus. One of the PMM student communities who experienced this phenomenon was students who were accepted at the Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU), Medan, North Sumatera. Those who meet in one place because they have the same goals and hopes ultimately end up in a community (Cobigo et al., 2016). Within this community, students interact to understand and adapt to each other.

The students carried out intense interactions by telling each other various stories and experiences, which were then responded to by each other and ultimately became an understanding for all students in the community. This situation produces themes called fantasy (Efianda et al., 2015). A fantasy theme is the content of a message that is dramatized to trigger the formation of a fantasy chain. However, not all messages can form a fantasy theme (Christin, 2018). Fantasy theme analysis was first initiated by Ernest G. Bormann in 1972 for small-group analysis. Then, Bormann explained that this theory could be used at various levels of communication (Dickerson, 2018).

The *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* student community at the Universitas Sumatera Utara developed fantasy themes to understand each other. Using Bormann's theory, this research analyzes the fantasy theme of culture shock that forms in the student community of the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* program at the Universitas Sumatera Utara.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Intercultural Communication

Communication will always occur in human life, whether we realize it or not (Hamid, 2016). In practice, humans use verbal and nonverbal symbols that are constructed in the form of messages as a means of communicating. However, these verbal and nonverbal symbols will only be understood by people who have agreed on the meaning of something (Neuliep, 2016). Suppose an individual meets another individual from a different culture. In that case, the two individuals' frames of reference may differ because they are unaware of all aspects of each other's culture (Sihabudin, 2022). These situations ultimately hampered the communication process. Even so, it cannot be denied that culture is the main foundation that serves as a guide and becomes a link in communication between individuals involved in it (Nasrullah, 2018).

Intercultural communication occurs due to factors that cannot be avoided. DeVito (1997) explains that increased human mobilization, immigration patterns, economic dependence, advances in communications technology, and the desire for political stability are the most influential things (Sihabudin, 2022). To increase communication success, understanding the cultural factors of the interlocutor, such as values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour, must be improved (Susilo et al., 2023).

2.2 Culture Shock

Even though technological advances and ease of mobilization increase the intensity of intercultural communication, this does not mean communication runs without obstacles. Xia (2009) describes that an individual can experience uncommon feelings that can directly impact the individual, such as experiencing psychological stress when in a new environment (Maizan et al., 2020). This phenomenon is called culture shock (Shen & Chen, 2020).

Dayakisni (2008) explains that the term culture shock was first introduced by a Canadian anthropologist named Kalervo Oberg in 1954 (Intan, 2019; Shen & Chen, 2020). Oberg concludes that culture shock is a pretty intense reaction that reflects an individual's inability to face their new environment, so at a certain level, it can disrupt their identity (Maizan et al., 2020). Triandis's (1990) research results show that the more significant the differences between the original and new cultures, the more difficult it is for new individuals to adapt (Harunasari & Halim, 2021). A year after Oberg presented his ideas regarding the phases of culture shock, Sverre Lysgaard (1955) united these separate phases and described them as a U curve, better known as the *U-Curve Hypothesis* theory (Wittwer, 2021).

The first phase is known as the *Honeymoon Phase*, where this phase is filled with hopes and expectations for a new culture. Everyone likes this phase because they have yet to encounter difficulties in experiencing new situations (Intan, 2019). The second phase is the *Crisis Phase*, which is synonymous with individuals' disappointment and dissatisfaction with a reality that does not match their expectations of the new culture (Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022). Conflicts and disputes may arise during this phase. Then the third phase is called the *Recovery Phase*. In this phase, the individuals involved have begun to get used to the existing cultural differences. They begin to have the confidence to interact smoothly with people in that culture (Shen & Chen, 2020). The final one is the *Adaptation Phase*, where individuals can adapt and accept the new culture more confidently, be more active in socializing, and begin to enjoy their new life (Shen & Chen, 2020). However, remember that each individual needs a different time to reach the adaptation phase.

2.3 Community

A community is several individuals who interact and support each other because similar experiences or characteristics bind them, have a sense of belonging, and are often connected by physical proximity (Cobigo et al., 2016). Communication is present in the community as a bridge between members. Even though there will still be socioeconomic disparities, all community members can act as both communicators and communicators (Nurghida, 2017).

Muzafer Sherif in Sentosa (2009) provides several characteristics of a community, namely 1) there are similar motives that encourage interaction between its members; 2) there are differences in the reactions and skills of each individual as a result of the interactions that develop; 3) the formation of organizational structure to achieve common goals; and 4) the formation of behavioural guidelines that regulate procedures for interaction and activities to achieve goals (Mulyana & Budiantoro, 2019).

2.4 Symbolic Convergence Theory

Symbolic Convergence Theory is a communication theory initiated by Ernest G. Bormann in 1972 at the University of Minnesota (Dickerson, 2018). Bormann states that this theory combines aspects of social science and humanism and can be considered a general communication theory (Christin, 2018). There are two basic assumptions in this theory, which are 1) communication forms reality and 2) each individual's understanding of a symbol can experience convergence or unification so that it can be understood together (Elsakina & Yohana, 2016).

Symbolic Convergence Theory begins when a group member pitches a dramatic story, including a funny story, to the group. Other members who catch the story may respond to the story. This series of stories is the core part of symbolic convergence, namely the fantasy theme (Efianda et al., 2015). As symbolic convergence continues, a

fantasy chain reaction builds group consciousness and creates a rhetorical vision. However, Bormann notes that not all fantasy themes will appear and trigger a fantasy chain because some messages do not (Christin, 2018).

2.5 Fantasy Theme Analysis

Fantasy Theme Analysis is an analysis method that Ernest G. Bormann also initiated. This method is used to identify and explain group consciousness or symbolic convergence itself. Hopkins (2011) explains that the Fantasy Theme Analysis method helps to analyze symbols produced by group members through emotions, words, codes, and nonverbal behaviour (Efianda et al., 2015). In contrast to commonly held views of narratives as silly and detached from reality, fantasy here involves past or imagined future events that unravel intrigues from shared realities (Afolayan et al., 2019). Fantasy themes describe narratives that explain group experiences and become a shared reality for all group members (Song, 2015). Robert Freed Bales explained that an essential function of fantasy themes is that they can reduce group tension and turn it into group solidarity (Mutiaz, 2019).

Initially, Bormann (1972) showed only two levels in the symbolic convergence process. However, Bormann (1982) added a third level, ultimately becoming fantasy themes, fantasy types, and rhetorical visions (Christin, 2018). The fantasy theme is the basic unit at this level. Fantasy themes can be conveyed through jokes, analogies, and other word games that can increase enthusiasm for interaction (Prasanti & Indriani, 2018). After sharing several fantasy themes and repeating some of these themes, group members will move to a more abstract level and provide an overview of the fantasy themes that refer to all similar dramatizations (Song, 2015). A cue or abbreviated label synonymous with a particular topic appears in this phase (Christin, 2018; Shields & Preston, 1985). The final level is a rhetorical vision where the fantasy theme has developed and spread outside the group to become a fantasy of the outside community (Mutiaz, 2019). West and Turner (2007) argue that this phenomenon forms a rhetorical community (Prasanti & Indriani, 2018).

Apart from the three levels above, one more term often appears in Fantasy Theme Analysis, namely Fantasy Chain. Bormann (1990) explains a fantasy chain as "...a series of ideas that members link together like a play (Kusuma, 2019)." The fantasy chain is defined as a process in which the message sent succeeds in getting a response from group members so that the intensity of communication also increases (Prasanti & Indriani, 2018).

3. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach to describe, analyze, and report the results of interviews and observations in the field (Hamid U & Nucifera, 2019). The theory used is Symbolic Convergence Theory with its inherent analysis method, namely Fantasy Theme Analysis, initiated by Ernest G. Bormann in 1972. Fantasy theme analysis provides insight into the shared views of members of a group or organization (Song, 2015). First, the researcher directly observed the interactions within the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* student community at the Universitas Sumatera Utara. Then, the author compiled a list of symbolic cues to find fantasy themes formed from August 2022 to January 2023 (Christin, 2018). By conducting in-depth interviews, researchers collected information from 13 informants participating in the program. As explained by Bormann, Howell, Nichols, and Shapiro, the best way to uncover a group's symbolic meaning is by collecting messages, stories, past stories, and anecdotes that they tell and retell (Song, 2015).

After all the data is collected, it will be processed to become more informative and easy to understand (Nursyafitri, 2022). Fantasy themes will be sorted again to determine those related to culture shock. Similar fantasy themes will be grouped into fantasy types, forming a rhetorical vision (Song, 2015).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 General Description of Research Objects

The *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* Program, organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology since 2020, has provided opportunities for students to study outside their home universities and home

islands. Students will also gain experience by exchanging culture with other students from Indonesia through a credit conversion system equivalent to a maximum of 20 credits (Anwar, 2022). Students successfully accepted into the PMM program must take the Nusantara Module (*Modul Nusantara*) course, equivalent to 4 credits. Based on the information page regarding this program released by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Nusantara Module is a series of activities aimed at increasing students' understanding of tolerance and introducing Indonesian culture through four sub-activities, namely *Kebhinekaan*, Inspiration, Reflection, and Social Contribution (MBKM Team, 2023). In its implementation, the Nusantara Module activities will be guided by one Nusantara Module Lecturer, assisted by one Liaison Officer (LO). Besides that, students can take courses from their respective recipient universities for the rest of their schedules.

The *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* program, which is abbreviated as PMM, has been going on for three batches with a total number of participants of around 38,000. In 2024, PMM will reopen with a quota of 15,505 students (Doddy, 2023). One of the universities active as a recipient university is the Universitas Sumatera Utara, commonly abbreviated as USU, located in Medan, North Sumatera. Based on the official document regarding the *Student Arrival Certificate* published by the Universitas Sumatera Utara on September 12, 2022, USU accepted 160 students from all over Indonesia in the second batch of PMM (Ikhsan, 2022). During the program, the 160 students interacted directly and online through the group feature in the WhatsApp application.

4.2 Results

The researcher found nine symbolic cues in different fantasy themes after conducting direct observations in the PMM student community at USU from July 2022 to January 2023. These nine symbolic cues were then used as guidelines in the in-depth interview process with 13 informants who participated in the second batch of the PMM program at USU. In-depth interviews were conducted online via the Zoom Meeting application between October 2023 and January 2024. However, in this research, the researcher and the informants agreed not to reveal their names and only use the informant code.

Table 1: List of Informant Codes

Number	Informant Code	Age (Years)
1	Informant 1	23
2	Informant 2	22
3	Informant 3	23
4	Informant 4	22
5	Informant 5	23
6	Informant 6	22
7	Informant 7	22
8	Informant 8	23
9	Informant 9	22
10	Informant 10	24
11	Informant 11	22
12	Informant 12	23
13	Informant 13	22

Source: *Results of Data Processing by Researchers*, 2024

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with the informants above, six new fantasy themes were formed, so the total fantasy themes created in the second batch PMM student community at USU was 15. Next, the researcher reduced the data into six fantasy themes related to culture shock.

Table 2: Fantasy Themes Related to Culture Shock

Fantasy Theme	Symbolic Cue in Fantasy Type	Time and Place
The *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka*'s Twibbon at the Universitas Sumatera Utara	Redesign of Twibbon	WhatsApp Groups of The PMM Community on July 8-27, 2022
Election of PMM Community's Leader and Committee at the Universitas Sumatera Utara	Tribal Chief	WhatsApp Groups of The PMM Community on July 26-August 10, 2022 and Zoom Meeting on August 2, 2022
Departure	Dormitory	Results of In-depth Interviews (October 2023-January 2024)
Volunteer for the Universitas Sumatera Utara's Anniversary Event	Unfair	WhatsApp Groups of The PMM Community on September 22-23, 2022 and Results of In-depth Interviews (October 2023-January 2024)
Nusantara Module Activities	Toba Lake	Hall of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Sumatera Utara on November 24, 2022, and Results of In-depth Interviews (October 2023-January 2024)
Inbound Student Release Event for the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* Program, Universitas Sumatera Utara	Memory	The Universitas Sumatera Utara on January 13, 2023

Source: Results of In-depth Interviews Reprocessed by Researchers, 2024

4.3 Fantasy Theme in The Culture Shock Phase

After getting the fantasy themes and symbolic cues formed in the second batch of the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* student community at the Universitas Sumatera Utara, the researcher will classify each fantasy theme into stages of culture shock. The Canadian anthropologist Kalervo Oberg introduced the term culture shock in 1954, which means an individual's reaction to facing a new environment that can cause an identity crisis at a certain level. In his research results, Oberg also explained the four phases experienced by individuals in the process of culture shock (Maizan et al., 2020). Several years later, Sverre Lysgaard described these phases as a U curve, better known as the U-curve hypothesis, in 1955 (Wittwer, 2021).

4.3.1 Honeymoon Phase

In this phase, individuals tend to have a positive feeling toward the cultural differences that occur (Shen & Chen, 2020). Individuals may not have encountered difficulties interacting with each other (Intan, 2019). In the second batch of the PMM student community at the Universitas Sumatera Utara, the fantasy theme about "The *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka*'s Twibbon at the Universitas Sumatera Utara" and the fantasy theme about "Election of PMM Community's Leader and Committee at the Universitas Sumatera Utara" occurred in the honeymoon phase.

1. Fantasy Theme: The *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka*'s Twibbon at the Universitas Sumatera Utara

    Twibbon refers to posts on social media combined with attractive frames designed in such a way (Pertiwi et al., 2021). Many organizations now provide twibbon when holding an event, including the Universitas Sumatera Utara, when accepting students for the PMM program. Only after the students were accepted and joined the WhatsApp Group did Informant 9 become the first student to post a fantasy theme regarding twibbon.

    "Why would I send a message like that? First, I felt enthusiastic about being able to pass the PMM program at the Universitas Sumatera Utara. Then, I also saw other friends who had passed the PMM program at other universities had uploaded twibbon. Secondly, twibbon is also an indirect reward for ourselves because we have passed this program." (Informant 9, Interview 2023)

After responding to the fantasy theme, USU immediately provided a twibbon that students could upload. However, enthusiastic students felt that USU's twibbon design could have been more attractive. Several students also took the initiative to redesign the twibbon.

"At that time, USU perhaps designed the twibbon simply because students had urged it. Then, students feel less satisfied. Meanwhile, my friends at other universities have good designs. So, I am a little afraid of missing out. Then, I volunteered to redesign it because I like design and had free time." (Informant 13, Interview 2023)

Other informants also responded to the students' enthusiasm expressed in the twibbon. According to them, the latest design for Twibbon is indeed better, and they appreciate this.

"Actually, if you look at our friends at that time, they were very excited about becoming PMM students who could go to the biggest campus in North Sumatera. It was positive to see them eager in showing their talents in editing and so on." (Informant 10, Interview 2024)

The fantasy chains about Twibbon begin to fade as the end of July 2022 approaches, and the next fantasy theme emerges.

2. Fantasy Theme: Election of PMM Community's Leader and Committee at the Universitas Sumatera Utara

Based on the PMM Student Briefing results, held on July 26, 2022, online via the Zoom Meeting application, the PMM committee requires each Receiving University to elect one student as chairman, called the "tribal chief." The tribal chief will be tasked with 1) conveying the aspirations of tribal members (PMM students), 2) conveying messages from Receiving Universities and PMM coordinators, and 3) keeping the team in solid condition (Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka [Official], 2022). The new term about tribal chief then sparked a new fantasy theme in the student community.

"I was confused and thought, 'What is a tribal chief? What does it do? why does it have to exist?' There are so many questions that I do not know the answers to. Then, at that time, the person chosen as tribal chief was a male student from Java. I finally found out what a tribal chief was like after arriving at USU. It turns out he is like the leader of all the students who take part in PMM at that one university." (Informant 11, Interview 2023)

The presence of tribal chiefs in the PMM community is essential for students. In this fantasy theme, more students responded to give their responses.

"In my opinion, the tribal chief election is very interesting because there are several candidates who express their opinions. I also think that the tribal chief is important because during the briefing, many issues, such as harassment, came up. Apart from that, there was also a lot of confusing information before we departed. So, we have to look for leaders who can take responsibility for these things." (Informant 3, Interview 2023)

Interactions still carried out online via WhatsApp groups mean that students are also confused about when the right time to elect a tribal chief is.

"As for my opinion, I feel half-assed about the election actually. If it is done online, we do not really know each other to know what the person will be like. However, if it is done offline, our time is quite limited because the PMM committee requires the presence of the tribal chief before departing to take care of data. So, it is good to do it online." (Informant 8, Interview 2024)

The election of tribal chiefs was finally carried out online via the Zoom Meeting application according to mutual agreement. After the tribal chief was successfully elected, the students continued to form a committee structure. Several informants expressed their interest in joining.

"To be honest, I was hesitant to take part on the committee because I felt that the students from Sabang to Merauke would all be cool. Then, I also saw that the majority of respondents in the WhatsApp group were students in semester 5 and above, while I was still in semester 3. After that, I got to know one of the female students who was from my city. We became close and talked a lot. After the election of tribal chief, my friend asked me to become the committee and we discussed what we wanted to become. Because I am also active on a committee in several organizations, I suggest choosing a treasurer. I also thought that maybe being a treasurer was not so busy after all. Finally, I became the first treasurer, and my friend became the second treasurer." (Informant 2, Interview 2023)

The fantasy theme about tribal chiefs began to stop being responded to around mid-August 2022. At that time, the PMM student schedule was getting closer to departing for USU. A new fantasy theme begins to form.

Based on information from the informants in the two fantasy themes above, they felt excited to respond to each other. Students who have just been accepted into the PMM program form expectations about the new environment and new people they meet, even though it has only been done online (Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022). The students spread the symbol through dialogue exchanges, which were ultimately understood by all community members (Wu, 2021).

4.3.2 Crisis Phase

The crisis phase usually occurs after students have interacted for a while. However, students participating in the PMM program can immediately experience a crisis phase when they first arrive in a new environment (Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022). The joy felt at the beginning can turn into anxiety and depression due to barriers to cross-cultural adaptation (Shen & Chen, 2020). In the PMM student community at USU, the fantasy themes that emerge in this phase are "Departure" and "Volunteer for the Universitas Sumatera Utara's Anniversary Event."

1. Fantasy Theme: Departure

    Based on the results of interviews with 13 informants, the theme related to the departure of PMM students to USU became an exciting fantasy to discuss. Before leaving, they are excited and have expectations about the new environment. However, after arriving at USU and meeting other students in person, several informants immediately felt a culture shock.

    "I departed on the second day. I also asked one of the students who had arrived there first about the conditions and facilities of the dormitory. I asked for a picture because I felt confused in the new environment. Then, when I arrived, I felt that sometimes I did not understand their language because they spoke their respective regional languages. There are those who speak quickly and there are also those who are quiet when speaking" (Informant 4, Interview 2023)

    "I left on the last day. When I just got there, I immediately attended the welcoming party. Even though I was quite tired and sleepy, I felt the event was fun and lively. Before leaving, the thing I was most worried about was where to stay because I am the type of person who is easily disgusted if I see something dirty. So, when the students who were leaving on the first day arrived, I immediately asked them for reviews about the dormitory. As for the rooms, they are still quite clean. However, when I first entered, I was most disgusted by the bathroom. If you call it dirty, not really, but it is not clean either. I ended up wearing slippers when showering, and I did not even dare to defecate. After a while, I cleaned the bathroom

myself, but it was not as clean as I wanted. I then tried to make peace with the situation." (Informant 5, Interview 2023)

In the departure fantasy theme, students are most looking forward to the dormitory they will live in for four and a half months at USU. Apart from that, differences in language and student attitudes also hinder communication. The fantasy theme of departure began to fade when students began to focus on studying at USU.

2. Fantasy Theme: Volunteer for the Universitas Sumatera Utara's Anniversary Event

Not long after the students had experienced their studies, USU held several events to commemorate their anniversary. In this event, USU then involved PMM students as volunteers. However, during the volunteer recruitment process, several informants interviewed felt there was deception, so the fantasy about volunteers became one that they remembered.

"I remember very well that the incident regarding the selection of volunteers occurred at night when I was in my room. I myself believe that the process was planned by the tribal chief and the people behind it, so that their friends were included first. So, even though there are people who fill up the form quickly, those chosen are still the people closest to them." (Informant 7, Interview 2023)

"During the first volunteer activity, I proposed the election via Google Form because I felt that the tribal chief would only choose core committees or those close to him. At that time, there was also information that the volunteer would get money. Finally, everyone got excited and wanted to join. In fact, do not talk about the money issue so that only those who are interested participate. Moreover, at that time, distribution of funds was late." (Informant 12, Interview 2023)

Unfortunately, volunteer activities that attract students' attention have limited quotas. Although some students believed that there was deception in this matter, other students stated that the election was carried out with the consideration of students who were having problems disbursing funds.

"So, what is being debated is that the tribal chief was quite close to one of the female students, so perhaps he first spread the information to his friends. Then, the chief, who was close to me, informed me regarding this matter. The other students who were selected were having problems disbursing funds, so they were selected by tribal chief outside who filled out the Google Form." (Informant 9, Interview 2023)

The fantasy about volunteers that had caused tension gradually faded, and most students accepted the reality. Discussions stopped at the end of September. However, a second event related to the anniversary asked PMM students to act as volunteers again. The second event was held in mid-October, and the fantasy theme of volunteers was discussed again, although not on a larger scale. Several informants gave their opinions about the second volunteer activity, which they felt was still unfair.

"I did not become a volunteer on the second event, but I followed the conversation. At that time, the students became noisy again because the information distributed in the dormitory WhatsApp group only asked for a list of people who had empty schedules on Thursday. I myself did not know that it turned out to be a volunteer. The other students were also angry." (Informant 13, Interview 2023)

Discussions about volunteers then died down around the end of October when the event had passed.

In the crisis phase, conflict may arise due to the obstacles experienced by each individual. One of the causes can be obstacles in communication. Students may need help to integrate into the new environment and be accepted by existing groups (Shen & Chen, 2020). Even though Robert Freed Bales in Mutiaz (2019) states that the function of fantasy themes is to reduce group tension, Bormaan, Cragan, and Shields (2001) state that fantasy themes can also take a destructive form (Kartikawangi, 2013).

4.3.3 Recovery Phase

Mufidah and Fadilah (2022) argue that individuals have begun to understand and adapt to new circumstances through their approaches (Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022). In this phase, the fantasy theme formed is about the "Nusantara Module Activities," a mandatory subject for PMM students. This activity is the thing that students will remember most because they can learn and visit new places directly. According to informants, Lake Toba, an icon of North Sumatera, is the most anticipated destination during the Nusantara Module activities.

"At that time, when other groups were already carrying out Nusantara Module activities outside, several groups were still carrying out activities only within USU. During our evening social gathering, we focused on discussing groups who had not yet been to Lake Toba. Maybe other friends who have not gone feel disappointed because Lake Toba has become an icon of Medan itself." (Informant 8, Interview 2024)

The unfavourable experiences of other groups hampered in the Nusantara Module activities aroused the sympathy of all students. However, as time passed, this became a joke among PMM students at USU. They teased each other about Lake Toba.

"The Nusantara Module's activity of going to Lake Toba also became a joke. Other groups seemed to favor their respective groups, while my group went to Lake Toba, and it was unclear when. At that time, during an evening social gathering, my group friends also expressed their complaints to the person in charge of PMM." (Informant 2, Interview 2023)

"I still remember my group. Our group's lecturers did not want to go to Berastagi, let alone Lake Toba. That is what I remember most; it even became a joke in my group. I told my friend who was participating in PMM at another university that it was difficult for my lecturer to go to Lake Toba, even though that was my goal to go to USU." (Informant 12, Interview 2023)

The students, who were previously very sensitive towards each other, started to get used to it, even making jokes about the Nusantara Module activities. In this phase, students begin to understand the character of their friends, so they do not feel too stressed (Intan, 2019). The fantasy theme of the Nusantara Module describes students' experiences, which become a shared reality for all community members (Song, 2015).

4.3.4 Adaptation Phase

The final phase of culture shock is the adaptation phase, which means that individuals can adapt and accept the new culture more confidently, thereby making them enjoy their new life (Shen & Chen, 2020). In the USU PMM student community, the fantasy theme formed in this phase is the "Inbound Student Release Event for the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* Program, Universitas Sumatera Utara." This event was the last activity held by USU before the students returned to their homes. In this event, each Nusantara Module group was asked to present something. The informants told the stories of their respective groups in preparing the performance.

"My group really tried hard. Previously, we wanted to show a flash mob, but we felt it was not proper because this was an exchange of students from all over Indonesia. Then, it happened that my group friend was competent in dancing, so she directed us. Actually, at that time, we also felt doubtful, but because it was the last time, we prepared everything; we even practised in the girls' dormitory until 9 pm." (Informant 13, Interview 2023)

"At that time, my group performed a poetry musical and there was also one person who sang in Javanese. And I did not join the performance due to me was going to the toilet at that time. The musicalization of the poem was planned impromptu because initially, my group was only represented by those who sang Javanese. Then, someone invited us to add a musicalization to the poem. She does the poetry and we sing in the back." (Informant 1, Interview 2024)

"When my group was performing, I did not participate because I was documenting. However, at that time I also performed singing with two of my friends. I felt it was the last chance, so I had to make memories after five months together. I have also adapted, so I feel more confident." (Informant 6, Interview 2023)

In this phase, students are more active and confident in socializing with each other and preparing joint performances. Several informants also said that they better understood the situations and conditions of their respective friends, so they felt comfortable with each other. Even though there may still be uncomfortable situations, most of the culture shock has been overcome (Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022). The fantasy themes formed in the phases of culture shock form their own emotions, motifs, and meanings for USU PMM students (Adams, 2013).

4.4 Rhetorical Vision of the Nusantara Module Activities: Visiting Iconic Destinations in New Areas

Of the six fantasy themes formed, the fantasy about the Nusantara Module activities succeeded in creating a fantasy chain until the final stage, namely rhetorical vision. Rhetorical vision is a fantasy theme that has developed outside the group, thus creating a rhetorical community (Mutiaz, 2019; Prasanti & Indriani, 2018). In the USU PMM student community, several informants said that they liked exchanging stories about the Nusantara Module activities they experienced at USU with their PMM friends at other universities. Their friends also had similar experiences (Christin, 2018).

"If to tell a story on purpose, maybe there is not one. So, usually when my friend updates their status, I comment, so there is a chat. Usually, we discuss about Nusantara Module activities, such as telling stories about what destinations we are going to." (Informant 8, Interview 2024)

"I like to tell my friends at other universities that it is difficult for my lecturers to go to Lake Toba or Berastagi. My Nusantara Module activities were only carried out on campus and they were only giving us snacks. My friends were surprised to hear this, but it turns out there are also some groups that did not dare to go anywhere until the funds for the activity had been disbursed. Then, after the distribution had been disbursed, they only went to destinations that were close by. I think that only happens at USU." (Informant 12, Interview 2023)

The rhetorical vision of the Nusantara Module illustrates that the experience of the Nusantara Module in each university can be a similar story. Through dialogue exchanges, students create shared understandings and then form rhetorical communities (Shields & Preston, 1985).

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and analysis above, there are six fantasy themes along with symbolic cues that were formed within the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* student community at the Universitas Sumatera Utara during four phases of culture shock, namely:

1. Honeymoon Phase: Fantasy Theme about The *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka*'s Twibbon at the Universitas Sumatera Utara with the symbolic cue 'Redesign of Twibbon' and Fantasy Theme about Election of PMM Community's Leader and Committee at the Universitas Sumatera Utara with the symbolic cue 'Tribal Chief'.
2. Crisis Phase: Fantasy Theme about Departure with the symbolic cue 'Dormitory' and Fantasy Theme about Volunteer for the Universitas Sumatera Utara's Anniversary Event with the symbolic cue 'Unfair'.
3. Recovery Phase: Fantasy Theme about Nusantara Module Activities with the symbolic cue 'Lake Toba'.
4. Adaptation Phase: Fantasy Theme about Inbound Student Release Event for the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* Program, Universitas Sumatera Utara, with the symbolic cue 'Memories'.

One of the fantasy themes succeeds in making the fantasy chain reach the stage of rhetorical vision, namely when individuals outside the community know and also experience similar experiences. The rhetorical vision of the Nusantara Module activities is an experience shared by all students who take part in the PMM program. Visiting

iconic destinations in new areas is the most frequently shared thing. This rhetorical vision was formed during the recovery phase and then continued to be discussed until the students returned.

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