

Strategy Analysis of English Zone Implementation in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools in Preparation for Global-Communication

Novi Dwi Yuliani ^{a,1}, Pajrian Noor ^{b,2}, Muhammad Rifqy Rujani ^{c,3}, Niska Kamalia ^{d,4}

^{a c d} Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Kalimantan Selatan, Gambut, Indonesia

^b UIN Antasari Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin, Indonesia

¹ novideye24@gmail.com*; ² Fajrian.yzb@gmail.com; ³ rifqyjani@gmail.com

* corresponding author

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 24/12/2024

Revised: 8/1/2025

Accepted: 13/1/2025

Keywords:

Strategy

English Zone

Boarding School

Global Communication

ABSTRACT

Proficiency in English today is intended as a tool for effective communication on a global stage, necessitating an update to traditional strategies. This article aims to identify alternative strategies within the English Zone program at modern Islamic boarding schools to support students' preparation for global communication and used descriptive qualitative research methodology. Three main steps were employed to achieve this goal: (1) understanding the existing concepts and strategies of the English Zone implementation, (2) identifying challenges and obstacles during the program's implementation, and (3) formulating alternative strategies to enhance students' readiness for global communication through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The analysis methods applied include statistical and descriptive analysis. The findings of this study indicate that Foreign Language Debate Practice and Students' Discussion, with agreed-upon adjustments, are the alternative strategies within the English Zone program at modern Islamic boarding schools to help students prepare for the global communication era.

I. Introduction

The popularity of modern Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) in Indonesia is closely linked to their role in integrating general education curricula and modern knowledge, including technology and foreign language proficiency. Martapura, known as a city of Islamic students (santri), boasts numerous traditional and modern pesantren, including the Darul Hijrah Putera Islamic Boarding School. A key program at Darul Hijrah Putera is its mandatory foreign language program, which includes the English Zone. The Modern Islamic Boarding School Darul Hijrah for boys is one of the pioneers of modern Islamic boarding schools in Martapura. Since its establishment in 1993, the boarding school has recorded a student enrollment of 1,339 for the 2023/2024 academic year. Based on previous observations, one of the flagship programs that has attracted a lot of interest from the students is the Mandatory Foreign Language program, which includes the English Zone program.

The English Zone serves as a foundational strategy for improving English proficiency among students, creating an immersive environment where they can develop communication skills in a controlled setting. The "English Zone" is a concept or area that differs from surrounding areas due to its specific characteristics or purposes. The "English Zone" (EZ) is a teaching strategy employed in educational settings with the intention of improving students' English-speaking abilities and providing an immersive environment [1]. However, a more specific or detailed definition of the "English Zone" might depend on the particular context or source. The English Zone also can be defined as a designated area where participants are required to use English for communication, with assistance from program administrators. Immersion in real-world contexts where learners are compelled to use English regularly accelerates fluency development, particularly in speaking and listening [2]. The rules of the

English Zone mandate that anyone entering the zone must communicate in English, even if using simple words or sentences. Violators of these rules may face sanctions or penalties. The English Zone can be an effective tool for enhancing students' motivation to speak English. With the support of Darul Hijrah Putera's regulations requiring students to reside in the dormitories, the program can be fully implemented around the clock under the supervision of the boarding school's management. This program also fosters a more positive attitude towards learning English by addressing affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects [3].

To date, the use of English has not been directed towards the needs of global communication. The emphasis has primarily been on grammar and language structure with the goal of improving foreign language proficiency. It is important to note that global communication skills are not synonymous with foreign language skills. Foreign language skills refer to proficiency in one or more foreign languages. However, fluency in a language—whether it is a native or additional language—does not automatically equate to a high level of global communication skills. This is because the meaning of a message is not mechanically encoded and decoded through linguistic signals (words and grammar) alone, but requires the application of background knowledge and interpretation. When people do not share the same background knowledge, this can easily lead to different interpretations of meaning and misunderstandings.

The English Zone was established to improve students' ability to communicate in English, preparing them for academic and professional success. In alignment with this purpose, it can also serve as a platform to introduce students to the principles of Global Communication, ensuring they are equipped to engage meaningfully in an interconnected world. Global communication can be defined as the process of exchanging information and ideas across national borders using various channels and platforms, such as social media, language, migration, and work [4].

Chen emphasized the role of global communication is multifaceted, impacting cultural understanding, business practices, education, conflict resolution, and global citizenship [5]. It is essential for navigating the complexities of an interconnected world and addressing the challenges that arise from cultural diversity and globalization. Therefore, global communication is vital for the student in order to navigate an interconnected world and addressing the complexities of cultural diversity in the upcoming future.

To date, the use of English has not been directed towards the needs of global communication. The emphasis has primarily been on grammar and language structure with the goal of improving foreign language proficiency. It is important to note that global communication skills are not synonymous with foreign language skills. Foreign language skills refer to proficiency in one or more foreign languages. However, fluency in a language—whether it is a native or additional language—does not automatically equate to a high level of global communication skills. This is because the meaning of a message is not mechanically encoded and decoded through linguistic signals (words and grammar) alone, but requires the application of background knowledge and interpretation. When people do not share the same background knowledge, this can easily lead to different interpretations of meaning and misunderstandings.

As times change, focusing solely on speaking skills is no longer sufficient to meet the evolving challenges of global communication. Proficiency in English today is intended as a tool for effective communication on a global stage, necessitating an update to traditional strategies. Based on the aforementioned research, there is an initiative to conduct further research. Therefore, this research is carried out to formulate alternative strategies for the implementation of English Zone based on the evaluation of existing and ongoing strategies, as well as a more detailed analysis of the challenges faced. In this research, the concept and benefits of education policy research are applied. The research aims to uncover the current state and continuity of the English Zone implementation in government and non-government institutions. The research findings, interpretations, and conclusions are the responsibility of the researchers and do not represent the views of any other party. The English Zone implementation can be evaluated based on legal frameworks and regulations. In conclusion, this research aims to evaluate the existing and ongoing strategies of the English Zone implementation, formulate alternative strategies, and analyze the challenges faced in detail.

II. Method

The research will be conducted in three stages using data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, exploratory survey analysis, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This Research used descriptive qualitative research methodology. The first stage involves understanding the concept of English Zone application in Islamic boarding schools. During this stage, the researcher will conduct observations and interviews to comprehend how the English Zone program is implemented in the Islamic boarding school. The collected data will cover the program structure, teaching methods, and rules applied in the English Zone. The second stage involves analyzing the challenges of English Zone application. The researcher will conduct exploratory survey analysis to identify various challenges faced in the English Zone application. Data from students, managers, and teachers will be collected to reveal problems and obstacles, such as communication difficulties, lack of resources, or cultural barriers. The final stage is to formulate alternative strategies for implementing the English Zone to support global communication readiness. Based on the findings from the previous stages, researchers will conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with stakeholders to formulate alternative strategies. These strategies aim to enhance the effectiveness of the English Zone and ensure that students are prepared for global communication. The discussion will result in recommendations that can be implemented to improve and update the English Zone program.

The observation and interviews will be carried out intensively for three days, involving the modern Darul Hijrah Putra boarding school as a partner. The proposing lecturers will directly observe every activity to understand the strategies of the ongoing English Zone implementation. This includes teaching strategies and those used to implement the program. Interviews will also be conducted with relevant parties to obtain more accurate data. A survey questionnaire will be distributed in paper form, as students are not allowed to bring handphones. Three Focus Group Discussions (FGD) will be held, specifically in the sixth month, weeks three and four, as well as the first week of the seventh month, with the same participants. The FGD participants will consist of 11 individuals, including 2 proposing lecturers, 2 research assistants, 1 boarding school leader, 2 language managers, 2 language student leaders, and 2 head masters representatives from the English Zone. The first FGD will evaluate the implementation of the English Zone strategy based on the results of the observations and interviews, while the second FGD will map out the challenges and design strategies based on the survey analysis results and the third FGD will be held to discuss the alternative strategy in preparation of global communication. The data will be analyzed descriptively and statistically.

III. Results and Discussion

The result and discussion will be elaborated in three points based on the data found along the research:

A. *The Concept of English Zone Implementation at Darul Hijrah Islamic Boarding School*

Based on the research findings obtained through observation and interviews, the implementation of the English Zone at Darul Hijrah Islamic Boarding School aims to create an environment that fully supports the use of English as the primary medium of communication in daily interactions. As it is easier for an individual to learn English if they are in an environment where English is frequently used [6]. This is implemented through a mandatory English-speaking policy in various aspects of life for everyone within the boarding school, including students, staff, and teachers, both in formal settings such as classrooms and in non-formal settings like dormitories and other social areas.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your experience when you first joined the English Zone program at Darul Hijrah Putra?

Interviewee: Sure. I have been involved in the English Zone program since I first entered Darul Hijrah Putra. However, for the first six months, I was only involved in the preparation process. At that time, we were not yet required to apply English directly.

Interviewer: What did you do during the preparation period?

Interviewee: During the preparation period, there are several mandatory activities that we must take part in. The Language section management has prepared programs such as Dividing Vocabulary,

Conversation, and Public Speaking. These activities help us prepare the basics to start using English actively.

Interviewer: How will you apply English after the preparation period is finished?

Interviewee: After six months, we started to be required to use English in our daily activities. It is used alternately with Arabic, each for two weeks. So, for two full weeks, we only used English, then continued with two weeks using Arabic.

According to an interview with one of the respondents above, Darul Hijrah also has Arabic Weeks, during which all residents of the boarding school are required to speak Arabic. It was added that Arabic Weeks and the English Zone are alternated, with each program running for two weeks every month and continuing in rotation. The implementation of the English Zone is managed by a unit called Language Counseling, consisting of several teachers with specific skills who are responsible for overseeing and regulating the program. Learning English becomes more effective when done in a real and relevant context. An environment that provides ample opportunities to use English in real-life situations, such as talking with friends, attending classes, or reading English books, will enhance one's English skills [7].

According to the respondents, the English Zone was established not only to improve students' linguistic abilities but also to cultivate a global mindset through the habitual use of an international language [8]. The strategies employed include interactive learning methods such as group discussions, debates, and hands-on practice facilitated by teachers proficient in English. This implementation is integrated with English curriculum-based learning, supported by learning media such as textbooks, digital materials, and multimedia rooms designed to enrich students' knowledge of English culture and grammar.

To reinforce the concept, in order to ensure that all students are required to use English during the English Zone program, the administrators have implemented a punishment system, which they refer to as a "court." In this system, administrators call upon students who are caught speaking a language other than English and then impose penalties, such as memorizing vocabulary, picking up litter, or writing correct sentences in notebooks, among others. Punishments are believed to have positive effects on students, such as deterring them from making the same mistakes and providing them with opportunities to improve themselves [9].

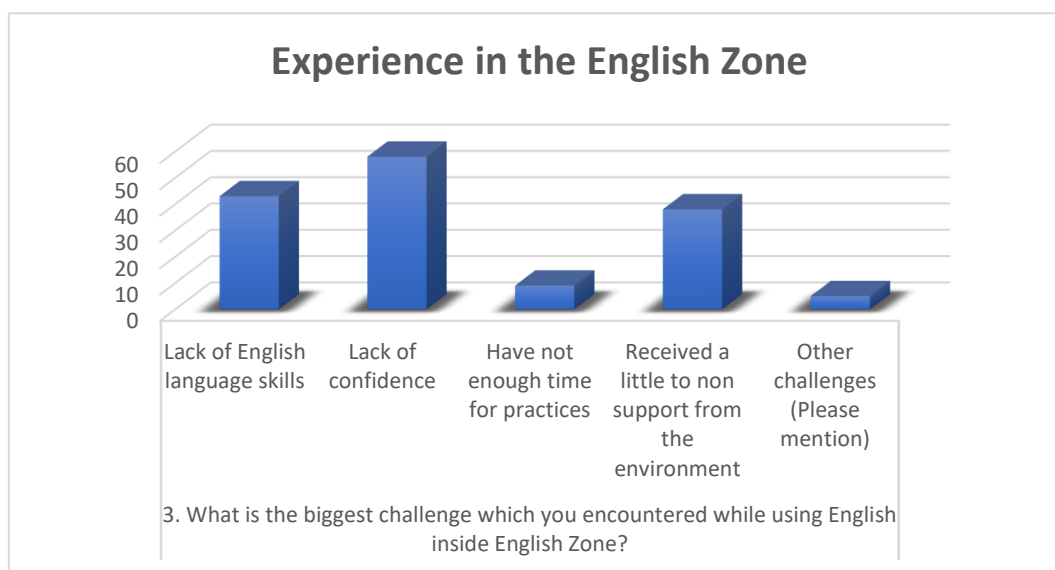
Several supporting activities are also included in the English Zone program, with the aim of providing a platform and opportunities for students to develop and practice their English skills, as well as to create an environment that fully supports the use of English as the primary medium of communication in daily interactions. These activities include: Vocabulary Distribution, Vocabulary Tests, Foreign Language Debate Practice, Public Speaking, Conversations, English Club, and Discussions (for grades 5-6).

B. Challenges and Obstacles in the Implementation of the English Zone

In this study, we used interviews and surveys to understand the challenges and obstacles in the implementation of the English Zone at Darul Hijrah Islamic Boarding School. While the concept of the English Zone holds great potential for developing students' communication skills, its implementation faces several hurdles. One of the main challenges is the disparity in initial English proficiency among the students. Many students come from backgrounds with minimal exposure to foreign languages, resulting in low confidence in speaking English and requiring longer adjustment periods and more intensive support.

Anxiety in using English, especially in speaking, can affect the learning process and students' success. This is supported by the theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). FLA is a situational anxiety perspective that arises in the context of using a foreign language [10].

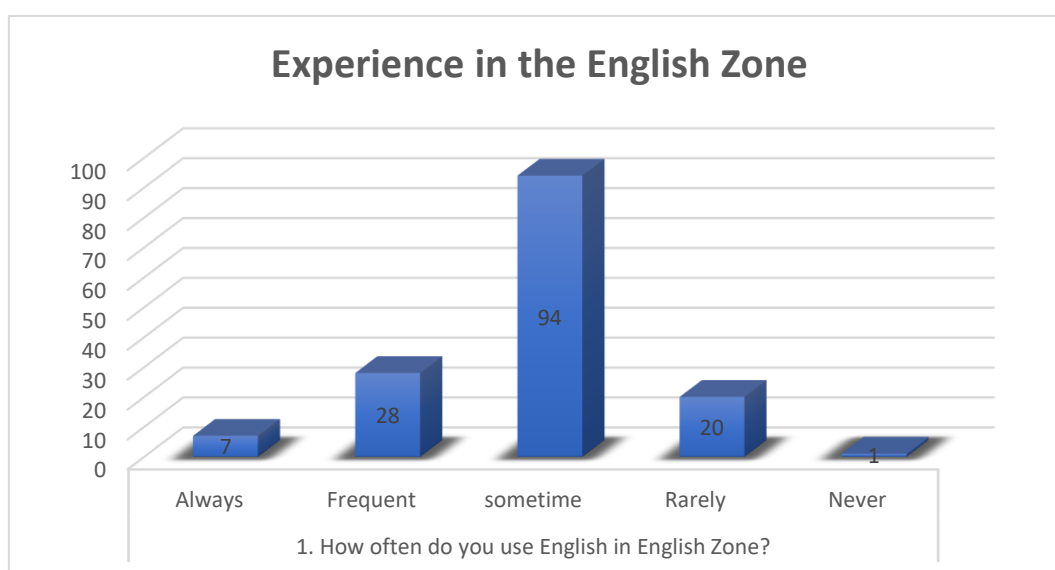
Figure 1. Survey results on students' obstacles in the English Zone.



From above, it is understood that a lack of confidence was chosen as the primary reason hindering students from using English in their daily conversations, followed by the feeling of "Lack of English Language Skill" among the students.

This issue leads to another challenge, as acknowledged by several interview respondents, who mentioned that some students admitted to being reluctant to use English because many of their peers could not understand them when they spoke in English. As a result, they often had to switch to Arabic or Indonesian to ensure their peers could understand what they were trying to say. This situation leads many of them to prefer using Arabic or Indonesian, as shown in the survey results in the following graph.

Figure 2. Survey results on the ratio of students using English.



In addition, the limited number of teachers who are truly competent and certified in English language instruction hinders the consistency and quality of learning. Another obstacle is the lack of up-to-date language learning resources, both in terms of reading materials and educational technology. Learning theory also explains that education is a process of interaction between students, educators, and learning resources [11]. Therefore, the selection of relevant learning resources becomes an important factor that can help students learn more effectively. Regardless of their form, relevant learning resources must align with the learning material, students' ability levels, and learning objectives. This ensures that these resources provide maximum benefit in the teaching and learning process [11].

On the other hand, monitoring students' compliance with the mandatory language rules also presents a significant challenge, as the number of students to be monitored far exceeds the number of supervisors.

C. Formulation of Alternative Strategies for the Implementation of the English Zone to Support Global Communication Readiness

The process of formulating strategies for the implementation of the English Zone to support students' readiness for global communication was conducted through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving a research team and seven teachers who were deemed to play a significant role in the development and implementation of the English Zone program at Darul Hijrah Islamic Boarding School. The discussion centered on the theme "Alternative Strategies for the Implementation of the English Zone to Support Students' Preparedness for Global Communication." Questions were formulated based on the data gathered during interviews, observations, and survey collection.

From the in-depth discussion conducted by the research team and the teachers, several conclusions can be drawn:

- a. The English Zone has significant potential to help students prepare for the era of global communication.
- b. Despite this potential, its implementation requires careful attention and oversight to ensure that the English Zone can have a substantial positive impact on students' readiness for global communication.
- c. Among the activities already implemented in the English Zone, foreign language debate practice and discussions have the greatest potential to support students' preparedness for the global communication era.
- d. Foreign language debate practice and discussions are proposed as alternative strategies within the English Zone to effectively address the challenges of the global communication era.

From the conclusions drawn, it can be understood that the implementation of the English Zone at Darul Hijrah Islamic Boarding School is considered to have potential for supporting students' development in preparation for the era of global communication. However, during the discussions regarding the challenges and obstacles identified through interviews, observations, and survey data, participants recognized that the execution of the English Zone still requires intensive attention and oversight to positively impact student development.

In the in-depth discussions concerning the activities implemented in the English Zone program, participants agreed to focus on two activities deemed to have the greatest potential as alternative strategies for addressing global communication challenges: 1) foreign language debate practice and 2) Students discussions.

Participants agreed to make several adjustments to the implementation concept of these two activities to better prepare students for global communication. For the foreign language debate practice, intensive training will focus on speaking skills aimed at enhancing communication abilities such as clarity, politeness, and timeliness in speech [12]. With the structured nature of debates, this format is seen as a way to encourage students to think calmly, critically, and solution-oriented while evaluating opposing arguments. Debates are also regarded as an effective learning method [13]. Therefore, adjustments will be made to the debate topics, with participants agreeing to include current global issues. This aims to broaden students' perspectives and ensure they stay updated with

contemporary developments. In this regard, trainers will provide students with internet access to facilitate critical reading, research, and case-building related to the debate topics.

Meanwhile for the students' discussions, which involve more participants than foreign language debate practice, adjustments will also be made to the themes of the discussions. In the future, students will be asked to discuss cases, events, and popular issues currently unfolding. The hope is that this will foster openness in exchanging views [14], enhance cultural awareness [15], and increase understanding of differences in values and norms.

IV. Conclusion

This research aimed to explore three key aspects related to the implementation of the English Zone at Darul Hijrah Islamic Boarding School: 1) The concept of the English Zone, 2) The challenges and obstacles encountered during its implementation, and 3) The formulation of alternative strategies to enhance students' readiness for global communication. The study employed a two-phase approach, beginning with interviews, observations, and additional interviews to gather comprehensive data. The insights gained from the first phase informed the topics and questions for the subsequent focus group discussion (FGD). The findings indicate that the English Zone is well-positioned to support students in preparing for global communication, offering a variety of activities that contribute positively to their linguistic development. However, several challenges hinder its effectiveness, including anxiety stemming from disparities in initial English proficiency, reluctance to use English, insufficient access to updated learning resources, and the imbalance between the number of students and supervisors. During the FGD, participants identified foreign language debate practice and student discussions as two activities with significant potential to address these challenges and enhance global communication readiness. These strategies highlight the importance of engaging students in practical and interactive language use, ultimately fostering a more effective learning environment.

Acknowledgment

Thank you to the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology which has provided grant funds in the National Competitive Research Program, Affirmation Beginner Lecturer Research, with contract number: 113/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024, to LLDIKTI XI, LPPM *Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Kalimantan Selatan*, and other involved parties who have supported the implementation of the research

References

- [1] M. S. Setyowati, "Students' Perception Toward English Zone in English Study Program of IAIN Curup," *Journal of English Education and Teaching (JEET)*, 2019.
- [2] C. Vallejo, "Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education, by Ofelia García and Li Wei," *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 85–95, Mar. 2018, doi: 10.5565/rev/jtl3.764.
- [3] N. D. Yuliani, L. Najmiah, B. Hamdani, and B. W. Pratolo, "EFL Students' Attitude Toward English Language Learning," *Journey: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 82–91, 2023, doi: 10.33503/journey.v6i1.2590.
- [4] D. D. Malik, "Pendekatan Komunikasi Internasional," 2017.
- [5] G.-M. Chen, "DigitalCommons@URI DigitalCommons@URI Communication Studies Faculty Publications Communication Studies 2005 A Model of Global Communication Competence A Model of Global Communication Competence," 2005. [Online]. Available: <http://www.wdw.chinamediaresearch.net/index.php/back->

- issues?id=42Availableat:<http://www.wwdw.chinamediaresearch.net/index.php/back-issues?id=42>
- [6] S. W. Hasibuan and R. U. Lubis, “Peningkatan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris Melalui Pengenalan Lingkungan Sekolah Kepada Siswa SDN Percontohan Panyabungan Increasing English Vocabulary Through Introduction of School Environment To SDN Percontohan Students,” *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Sains dan Teknologi*, vol. 2, no. 1.
- [7] K. Tauhid and ; | Patiyasa Lubis, “Pentingnya Menguasai Bahasa Inggris dan Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Kemampuan Berbahasa Inggris,” 2024.
- [8] R. A. Prayoga, K. Pusat, P. Strategi, D. Kebahasaan, K. Pendidikan, and D. Kebudayaan, “Pola Pikir Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris Pada Masyarakat Perkotaan di Jabodetabek,” 2019.
- [9] in Romli and H. Khotimah, “Pemberian Hukuman Di Dunia Pendidikan Perspektif Islam (Didikan Vis-A-Vis Hak Asasi Manusia),” *JIE : Journal of Islamic Education*, vol. 9, 2023, doi: 10.18860.
- [10] P. Miyondri, “Analisis Kecemasan Siswa SMP dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Prancis Sebagai Bahasa Asing,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 131–142, Jun. 2023, doi: 10.17509/bs_jpbsp.v23i1.59883.
- [11] W. Qori Fatima, L. Khairunisa, D. Chandra Priatna, B. Prihatminingtyas, and U. Tribhuwana Tunggadewi Malang, “Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Melalui Media Game Pada Panti Asuhan Al Maun Di Desa Ngajum,” *Seminar Nasional Sistem Informasi*, 2019.
- [12] O. Hargie, *Skilled Interpersonal Communication: Research, Theory and Practice*. 2021. doi: 10.4324/9781003182269.
- [13] J. Bellon, “A Research-Based Justification for Debate Across the Curriculum,” *Argumentation and Advocacy*, vol. 36, pp. 161–173, Dec. 2000, doi: 10.1080/00028533.2000.11951646.
- [14] B. Genc and E. Bada, “Culture In Language Learning And Teaching,” 2005.
- [15] D. Deardorff, “The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States,” *Journal of Studies in International Education - J STUD INT EDUC*, vol. 10, pp. 241–266, Sep. 2006, doi: 10.1177/1028315306287002.