

Indonesian EFL Teachers' Intercultural Communicative Competence

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Abstract. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is one amongst the influential prerequisites to individuals living in multicultural societies by allowing us to prevent issues brought about by diverse cultural backgrounds and to effectively and properly interface with others. This research focused on investigating Indonesian EFL teachers' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as their knowledge and belief about other cultures is crucial to promote students' ICC. Using a quantitative method by employing an on-line questionnaire, the result of this study explained that moderate levels of ICC were possessed by the participants. Mean score of attitudes dimension was found high while the mean scores of knowledge, skills, and awareness dimension were respectively moderate with knowledge dimension was the lowest. It was also revealed that 68% of the respondents have never experienced any cross-cultural encounter with people from abroad. These findings and the fact that Indonesia is a multicultural country potentially contribute to the rank scores of each dimension underlying their ICC. As regards, this research suggested that in classroom activities, Indonesian EFL teachers apply culturally responsive teaching, introduce intercultural teaching and English varieties, as well as having a postmodern perspective in English teaching.

Keywords: World Englishes, Intercultural Communicative Competence

1 Introduction

Living in diverse cultural societies makes Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) one of the prerequisites that assist us with managing social contrasts. The term ICC was first brought about into discussion in English Language Teaching (ELT) context [1] by defining that ICC as an individuals' capability to effectively and properly interface with each other with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, in foreign language context, an impressive level of ICC is required. Liddicoat and Scarino [2] pointed out that depending solely on communicative competence is inadequate to perform effective communication in international context. Thus, ICC should also be considered.

Furthermore, the role of English as an International Language (EIL) has prompted a logical consequence that the teaching of English must inevitably be accompanied by the formation of ICC as variations of English have been emerging to accommodate the cultural needs of the English speakers around the world. In Asian context, English has shifted its role, from mostly foreign language to English as a lingua franca (ELF). With the rich multicultural and multilingual background of Asian users of English who routinely use English as a lingua franca, ICC is an inevitable competence for English users in Asia. This condition demands that the goal

of the teaching of English, at least in Indonesia, should no longer primarily be about having native-like English [3]. It should also be completed with the ability to understand and to communicate messages from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences allow misunderstandings to occur in communication given that a message from one culture may lead to different interpretations by people from different cultures. For this reason, the role of foreign language teachers, in this case English as a foreign language, is very important because teachers can provide understanding and help students in forming cross-cultural competence [4][5][6].

In the Indonesian context, Madya [7] argued that Indonesian students have naturally and nationally been involved with intercultural language learning activities because of multiculturalism that the country has. However, a study by Morganna et al. [8] found that most Indonesian English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers still have a modernist perspective and there are just few of them who have a postmodernist perspective. It implies that only few of the teachers who see the objective of EFL learning is to equip students with knowledge and skills to communicate with all global citizens of different cultures since most of the teachers' objective is still about guiding students to gain native-speaker-like mastery in English. As the modernism perspective seems to overlook the intercultural point of view in its perspective, postmodernism takes into account the ICC. It is in response to the status of English in EFL context that has been expanding into EIL and even a lingua franca in Asian context. Gunantar [9] discovered that even though intercultural behaviours and communications are preceded in several parts of textbooks, there is no example of comparison between native English cultures and local cultures. It seems that ICC is put aside since the Indonesian government concerns much on local wisdoms or cultures. Even though communicative competence is much promoted in tasks in EFL textbooks, ICC has not been advocated [10].

Over and above that, research in this area appears to be disregarded. There are only extremely restricted studies which can be uncovered identified with Indonesian EFL teachers' ICC. Consequently, this study determined to investigate Indonesian EFL teachers' ICC.

2 Research Method

The exploration of Indonesian EFL teachers' ICC in this study was aimed to find out the level of the teachers' ICC as it is believed that teachers indeed have an essential role in developing ICC in the EFL teaching context. Saricoban and Oz [6] argued that foreign language teachers, especially English, need to retain confident level of ICC to develop their students' ICC. The teachers' ICC is believed to facilitate teachers in forming, promoting, and performing culturally-bound instructional activities [5] since teachers' motivation in advocating students' ICC is believed to be in a positive correlation with their familiarity with the culture of the target languages they teach [4].

A cross-sectional survey Creswell [11] using a questionnaire adopted from the last section of the questionnaire from Zhou [5] was employed to reach the objective of this study. Employing nonprobability sampling with a snowballing approach [11], the data was collected once the researcher had made the questionnaire available to the participants using Google Form whose link was distributed via Whatsapp. Thus, large numbers of participants coming from diverse geographical areas in Indonesia can participate in the study in a relatively short period of time.

The survey was opened on March 3, 2021 and closed on March 18, 2021. Toward the end, there were 122 responses ready to be analyzed using descriptive statistics. Before that, the researcher classified ICC into 3 levels. The detailed criteria of ICC can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria of Intercultural Communicative Competence

ICC Level	Mean Scale
High	3.35 - 5
Moderate	1.68 – 3.34
Low	0 – 1.67

This study presented Cronbach's Alpha value for instrument reliability. The result can be shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics of Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.922	20

A result of .922 signified an ideal reliability value. Zhou [5] whose result was .96, it also signified that the items were exceptionally reliable. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied to determine the validity. As result, the significance value of each item (20 items) was $.000 < .05$ and of each item was more than the r table, thus signifying validity.

3 Finding and Discussion

A total of 122 EFL teachers across Indonesia took part in the survey by filling out the six-point Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 20 items adapted [5]. The questionnaire embraced four dimensions of ICC namely knowledge (item number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), attitudes (item number 6, 7, 8, 9), skills (item number 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16), and awareness (item number 17, 18, 19, 20). The six-point Likert scale ranged from not at all (0) to very high (5). From the 122 responses collected, 2 responses cannot be used since the participants do not share the characteristic needed, thus the analyzed data were derived from 120 participants.

Based on the result of the survey, the overall dimensions' mean score derived from the questionnaire's responses was considered as moderate ($M = 3.08$). It means that the EFL teachers in Indonesia have a moderate level of ICC. Scrutinizing further, it was found out that the participants' mean score on attitude dimension were the highest which was 3.52 while mean score for knowledge, skills, and awareness were moderate while their mean score was 2.65, 3.13, and 3.10 respectively (Table 3).

Table 3. Mean Score of The Four Dimensions of ICC

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Agreement Level
Knowledge	2.65	.979	Moderate
Attitude	3.52	.929	High
Skills	3.13	.947	Moderate
Awareness	3.10	.881	Moderate
Total	3.08	.983	Moderate

From 120 participants, 2 participants were in low level (2%), 78 participants were in moderate level (65%), and 40 participants were in high level (33%). The detailed percentage of participants ICC level is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Frequency of ICC Level in Percent

ICC Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	2	2%
Moderate	78	65%
High	40	33%
<i>Total</i>	120	100%

As to ICC dimensions, this finding in some extent was similar to Zhou [5] in that the mean score of the attitudes dimension was the highest while knowledge's in the lowest. A possible explanation that can be underlined might relate to the multicultural and multilingual nature of Indonesia. The heterogeneous trait has made Indonesians really familiar with cultural diversities and how to negotiate among different cultures. Tolerance and understanding have always been fundamental values emphasized in every education level in Indonesia. Thus, intercultural competence within Indonesian heterogenous context should be nothing new. Simpson [12] acknowledged that Indonesia is highly successful in creating national identity through the use of Bahasa Indonesia as a means of inter-ethnic communication which does not necessarily displace the use of any regional or minority languages. This practice should be a good model for English as a lingua franca.

The multicultural background of Indonesia could possibly contribute to the high mean score on the attitude dimension. However, the fact that only 68% of the respondents have never encountered cross-culture experience with people from abroad triggers another postulation leading to the low mean score of the knowledge dimension. Intercultural experience is believed to have a compelling contribution to the formation of an individual's intercultural communicative competence. Therefore, the absence of knowledge on culture and of comprehension of how interaction occurred in one's own culture and interlocutors potentially leads to the insufficient knowledge dimension constructing intercultural competence.

Both the findings in this study Zhou [5] lead to an inquisitiveness if knowledge of ICC is underplayed owing to the fact that when individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact, they, on numerous occasions, rely upon their perception of their own culture [1][6]. Western culture appears to be awfully intriguing and its acceptance turns out to be indispensable for numerous Indonesians' day-to-day existence [13]. This situation should not happen when intercultural knowledge is being introduced during the language teaching-learning process. Intercultural language learning highlights the fundamental importance of socio-cultural aspects in language learning that cannot be reached by communicative approach [14]. Technically, principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) can be employed to put intercultural language learning concepts into practice. defined CRT as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspective of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" [15].

On that account, a primary concern in teaching culture should be on our own and then the target culture. emphasized that encouraging students to comprehend the intention of action and reaction that in the manner of speakers from different languages do should be the goal of teaching culture through teaching foreign languages. As a result, to be able to grasp similarities and differences and to conserve the relationship between their own culture and others' rather than mimic must be the students' main necessity [1]. On top of that, the intercultural context in English teaching must integrate cultural relativism as a major guideline. Cultures can be elaborate in relationship to innumerable perspectives, such as qualities and traditions [16]. An ethnocentric perspective, which unfairly passes judgment on particular cultures, is not worthy to be owned [17].

Furthermore, Byram [1] indicated that attitudes are the prerequisite for effective intercultural communication. The relation of the attitudes with other dimensions is not simply as cause and effect frequently assumed [1]. In respect of language teaching, ICC is individuals' ability to comprehend as well interact with others from different cultural backgrounds using their attitudes, cultural knowledge, and skill [18]. Besides, Fantini [19] expressed that awareness becomes significant since it gives impact to other ICC dimensions. In this manner, with respect to these ideas, ICC dimensions are knowledge, skill, attitude as well as intercultural awareness. It can be asserted that every ICC dimension is associated and they have a similar amount of significance.

Contended that in developing students ICC [6], English teachers ought to have an impressive level of ICC. The teachers' ICC can guide them out to arrange, facilitate, and participate in classroom activities [5]. At the point when teachers are teaching foreign languages and they are more advisable or aware with culture, the more enthusiastic they are to develop students' ICC [4]. Unfortunately, it seems that numerous Indonesian EFL teachers constantly used a modernist perspective Morganna [8] by believing that the goal of language teaching is to be native-like, both cultural and linguistic competence-wise. That is in accordance with obviousness that there still are a few people who show a tendency to mimic the native speakers of language that they learn while they ought not need to.

4 Conclusion

The goal of foreign language teaching should not be merely to encourage students to have native-like competence. Additionally promoting their intercultural competence is crucial to help them perform effective and proper communication while interacting with others from various language and cultural backgrounds. Subsequently, ICC is truly required and teachers without a doubt play a fundamental part in developing students' ICC. Therefore, the objective of this recent study is to investigate the ICC of EFL teachers in Indonesia with an expectation that the research results can contribute to providing understanding of intercultural issues and help students in forming cross-cultural competence. It can be learnt from the finding of this study that the EFL teachers have moderate levels of ICC. From 120 participants, 2 participants were in low level (2%), 78 participants were in moderate level (65%), and 40 participants were in high level (33%). The finding additionally uncovered that participants' mean score in the attitude dimension was higher than the other three measurements and the knowledge dimension had the lowest mean score. In other words, they already had good attitude toward intercultural phenomena. It is in line with Madya [7] who argued that Indonesian students have naturally and nationally been involved with intercultural language learning activities because of multiculturalism that the country has. However, the knowledge, skills, and awareness of ICC dimensions of the teachers needs to be improved.

The improvement of the EFL teachers' ICC will affect their approach as well as their goal in teaching the language. Teaching English should no longer be seen as copying the native speakers' language and culture, but it should be seen as teaching a means of communication to enable people around the world to interact and express themselves, tagging along their cultures and identities. Therefore, an intercultural language learning approach should be promoted in EFL classrooms in Indonesia, not only to develop the students' ICC but also to give a more meaningful direction for the EFL teachers that the goal of English teaching should focus more on the intelligibility instead of being native-like.

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