RESPONSES TO INTERCULTURAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES AMONG INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract: Since Intercultural Communicative Competence was introduced, there have been multiple studies conducted to do research on how the competence can potentially improve not only students' knowledge and skills at using the foreign language, but also students' attitudinal development towards the culture of the foreign language. The present study explores how Intercultural Communicative Competence is implemented in Indonesian universities in EFL courses. Via a qualitative multiple case studies, forty-two students' responses towards activities and personal changes after attending the course were elicited through interview surveys. The iterative data analyses involved data condensation, data display, data verification and conclusion. It can be found from the data that cultural sharing with discussion along with reflection has been prevalent at the classroom activities despite the debate of its effectiveness. It was quite striking that the students expressed their changes of attitudes towards other foreign cultures upon the engagement of the course. This study proposes the most-suited-contextualized teaching activities for the competence in Indonesian context and strives to enrich phenomena of intercultural teaching and learning in the typical EFL contexts. All of these to support that there is no one-fit-all contexts in promoting Intercultural Communicative Competence.
Keywords: *Intercultural communicative competence; students' responses; intercultural sharing experience, Indonesian EFL context.*

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural education in English as a Foreign Language has been implemented in Indonesia with multiple interpretations; this situation is caused by the absence of syllabus or curriculum how EFL teaching and learning is clearly implemented. On the macro level, the policy makers seem to worry about the influence of state ideology via foreign languages education (Munandar & Newton, 2021). Likewise, on the meso level, some claim that some programs have been supported by the Independent Curriculum; one of them is with the Project of Strengthening Profile of Students with *Pancasila* as a national state ideology or *Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Hartono et al., 2023). This program has been enacted as the mainstreaming platform to promote the understanding of global diversity even though it seems to focus exclusively on the complexity of multiculturalism and multilingualism of Indonesia (Mailin et al., 2023). As a result, the variety of intercultural teaching and learning has

subsequently implicated in different forms and models being promoted in EFL classroom teaching where each institution has its own perspective and point of views implicating the quality of Intercultural EFL Pedagogy on its policy.

On micro level, an individual teacher's belief about the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the nature of culture have also impacted on the Intercultural EFL Pedagogy in real classroom teaching (Aulia, 2022). In turn, learners will be overwhelmed by how a target language is ideally learned in simultaneity with its culture in order to achieve an optimal Intercultural Communicative Competence. The over-reliance on teachers would not ensure the quality of intercultural education (Hartono et al., 2023). Still, the practice depends on the decision upon teachers in classroom teaching. It is evident that this situation implicates inconsistencies between policy making and practices (Raihani, 2018).

This situation is exacerbated with the limitation of relevant references at EFL classroom teachings

including textbooks. Imported or national-made textbooks were available; yet not all EFL teachers are able to use it as a designer of the intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be adjusted with the context of classroom and the personalised learning of each student (Ning & Soekarno, 2024). The EFL teachers should have studied and discussed the best way to implement Intercultural EFL pedagogy through scientific methods alongside their own individual teacher belief shaped by own experiences, knowledge, understandings, values, and personal attitudes (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2024). Even with constraints and limitation of resources, the EFL teachers have played a key role in implementing intercultural education despite resource limitation.

Furthermore, the void of clear teaching instruction and procedure of Intercultural EFL Pedagogy is even embedded in the teachers' high-stake professional identity. There is still ambivalence and tension upon teachers' identity with either positive or negative impacts raised by the pedagogy (Dervin et al., 2020). On the one hand, some believe in the pedagogy would reduce nationalism of Indonesian students' nationalism with being exposed by foreign cultures. On the other hand, some take stance on becoming "a modern global citizen" is one of the ways to accelerate the national development. The ambivalence may be caused by the understanding of culture through the lens of essentialism where culture is still limited to physical entity such as geographical factor, fixated membership, and typical characters of the members (Holliday, 2021). Indeed, culture is always inextricably with identity along with its social forces, but it can be highly complex, dynamic, and diverse or even conflicted (Holmes & Corbett, 2022). In fact, the intercultural EFL pedagogy can be implemented by respecting other cultures and still holding the national and the local cultures' values with the multingual context and multicultural nature of Indonesia (Liddicoat, 2020b). The nature of the Indonesian society should be viewed as a strength rather than a weakness in the promotion of Intercultural EFL Pedagogy (X).

As part of a larger study in the Indonesian EFL contexts, the present study endeavours to follow up the findings that the cultural sharing has been predominantly implemented in Intercultural EFL Pedagogy in multiple names such as intercultural education, cross cultural communication, and intercultural English teaching and learning. The contexts have represented that the foreign languages have been taught along with their cultures such as American, European, Australian, as well as Asian cultures. As what Dervin and Simpson (2019) claimed that the intercultural pedagogy is neither focused on western nor eastern cultures, it stems from a groundwork that learning a foreign language is never exclusively independent of its culture. It depends on the context, emotion, interlocutor, and other socio-cultural relations that build the third space (Holliday, 2022), which always affect the effectiveness of communication at an intercultural encounter.

All of these appear due to the fact that the integration of intercultural education into EFL teaching (henceforth called Intercultural EFL Pedagogy or Intercultural Teaching Learning of English) has resorted to cultural sharing, or other activities such as group work or pair work (Aryadi et al., 2020), based on either an institutional or an individual teacher's shared understanding.

The present study, however, accentuates on the ways of intercultural teaching and learning activities being implemented in actual EFL contexts. As an innovative language teaching and learning approach, Intercultural EFL pedagogy must include the perspective of learners in the form of their responses so that there is an interconnection between the learners' and the teachers' beliefs towards the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the nature of culture, leading to the practice of ideal Intercultural Teaching Learning of English. In other words, understanding student responses is crucial for tailoring effective intercultural teaching strategies in diverse EFL contexts (Liddicoat, 2020a). This gap is becoming central to investigate the effectiveness of the cultural sharing. The study is conducted to answer the research question: How do the students respond towards the intercultural teaching and learning activities in their university classrooms?

There are varied perspectives toward the ideal way of implementing Intercultural Teaching and Learning activities in foreign languages teaching especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The following sub-headings will be focused on the underlying theories of Intercultural EFL pedagogy and its connection with Intercultural Communicative Competence. Then, the literature review will end with varied perspectives to understand interculturality in languages education. There are varied perspectives of Intercultural Teaching and Learning of English. First of all,

Liddicoat (2022) offered five principles through which the intercultural pedagogy can be

implemented: active construction; making connections; social interaction with others; reflection on different experience and perception; and responsibility to respect. All of these aspects must be considered as syntaxes embedded within all teaching and learning activities. The EFL teachers must be able to use these five principles as the framework for English language teaching and learning activities in classroom with learners.

Elsewhere, Humphreys and Baker (2021) suggested some stages from the basic to the more conceptual understanding of culture teaching and languages in classroom, though there are no specific methods of learning should be promoted; it is grounded from deeper cognitive levels from understanding, analysing, to reflecting. The activites are predominantly discussion and sharing experiences via three stages, namely basic cultural awareness, advanced cultural awareness, and intercultural awareness. At the basic, the intercultural teaching and learning activities target the capability of articulating one's own culture, whereby he or she can understand the similarities and differences between his/her own culture and other cultures. On the next level, students are expected to be able to understand the dynamic and fluidity in cultural comparison. And finally, the most complex one is that the pedagogy is aimed at equipping students with skills at adaptation and negotiation with perspectives and practices of other cultures. The pedagogy is potential to ensure the readiness of future students to have overseas education from their own countries (Fantini, 2020).

Meanwhile, Moloney et al. (2020) posit three stages of promoting Intercultural EFL Pedagogy where experience and reflection are the central. They propose iterative three cycles of process: using language, making linguistic connections, and moving between cultures. Using the language includes learning the language and the learners strive to improve their linguistic competences. Then, the learners attempt to build linguistic connections at any levels between their first language and the target language by learning socio-cultural aspects influencing the target language use. Once the targeted capability has been reached gradually, the learners start to negotiate, to some extent, with across identities and enact some roles of being the other as the proficient speaker of the foreign language or mediate across cultures (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2021). It is inevitable that they would enact a different role as another person from the roles in their daily lives as having a language indicates having a new identity (Kramsch & Zhu, 2020).

Byram (2020) contends that all aspects of Intercultural Communicative Competence can be acquired through foreign language education that lies at *Politische Bildung* or political education, which is more complex and deeper, enabling foreign language students to have knowledge about other cultures, to reflect on social norms of other cultures, and to instil learners some values for engaging with people from other cultures. The proposed citizenship education never separates foreign languages education; they work in tandem with to empower young generation in the achievement of intercultural competence (Byram & Golubeva, 2020). From the Indonesian curriculum, the proposed method seems to have been implemented through multiple ways in the Indonesian context not only from foreign languages education but also other subjects such as religion education, civic education, and others.

Unfortunately, the above perspective seems to have left the core elements of Intercultural Communicative Competence. The intercultural approach should involve holistically knowledge of other cultures, intercultural attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction (Byram, 1997).

More interestingly, Corbett (2022) contended that Intercultural Communicative Competence only can bring impact on one's intercultural development when critical analyses and reflection are salient. They can be typically accommodated by observation, interview, discussion, and reflection (Barrow, 2021). Then, all of these can be optimised by other encounters such as an ethnographic activities or interaction or engagement via telecollaboration (Toscu & Erten, 2020), that managed by an interculturally-speaker teacher who has some sorts of research skills and intercultural experiences .

In recent studies in Indonesia, Nindya, Utami, and Khoiri (2022) revealed a number of studies showing that EFL teachers are not well-prepared to integrate intercultural teaching in EFL classrooms. It becomes crucial to find out the possible causes of their unpreparedness to integrate intercultural teaching in EFL lessons. Not yet being implemented due to limited time, curriculum, and students' different proficiency.

Another study from Setiawan (2023) explicated the teachers' perspectives that the languages learning that involved local contexts in terms of local languages and cultures would bring positive impacts on the students' English language teaching and learning leading to the improved Intercultural Communicative Competence. The major finding is

not merely about the teaching and learning resources, yet the ways how the teachers tried to build relationship between the texts and the students' life experiences. It was found through the study conducted by Munandar and Newton (2021) that the determining factor is teachers as the agency who have been interacting between his/her own interculturality (the interplay between his/her own understanding and experiences about language, culture, and language learning), student learning needs, and contextual limitations. In most recent study, Mahaputri, Misdi, Yusuf, and Aziz (2024) have conducted a study confirming a close connection between Intercultural Communicative Competence and critical thinking of students through problem-based learning model via the exposure of cultural diversity issues in classroom teachings.

With all above, it is evident that Intercultural EFL Pedagogy has insightful goals not only communicative abilities and knowledge but also the broadened individual's views about the world impacting on attitudes (Sercu, 2023). As a result, there is a balanced status between the importance of English along with its culture and the local languages together with local cultures in consideration of multilingual and multicultural realities of students' identities in Indonesian EFL contexts (Mailin, Dalimunthe, & Zein, 2023). These are expected to lead to, not limited to, students' abilities of interaction, negotiation, and adaptation with other cultures. These include respecting own cultural values and other cultures simultaneously. This orientation must be designed comprehensively that involves a combination between formal knowledge and experiential knowledge (Deardorff, 2020), and reflexivity in the form of sharing and discussion for students (Matthews, 2020). There is little research in investigating the students' responses on what they perceive their Intercultural Teaching Learning of English classrooms. The present study is intended to explore the presence of those elements in the designated EFL teaching contexts.

METHOD

The study is qualitative in nature with multiple case study design with postmodernist philosophical perspective (Holliday & MacDonald, 2020). It involved forty-two students from three universities representing Indonesia (Eastern, western, and central regions). They have been selected due to their programs of Intercultural EFL Pedagogy where they learn English and cultures simultaneously.

There were 42 university student participants from three universities involved from the selected universities. The sampling strategy used a purposive sampling as the participants were selected based on their enrollment in intercultural EFL pedagogy courses. The number of participants was regarded low, but it indicated the real situation as the course was listed as an elective course. In other words, the students were selected due to the natural setting of their own studies.

The interview survey consisted of four questions: 1. What are you doing usually in your classroom activities? 2. What knowledge and skills do you learn? 3. How do you apply such knowledge and skills? And 4. What changes have you felt?

The interviews survey adopted a narrative inquiry (Harbon & Shen, 2015) that explores students' life stories indicating the elements of Intercultural Communicative Competence and their own understandings about cultures, language, and language learning . Via this approach, phenomena, actions, people, and metaphors were elicited and able to illustrate the clearer images of intercultural teaching and learning at Indonesian EFL contexts at university level.

The interview survey took maximum 60 minutes per participant in consideration of fatigue and boredom with repetitive answers. The interview survey used English with some mixtures of Bahasa Indonesia. It was assisted by voice recorder and the recording was then transcribed and placed into one file. The data in Bahasa Indonesia were then translated literally in English.

Afterwards, for data analyses, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes from the transcribed interviews (Mezmir, 2020). The data were firstly condensed by highlighting the emerging free codes through questions, keywords, and probable interesting themes as first snapshop of thematic analysis. The data were then displayed to capture patterns, relationships, clustering, or a building logical and axial chain among the codes in the form a matrix table or a networking diagram. Next, the data were stipulated to be themes after having been verified by checking the representativenesses or commonality of the embedded categories within the emerging themes. And finally, the themes were triangulated across participants.

Prior to concluding the result, the data have undergone repetitive recycled analyses from the above stages (condensation, display, verification, and conclusion). The main themes will be presented and discussed in the following sub-

headings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It can be surmised from the data that the cultural sharing has been predominantly used in most of Intercultural Teaching Learning of English classrooms. The study has found that the cultural sharing, despite its debatable effectiveness, has been conducted by the university teachers/lecturers who have engaged and experienced lengthy engagement and interaction with the cultures of target languages via formal (master or doctoral degree) and non-formal educations (training or conference or other capacity building activities) (Almeida et al., 2016). For practical reason, only a few representative extracts are presented because the other typical extracts have indicated the same theme.

Cultural sharing experiences, discussion, and reflection

First and foremost, the present study has associated the cultural sharing with intercultural experiences, discussion, and reflection. The participants noted the value of group discussions for understanding cross-cultural communication. This finding can be indicated by the following extracts:

01/13/11 stated that:

> "What I usually do in class is quite a lot of examples of group discussions and joint reflections in one class, conducting question and answer sessions with the lecturer who teaches, even though the lecturer is not a native speaker who has cultural differences, but our lecturer is very experienced in cross-cultural communication."

05/13/11 stated that:

> "Discussing with friends, paying attention to the lecturer when explaining, reading and presenting the results of the discussion and answering any questions from several groups and responding to the results of the discussion or what was explained and faced directly by the lecturer."

06/13/11 said that:

> Presentation of cases that usually occur in intercultural communication based on journals or scholarly articles. Analysis and discussion on the similarities and differences between foreign cultures and cultures in Indonesia/in the region."

04/13/02 claimed that:

> "Some discussions about foreign and domestic culture were accompanied by questions and answers about overseas study experiences such as cultural shock and others."

15/12/02 stated that:

> "I learn about various culture in my CCU class on the the second semester. I can provide myself with knowledge how to prepare myself before entering other countries. I also do share my knowledge and experience sabout my birthplace Malaysia with my classmates who are Indonesian. And, we do some discussion and reflection on the differences."

16/12/02 mentioned that:

> "The intercultural classroom lecturer usually teaches while telling stories about various cultures. Occasionally he shows videos about the culture/customs of people abroad. The students usually just sit and listen the personal stories. Then, we start discussion and reflection."

23/12/02 said that:

> "We usually, well majority of the hours, spent on listening to the lecturer's experiences when he was still abroad and understood how the western people bahave. The lecture also gave us tips on how to deal with cultural shock in discussion as our culture is different."

From the above extracts, the intercultural teaching classrooms lie at intercultural experiences and reflective teaching activities. The discussion has been promoted whereby the students immensely compare between their own cultures and other cultures while learning English as the target language. Syam et al. (2020) argued that cultural comparion may lead to improve linguistic competence in spoken and written skills.

This finding is paramount to exercise the skills of interpreting and relating of students. The lecturers have earned the rights to be the resource persons because they have been exposed to and interacted with the cultures and the target languages more intensely (Arshavkaya, 2020). Therefore, the lecturers have been equipped with knowledge and skills required to be an intercultural mediator as he/she has been at the third space beforehand (Kramsch & Uryu, 2020). Within this situation, the intercultural teaching classroom can be different from the less effective and typical cultural sharing as the previous studies have

studied about (Moon, 2023). From now onwards, the cultural sharing experience in the present study may be replaced by the term "intercultural sharing experience" due to its quality to intercultural communicative competence.

Attitudinal development in classroom teaching
Secondly, some indicative attitudinal developments have appeared in the students' responses, though still need further evidence. The present study attempts to project the contexts or subject positions where the students can apply their knowledge and skills through their experiences (Kramsch, 2020). The university students shared their own understandings about the knowledge and skills of other cultures they gained in their intercultural experiences.

In addition, they have also claimed their changes after being aware of the self and the other identities towards interculturality in EFL pedagogy. The changes are inextricably intertwined with the critical cultural awareness they develop over times. To some extent, these attitudinal shifts suggest that students are progressing toward greater intercultural awareness, a key component of intercultural communicative competence (Huang, 2021). This may have become the outcome from the implementation of the intercultural EFL pedagogy. The following presentation of extracts is systematically arranged from the basic to the advanced levels of critical cultural awareness the students internalised from.

02/13/11 stated that:
"When I tried to interview some foreigners and tried to steer the conversation to avoid misunderstandings."

I learnt about foreign cultures. I gained cultural knowledge and how to apply it if I go abroad or meet people of different cultures.

07/13/11 mentioned that:
"To meet or talk directly with a person of a different culture. Questioning and answering with the person in terms of their varied languages, habits, customs, and cultures."

Know more about other cultures with their surnames. More courage to deal with people from other cultures.

13/12/02 said that:
"I become more cautious when meeting culturally different people such as foreigners who sometimes do not like to be asked by any

questions that may invade their privacy."

After attending this course, I feel that my knowledge has broadened, and I can better understand the differences between people. I also became more aware of the social values that exist in other countries which are certainly different from the values that exist in our country. So, when encountering someone who is not from my country, such as the Caucasians who have a habit of conversing with eye contact, I understand and respect their habit.

06/12/02 stated that:
"Knowing different things from other countries where many gestures have different meanings between us and foreigners."

Internalising what I have learnt. If there is something that I need to use, I will use it. The rest (knowledge and skills), I have not used specifically. To be precise, I can respect other people's opinions and understanding.

15/12/02 said that:
"It gives impact on English students who want to study abroad or a person who often communicate with foreigners. Knowing each other culture could be the best as we are perceiving our relationship with others."

"I feel confident when I speak with foreigners as I already know how to communicate with them properly. I also learn to be a better person as I take some examples from other cultures, for example, being punctual and disciplined, and so forth."

16/12/02 mentioned that:
"I have learned many things about foreigners and applied them by being tolerant. For example, there are questions that are sensitive to some foreigners and when I meet them, I don't ask them such questions."

"I feel more tolerant and open-minded. I am no longer overly fanatical about my own culture but I still maintain and nurture my religious beliefs."

21/12/02 stated that:
"By becoming a more understanding person, I am also a much more prepared and becoming an

adaptable person."

"I feel like becoming Mr. Worldwide or a global citizen (as my identity). That means that I am more aware of the cultural and social situations all around the world, especially those of target cultures."

From the above data of seven representing university students, the critical cultural awareness of the university students seemed to have developed (Guilherme, 2022), even though the critical awareness demands vast and intensive interaction with target language's communities. Some of these students have been recognised to have positive trends of personal intercultural profile development, though still need to maintain the early stage of competence (Safitri & Ulfiati, 2021). This can be motivated by their own motivations to solve any problems of miscommunication and great willingness to empower themselves to be an intercultural communicator, especially when they study overseas in the future (Oguro & Harbon, 2021).

It is admittable that the university students have expressed varied degrees at showing their own indicative intercultural awarenesses. It started from alternation on communicative behaviour, continued with change on attitude, and eventually ended up with individual negotiation with positive values from the other cultural identity in Intercultural EFL Pedagogy (Dervin, 2023). Despite the need of further evidence, these phenomena become initial groundwork for Indonesian EFL context if intercultural sharing experience could work effectively in these contexts.

CONCLUSION
To sum up, the cultural sharing here is closely linked to intercultural sharing experience as the lecturers have been experienced at dealing with successful encounters and engaged with numerous unfamiliar situations at varied degrees through overseas study and professional development influencing the teachers' intercultural profile development. The positive finding is that the discussion and reflection have been massively carried out that seem to have developed the knowledge, skills, skills of interpreting and relating, as well as critical cultural awareness of the university students as the research participants. All of these can be indicated in the students' narratives about their teachers' intercultural sharing experiences that contain discussion and reflection.

The present study has also justified that theoretical and experiential knowledge must be accompanied by reflexivity in which a positive learning climate must be conditioned before discussing any cultural issues proportionally and then reflected on emerging issues with measurable parameters towards the phenomena of the culture of target language (Scarino, 2022). This set of combination seems to be potential to be advocated by EFL teachers alongside other learning activities as shown in other EFL contexts in the world.

The present study, nevertheless, remains a vexed question to stimulate further research about potential activities in conjunction with intercultural sharing and reflection. It then moves on to the multiple methods to improve the lack of skills of discovery and interaction the students have (Porto, 2021). This positioning remains innumerable discussion because there is no method that suits all contexts of English language teaching with cultural integration (Dervin, 2024). Our work is determining to ensure the achievement of Intercultural EFL pedagogy.

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