



Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Pedagogical Critic in English Language Teaching

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Abstract: Research about Intercultural Communicative competence with its relation to English language has been discussed among scholars. However, the discussion about how to integrate it into teaching and learning English in the classroom remains lacking exploration. This research investigated the lecturers' ways of integrating ICC components in teaching and learning English. This research involved four lecturers of the English Education Department IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo which was taken purposively. The participants were the lecturers who taught receptive and productive skills. It employed a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through interviews and observation sheets and analyzed using thematic analysis. It found three lecturers' ways of integrating ICC in teaching English, first, the teachers guided students to have intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills in teaching the English language. Second, the teachers contrasted between English language culture and Indonesian culture. Third, the teachers asked the students to practice the activities which addressed to intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills. This research implied that ICC is competence should be mastered by the English learners in the digital era.

Keywords: *Intercultural communicative competence; English language teaching and learning; components of intercultural communicative competence*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Communicative Competence, henceforth called ICC is defined as the competence to use language successfully and appropriately in the different cultural environment. ICC is a complex competence that demands to function successfully and appropriately when engaging with those who are linguistically and culturally different from others (Ruiz, 2019). An individual who has ICC is ready to develop a connection with others by knowing people through a successful interaction of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Chen & Starosta, (2017) stated that an individual should understand how to engage in negotiation and demonstrate respect for the meaning of cultural symbols and customs that are evolving during the interaction.

ICC terminology has been defined by scholars who are concerned with conducting research on it. For instance, Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, (2016) have been conceptualized ICC as the communicative ability to recognize and negotiate linguistic and cultural differences with people from other cultures using a language, as well as the ability to productively relate to otherness. In similar, (L. Liu et al., 2022) defined ICC as the ability to speak successfully and appropriately with persons from many cultures. In addition, Fitriyah, (2020) cited Thao & Tai, Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño (2018) identified that ICC is the competence that comes from the interplay among an individual's culture and others, where communicative aspects are involved in carrying out a method to compare cultural features among them.

Having ICC has been an obligation for individuals in the 21st era. Human interaction, in all aspects of life covered not only in small and regional region, but it has been covered international region. Nowadays, there has been increasing globalization due to a number of factors such as business, education, technology, tourism, and so on around the world (Sevimel-sahin, 2020). Communities are getting more interested in contact with foreigners than ever before. This situation developed multilingual and multicultural relationships among people, thus people realized that without the assistance of ICC, there were hurdles and limits when they access a foreign territory and it may result in confusion and misconceptions. (Ruiz, 2019). Moreover, Ruiz explained that it is urgent for people to deeply explore the cultural differences to prevent damaging relationships.

People can develop their ICC when they are learning a foreign language, such as English language. The concept is strengthened by looking at the strong relationship

between language and culture. Culture plays an important role in the process of effective second and foreign languages (Badrkoohi, 2018). Knowledge of diverse cultures is equally important as the ability to speak a foreign language. (Riana et al., 2021). In more detail, Jarosz & Kiszczak, Anna Adamek, (2021) explained the unseparated relation between language and culture. They cited Kramsch (1993) who claimed that learning another language does not preclude learning about the culture to which it is related. He stated that if language is viewed as a social practice, culture becomes the foundation of language teaching. If the student is to become a truly proficient foreign language speaker, it appears that language and culture cannot be separated and hence taught independently.

ICC affected students' language proficiency, such as (Achieng, 2021; Miauw & Guo, 2021) found in their study that ICC is in line with the student's language proficiency. There was a close relationship between ICC and students' language proficiency. The higher the students' competence in understanding culture, the higher the language fluency they have. ICC stimulates the student's motivation to engage fully in teaching and learning. Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, (2016) identified that there was a strong relation between the level of students' motivation with the level of their language proficiency. The students who are eager to understand the European and American culture, he/she has high motivation to learn the language and also the culture.

English is the language that gets the most attention when discussing the integration of ICC in teaching foreign languages. English has been the lingua franca and is used by more than 360 million people as first speakers, 342 million people as second-language speakers, and 730 million as learners (Edi, 2017). English is also used in all contexts of human life, such as education, politic, and economics. Therefore, integrating ICC into teaching English became a necessity in this era.

Integrating ICC in teaching English means integrating ICC components. Bryam & Wagner, (2018) mentioned ICC components which should be integrated in teaching English, namely intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills. Intercultural knowledge relates to an individual's comprehension of their own cultural and social knowledge, as well as other countries' information. Intercultural attitude relates to people's honesty, enthusiasm, and preparedness to accept different cultures whereas they believe in their own culture. Intercultural skills refer to people's capacity to learn new information about a new culture and apply it appropriately during conversation.



However, the integration of ICC components in teaching English has been clear, but the application in the classroom is still lack of implemented. The research identified that teachers feel reluctant to implement in their teaching (Mas, 2020). Even though the teachers have good understanding of ICC, they do not implement ICC in the classroom (Chau & Truong, 2019). Chau and Truong surveyed 101 English teachers at secondary schools in Vietnam and proved that teachers have a good understanding of intercultural integration, but they rarely conducted intercultural activities in the classroom. Similarly, (Fitriyah, 2019) found that teachers perceived high culture teaching in English language classrooms, however, their practices were still low. She studied 20 English lecturers from three universities in Java.

Some scholars have been studied about integrating ICC in teaching English as Foreign language. The result of these researches gave guidance to the English teachers in integrating ICC in teaching English. Cai & Lv, (2019) proposed some classroom activities for teachers and students in integrating ICC in teaching and learning English based on a task-based approach. They developed tasks from the *New Horizon* book and integrated the materials with cultural components in giving intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitudes, and intercultural skills.

Another research showed the strategy for improving the students' ICC in English language classrooms (Santoso, 2020). She found that the scavenger hunt was an effective technique to develop the students' cultural knowledge, intercultural communication, intercultural adaptation, information technology, and soft skills also the students' English proficiency. Chlopek, (2008) argued classroom activities by classifying three stages of the integration of ICC in teaching the English language. Stage one is when the students learn their native culture. It helps students look at their native culture consciously and objectively. In stage two, the students learn the culture of English-speaking countries and compare those cultures with their native culture. It helps the students to be objective in viewing cultural differences and to consider to the differences. Stage three, the students broaden their cultural understanding by learning about many cultures throughout the world. This is the longest stage, but students should already be able to look for and recognize various cultural features of foreign societies.

The research results cited above suggested that the guidance for teachers in integrating ICC in teaching the English language is already accessible. However, this



research came to add and contribute references about integrating ICC in teaching the English language. The result of this research was different from previous researches, however, it also proposed guidance for teachers in integrating ICC in teaching English Foreign Language.

This research investigated the teacher's/lecturers' ways of integrating ICC in teaching the English language. Teachers or lecturers used three ways, namely, first, the lecturers guided students to have intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills about the English language. Second, they contrasted between English language culture and Indonesian culture. Third, they asked the students to practice the activities which addressed to intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills. Therefore, this research answered the research question "How were the lecturers' ways of integrating ICC components in teaching English Foreign Language?"

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative method to investigate the lecturers' ways of integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence components in teaching English Foreign Language. There were four (4) lecturers of Jurusan Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Tarbiyah, and Teacher Faculty of IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo as volunteers in this research. To preserve the participants' confidentiality, the names in this study were classified as P1 (participant 1) and P2 (participant 2) sequentially. As a result, none of the participants were identified by their genuine names. The consent form was signed voluntarily by all participants in this study.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Participants	Sex	Educational Background	Courses that he/she teaches
P1	Female	Master	Speaking
P2	Female	Ph.D	Reading
P3	Male	Ph.d	Writing
P4	Male	Master	Listening

The main data was obtained through semi-structured interviews and observation sheets to find out data about the lecturers' ways of integrating ICC components in teaching English Foreign Language. There were 7 questions or indicators related to lecturers' ways in the classroom which covered ICC components, namely intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills. The questions or indicators were

developed by Zhou, (2011) and Fitriyah, (2020). The interview was done via written interview, thus the interview sheet was sent to the participants via email and they sent their answers via email too. Participants in the study had the opportunity to re-check the transcription of the interviews, which was sent back to them by the researchers. This re-checking can improve the accuracy of the findings. The interviews were conducted in English because the participants felt at ease with the language. (Creswell, 2012). The observation sheet was filled out through offline classroom observation. It was done after the interview section. The questions in interview sheet was developed and used as the indicators in observation sheet. The checklist was used to identify whether the lecturers did the indicators or did not do.

The data analysis method utilized in this study was the thematic analysis approach (Galvan et al., 2017). The first step is to read the entire dataset and then perform initial coding. The next step is to look for and examine emergent themes by connecting them and comparing categories and codes. The main categories are refined and specified in order to create meaningful and theoretical types of participation.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The result of the analysis of this research showed that there were three lecturers' ways in integrating ICC in teaching English. First, the lecturers guided students to have intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitudes, and intercultural skills about English Foreign Language. Second, they contrasted between English language culture and Indonesian culture. Third, they asked the students to practice the activities which addressed to intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills.

The lecturers guided students to have knowledge, attitude, and skill (ICC components) in teaching English Foreign Language by giving listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials which contain cultural component.

"I prepared listening material for my students based on cultural content materials. It helped the students to understand the English language and at once to understand the culture of English in using the language. (P4)

Lesson materials were urgent to guide the students to understand the English language and the culture of the language.

“To guide the students to have intercultural knowledge, I composed speaking materials based on cultural content. For instance, I gave material about *introduction*, thus, I prepared vocabulary and expressions that English people use in many different contexts. Context in speaking is reflecting cultural components, because it is relating to social life (P1).

In the same line as P4 and P1, P2 and P3 agreed that students were guided toward intercultural awareness by creating educational materials based on cultural elements.

The lecturers guided the students to have intercultural attitudes by applying the social role-play method. The lecturers named social role play because the lecturers created social context in applying the role play. It was mostly done in speaking skills.

“I guided my students to have intercultural attitudes by applying the social role-play method. For example, the material was *introduction*, then I grouped the students, each group had 4 students. They were given a social context to make an introduction formally and informally. For instance, they introduced each other as country delegates in bilateral meetings. They introduced each other as a friend in the party. (P1).

Based on interviews and observations, the findings showed that the second way of integrating ICC components in teaching English was to contrast the differences between English language culture and Indonesian language culture. The lecturers asked students to study the diverse perspectives of Indonesian and English-speaking people, to explore cultural symbols, norms, or cultural acts implied in occurrences., and to explore different perspectives of Indonesian and English-speaking people may have on a particular event/phenomena.

“I asked my students to explore the differences between English culture and Indonesian culture through reading books or articles printed or electronic”. (P2)
In addition, the lecturer who taught listening skills said

“I asked my students to explore the cultural symbols and norms by listening to podcasts or talk shows” (P4)

The lecturers’ ways of contrasting the cultural differences give positive impact to students’ affective. They have cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, and escape them from cultural shock. They were more tolerant to the difference and be wise to respect other culture.



The data on interviews and observation showed that the third way of integrating ICC components in teaching English was practicing classroom activities as follows:

1. Ask students to share unique or strange cultural symbols, customs, or practices from an English-speaking country (s). (Intercultural attitude)
2. Inspire students to consider how their own values, beliefs, and perspectives which may differ from those of other cultures.
3. Tell students to discuss how English speakers perceive Indonesian people and culture.
4. Encourage students to examine cultural symbols, norms, and acts in English-speaking countries using various sources (e.g., books, movies, and magazines). (s).
5. Encourage students to apply their past cultural knowledge and skills to explain events or standards from English culture (s).
6. ask students to discuss the cause of stereotypes that Indonesian people have for English cultures.
7. Encourage students to identify and explain common misunderstandings in communication between Indonesian and English speakers.

The findings of this study revealed three significant novelties. First, incorporating ICC components in teaching English was implemented by adding cultural artifacts to instructional materials. Not debatable that lesson material has a strong position in teaching and learning. Lesson materials improve the teaching and learning process to be more effective and interactive, guide lecturer who will direct all their activities in the learning process, and facilitate independent learning. Moreover, it served as guidelines for students who will direct all activities in the learning process (Nurjaya et al., 2023).

Second, it indicated that integrating ICC components in teaching English improved the students' cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, and the students' positive attitudes toward cultural differences. Some researches confirmed that ICC has a positive impact to foreign language learners. Isamukhamedova & Навои, (2020) concluded that the students were aware of the importance of knowing and understanding other cultures for effective communication. Effective communication refers to the process of conveying information in a way that is understood by the target audience and results in the desired consequence. It involves clarity, active listening, empathy, and the ability to convey ideas accurately

and persuasively. Effective communication fosters mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration among individuals or groups (Huriati et al., 2023; Zilola & Yoqubjon, n.d.).

Third, the integration of ICC components in teaching English showed the lecturers and the students' activities in the classroom. This finding helped the teachers of English language to integrate the ICC components in teaching English. Some earlier research discovered that teachers were still reluctant to integrate ICC components in teaching, yet they recognized that ICC is crucial in teaching English. Mas, (2020) found that the scholars concluded that ICC is one of the most important core competencies worldwide. Thus, teachers must fully learn the ICC in order to help their students become intercultural speakers in multicultural settings. However, they were hesitant to expand their competency in terms of incorporating ICC features into their teaching-learning process.

Meanwhile, the importance of integrating ICC in teaching English proposed, because it affects the students' competence to use the language and also students' competence to interact internationally (Abduh et al., 2021; Basalama, 2018; Fajaria & Abdulrahman, 2021; Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2016; Santoso, 2020; Weda et al., 2022)

Liu, (2021) recommended exploring intensively how the teachers practice English teaching which inserts cultural components. In addition, Gong et al., (2021) recommended that English teacher should be equipped with ICC because they are pedagogical resources in teaching ICC. In another expression, Badrkoohi, (2018) said that the teachers should be supported to develop the students' ICC to decrease their demotivation in learning the English language.

Therefore, this research implied that intercultural competence is one of the competencies in learning a foreign language that the students need to possess. It emphasized that teachers should integrate ICC components in teaching English without hesitation because this research result has shown the teachers' way. However, this research has proposed a new finding, but it recommended for another research to study the integration of ICC components in teaching and learning English specifically in one language skill, such as in reading skills.

D. CONCLUSION

This research found that integrating the ICC components in teaching English is done in three ways. First, the lecturers guided students to have knowledge, attitude, and skills about the English language. Second, they contrasted between English language culture and Indonesian culture. Third, they asked the students to practice the activities which addressed to intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills. The lecturers guided students to have knowledge, attitude, and skill (ICC components) in teaching the English language by giving listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials which contain cultural component. They guided the students to have an intercultural attitude by applying the social role-play method. The result of finding in this research indicated 3 important novelties, first integrating ICC components in teaching English was applied by inserting cultural items in lesson materials.

Second, it indicated that integrating ICC components in teaching English improved the students' cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, and the students' positive attitudes toward cultural differences. Third, the integration of ICC components in teaching English showed the lecturers and the students' activities in the classroom. Therefore, this research implied that intercultural competence is one of the competencies in learning a foreign language that the students need to possess. It emphasized that teachers should integrate ICC components in teaching English without hesitation because this research result has shown the teachers' way. However, this research has proposed a new finding, but it recommended another research to study the integration of ICC components in teaching and learning English specifically in one language skill, such as in reading skills.

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