Teacher's Cognition of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Indonesia EFL Context

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Abstract. This study discussed English teachers' intercultural communicative competence, the teachers' cognition of intercultural communicative competence and how they assimilate this competence into their language teaching practices in English for foreign languages classroom. This study used a mixed method research. The participants were 35 English teachers. Instruments for collecting data were a questionnaire and structured interviews. The finding revealed that the English teacher had a high Intercultural Communicative Competence, perceived the Intercultural communicative competence as being important in language teaching. However, teachers have not fully integrated ICC into student activities. The implication of this study is to make English teachers aware of their willingness to always try to integrate cultural learning into language teaching that is packaged through the students' activities.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, teacher's cognition, EFL

INTRODUCTION

The topic of intercultural learning has received a lot of interest because of the rise of globalization. In addition, developing intercultural communicative competence is one of the 21st century competencies that has become very important (Idris, 2019, Sudhoff, 2010; UNESCO, 2006). Intercultural communicative competence has been conceptualized in a variety of ways depending on the theoretical orientation of scholars and perceptions of what counts as competency (Song, 2008). Researchers have typically used the concept of communicative competence between cultures to refer to the ability to interact efficiently and effectively with people from different countries or with different cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardoff, 2006).

Being an important goal of language education, intercultural communicative competence has become an important concept for language teachers. Intercultural communicative competence is a combination of attitudes and curiosity, interpreting, discovery and interaction skills, knowledge, and critical cultural awareness that is applied through intercultural activities (Lashari, Kaur, & Awang-Hashim, 2018). This activity can create mutual respect and understand the culture of others and create communication without obstacles (Huber and Reynolds, 2014, Byram 1997).

The English teachers who learn and teach English not only master linguistic competence but also intercultural communicative competence. They do not need to know everything about the target culture, but their role is to help the students understand how interactions between cultures occur. However, to implement the method, they must understand cultural knowledge of the target language (Byram et al, 2002). Henceforth, the role of the English teachers becomes important because they must assist the students in achieving that knowledge holistically. However, in doing so, the English teachers must first understand and possess these competencies. In other words, they should have cognition about intercultural communicative competence. Teachers' cognition is fundamental in various aspects of intercultural communicative competence oriented in English teaching. Teacher's cognition is a dimension of cognition that is not visible from teaching. So, this is what the teachers know, believe, and think (Borg, 2003) and significantly influence teacher teaching practices (Feryok, 2010; Zhu & Shu, 2017). The teacher's cognition plays an important role in a conceptualization scheme of teaching so that this will build on what the teacher does in the language teaching class. In other words, it provides insights on the teachers' own interpretations of their teaching practices, the practices of their prior experiences, and their specific work contexts.

Several research studies on the subject of teacher's cognition have been carried out in the field of language teaching. This research has built a general framework for studying language teachers' cognition primarily involving how teachers' cognition is related to educational background, knowledge, perceptions, teacher job identity, environmental factors (Borg, 2009; Van Driel & Meijer, 2001; Woods, 1996; Wu, 2008; Xia & Feng, 2006) and combining language teachers' cognition with ELT studies in grammar and writing (Gao & Liu, 2008); Zhang, 2008; Zheng, 2006). The teachers' cognition can change depending on various factors, including teacher personal factors and contextual factors (Rubie-Davies, Flint, & McDonald, 2011). Previous research resulted in findings about the knowledge of English teachers in teaching intercultural communication competencies and potential influencing factors. But limited studies have concentrated on English teachers who teach Chinese as a second language in the intercultural communication skills teaching process. The language teachers are required to be able to regulate intercultural communicative competence as the main goal in their teaching since it allows language learners to become 'intercultural speakers' (Byram, 1997). This has been widely recognized as one of the important and ideal goals of language education (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). However, less attention has been paid to the knowledge of teachers in the teaching of intercultural communication skills, although intercultural communication skills become the general orientation of linguistic education in the context of globalization (Gu, 2016; Young, Sachdv, & Seedhouse, 2009). Expecting intercultural communicative competence becomes logical when it is seen as one of the goals of education that is assessing intercultural learning, being a backwash to teaching and learning, and influencing the teachers and the students' motivation in the intercultural learning (Sercu, 2004; Borghetti 2017; Scarino, 2009; Benlahcene, Lashari, & Lashari, 2017).

In addition, English in Indonesia is a subject taught since Junior High School (*Permendikbud* Number 58 of 2013). English at this level is a tool for oral and written communication (Shehzad et al., 2019). The communication at this level aims to understand information, thought, and feeling and develop science, technology (Hussain et al. 2016, 2020; Saare et al. 2020; Sari and Mohamad 2020) and culture (Ministry of National Education, 2013). Thus, teaching English at the junior high level, one of the goals is to develop communicative competencies among students' cultures. Consequently, teachers must provide knowledge about it before students continue their studies in higher education and can live in this discursive era.

This examines aims to gain an insight into the teachers' intercultural communicative competence of Indonesia English Foreign Language teachers', their cognition and practices of cultural teaching. As limited studies in teaching English contexts have been found on how English teachers' intercultural communicative competence in Junior High School reflects their cognition, this study attempts to answer the following questions:
1. To what extent the English teachers master Intercultural Communicative Competence?
2. How do English teachers perceive intercultural competence in English Foreign Language Classroom?
3. To what extent do the English teachers integrate intercultural competence into their classroom practice?

METHOD

The mixed methods research design is used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. This study method can be used for research, selecting qualitative and quantitative data to discuss a research problem (Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell, in a mixed methods study, researchers can obtain more complete data about one of the methods used also solve research problems and the combination of qualitative and quantitative data can utilize the reinforcement obtained.

The participants were 35 English teachers. The majority of the participants were female (57.1%) and male (42.9 %). Regarding the participants' educational, 71.4% of the participants held a bachelor's degree, while 28.6% held a master's degree. There was no a doctoral degree. All the learners graduated as a foreign language in the field of English and English teaching. Two analysis instruments were used: a questionnaire, and a formal interview. The questionnaire gathered the participants' backgrounds, perceptions of intercultural communicative competence, and classroom practices, as adapted from Zhou (2011). It employed the standardized interview adapted by Abdulla Al Mawoda (2011). To determine reliability and validity, the data obtained from the instruments have been triangulated.

The method for collecting data was broken down into two stages. The first stage was to send the questionnaire to 35 English teachers through Google form to obtain the quantitative data. In the second phase, structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data to support quantitative data. For the structured interview, the researcher interviewed 10 English teachers via phone. Data collected from the research instruments were triangulated and analyzed, and then tabulated to measure the levels of

Teachers' Cognition of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Indonesia Efl

teachers' intercultural communicative competence, cognition and their opinions about ICC in Indonesia EFL context. Descriptive statistic, including frequency, percentage, and mean, were employed. Transcripts were analyzed in order to keep the authenticity of the contexts where the interviews were conducted.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

To what extent the English teachers master Intercultural Communicative Competence?

The English teachers were asked to rate their knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness related to intercultural communicative competence on the questionnaire instrument which was set on a scale of 6 from 0 (not at all) to 5 (very high). One intercultural communicative competence score was also generated for each English teacher by adding and then averaging a score of all 20 items, which ranged from zero to five. Mean score of 3.24 shows that perceptions of competence among the English teachers are slightly above average on a 6-point scale.

This instrument measures four dimensions of intercultural communicative competence, namely awareness, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Individual scores are calculated for each dimension by adding and then the average score of items that measure the dimensions. The four dimensions of competency in the English teachers' intercultural communicative competence all fall slightly above the average, which indicates that they show average intercultural knowledge, attitudes, awareness, and skills. Among the four dimensions of intercultural communicative competence, the English teachers show the highest level for skills (M = 3.12) and the lowest level for knowledge (M = 2.78). The finding of the English teachers' intercultural communicative competence can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. *Teacher's Intercultural Communicative Competence*

Statements	Mean
Knowledge	**2.78**
I am familiar with the cultural norms and expectations of English culture (e.g., food, clothing, eating manner, public behaviours, greetings, etc.).	3.20
I am able to recognize an English document in its own cultural context.	3.05
I am interested in knowing the different ways that English speaking people see a particular event in Indonesia.	2.60
I can describe some important historical/social/political events that have shaped English cultures.	2.60
I am willing to question my values and beliefs which are perceived differently by people from other cultures.	2.45
Attitude	**3.07**
Before I talk or write to English speaking people, I think about how they, with different cultural backgrounds, will feel about or react to what I am going to say or write.	2.65
I can recognize when some Indonesia people communicate inappropriately to English speaking people	2.97
I am interested in knowing the different ways that English speaking people see a particular event in Indonesia	3.00
I can describe the history of relationships between English speaking and Indonesia countries.	3.20
I am interested in knowing unfamiliar aspects of English culture (e.g., history, people's values, and traditions, etc.).	3.54
Skill	**3.12**
I can describe how some events in Indonesia are perceived by people from English speaking countries.	3.20
I can contrast communicative behaviours of English speaking people and Indonesian in social setting (e.g., school, family, office, etc.).	3.54
I am able to identify how some misunderstandings happen in interactions between English speaking people and Indonesia.	3.20
I am able to find out unfamiliar cultural information I come across in oral or written communication situations	3.05
I am willing to understand differences between English speaking people and Indonesian in their values, behaviors, and beliefs.	2.60
Awareness	**2.86**
While interacting with English speaking people, I adjust my body language, behaviour,	3.05

and gesture according to what is considered appropriate by them.	
I think I should not immediately judge people from other countries, because their behaviors might just be the result of cultural differences.	2.60
I demonstrate awareness of English speaking people's reactions to me which reflect their cultural values.	3.00
I am aware of the diversity in English cultures (e.g., class, differences in race, gender, and profession, etc.)	2.45
I demonstrate awareness of seeing myself as a "culturally conditioned" person with personal habits and preferences.	3.20

The findings are supported by interview. Ten English teachers were interviewed with the question about whether they are interculturally competent teachers or not and the reasons. Six of them said that they cannot yet be said to fully master intercultural communicative competence. They rarely look for the information about the culture of the target language and rarely socialize with native speakers. They teach according to existing material. Meanwhile, four other English teachers said that this is something extraordinary because they are interested in the culture of other countries. So, they have pretty good intercultural competence". They also were given a question about the characteristics of interculturally competent teachers. Eight English teachers said that the teachers who discuss the socio-cultural norms of the target language and their pragmatics and know at any time that they have to ask who they are talking to, understand the age, sex, and social status of the listener and the type of clothing they depend on are called interculturally competent teachers.

How do English teachers perceive intercultural competence in English Language Teaching?

The second research question explored the English teachers' perceptions of cultural teaching in EFL education. The English teachers were asked to rate five statements related to that. The first finding shows that the majority of the English teachers used a 4-point scale to indicate the level of culture about their perceptions of cultural teaching. The level of "*very important*" is *"Provide information about daily life in English speaking countries"* (mean = 3.57) and *"Develop a curious / tolerant / respectful / open attitude towards other cultures and cultural differences"* (mean = 3.45). These finding reveals the facts about the problems discussed in English teaching because the English teachers accept to enhance their students' cultural knowledge. Ranking top priority in English, the English teachers agreed on *"Foster the students' respect for world cultural diversity"* (68%), followed by *"Provide information about daily life in English speaking countries* (62.9%), and *"Promote the ability to conduct effective communication with English speaking people"* (60%). The findings show that the English teachers prioritize teaching English for practical reasons, which is to help the students acquire knowledge and skills for their daily life.

The *"important"* level is *"Promote understanding of different processes of individual and social interactions in English and Indonesian culture"* (mean = 3.48), "*Promote the ability to conduct effective communication with English speaking people"* (mean = 3.20), and *"Foster students' respect for world cultural diversity"* (mean = 3.10). This second finding reveals that cultural teaching is considered an important issue in teaching English as a foreign language. This also indicates that English teachers are willing to increase their ability and respect for the target language culture. Teachers' Perception on cultural teaching in EFL education can be seen in Table 2.

In line with interview data, ten English teachers agreed about the types of competencies and knowledge about different cultures. They are aware of the socio-cultural and pragmatic norms of different cultures and what knowledge must be explained, when and why. They also emphasized that teaching language means also teaching culture from the target language so teaching language especially English as a foreign language not only focuses on linguistic competence but also on intercultural competence. Also, if someone communicates without knowing the culture of another person, it can cause misunderstanding and conflict. Thus, intercultural competence is a bridge to this problem.

Table 2. *Teachers' Perception on cultural teaching in EFL education*

Statements	Mean	Percentage	Level of Agreement
Provide information about daily life in English speaking countries.	3.57	62.9%	Very important
Promote understanding of different process of individual and social interactions in Indonesia culture and English.	3.48	51.4%	Important

Develop a curious/tolerant/respectful/open attitude towards other cultures and cultural difference.	3.45	51.4%	Very important
Promote the ability to conduct effective communication with English speaking people.	3.20	60%	Important
Foster students' respect for world cultural diversity.	3.10	68%	Important

To what extent do the English teachers integrate intercultural competence into their classroom practice?

This third research question considers further which the English teachers integrate intercultural communicative competence in their classroom practice, and which activities are most often used in the classroom. The participants report the frequency of their contact with their daily lives on a 4 point scale, ranging from "often", "sometimes", "often" and "never". The English teachers show how often they apply 10 cultural teaching activities in teaching activities in the classroom. This can be seen in table 3. The findings show that 6 out of 10 activities are sometimes applied by participating English teachers. This suggests that cultural instruction may not yet be an integral component of their English Foreign Language teaching.

Teaching activities that are rarely applied are *"The teachers tell students what they should know about a cultural topic"* (45.7), *"The Teachers ask students to compare Indonesian and English culture regarding a particular topic"* (42.9%), *"The Teachers ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Indonesian and English speaking people and explain the causes"* (45.7), and *"The teachers ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents / events from English cultures"* (45.7%). The finding shows that teaching practices that are rarely applied are about the introduction of target language culture and differences in their own culture and target culture. This finding also shows that student-centered activities are rarely applied in class. Some cultural learning and teaching experiences have not yet fully taken place in the form of oral and written communication. The data can be seen in Table 3.

Data supported by interviews with the English teachers. Seven English rarely discuss the culture to their students. Three English teachers sometimes give questions to them about culture and discussed cultural topics. Some English teachers rarely ask students to do assignments about the culture of the target language. The students are rarely looking for information about it. So, the students show less experience about the target language culture. This might prove that there are deficiencies in the integration of intercultural communicative competence into English Foreign Language classroom.

Table 3. *Intercultural Competence into the Classroom Practice*

Statements	Mean	Percentage	Level of Agreement
The teachers ask the students to address a particular cultural topic.	2.60	57.1%	Sometimes
The teachers tell the students what they should know about a cultural topic.	2.91	45.70%	Seldom
The teachers use technology to illustrate a cultural topic (e.g., CD-ROMs, videos, Internet, and the PowerPoint, etc.).	2.68	51.40%	Sometimes
The teachers ask students to compare Indonesia and English culture regarding a particular topic.	2.40	42.90%	Seldom
The teachers ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from English speaking countries communicate.	2.57	62.90%	Sometimes
The teachers ask students to explore different perspectives Indonesia and English speaking people may have on a particular event/phenomena.	2.65	37.10%	Sometimes
The teachers ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Indonesia and English speaking people and explain the causes.	2.91	45.70%	Seldom
The teachers ask students to discuss how their own values and beliefs influence the way they perceive other cultures.	2.60	54.30%	Sometimes
The teachers ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures.	2.40	45.70%	Seldom
The teachers ask students to explore values, beliefs, and	2.57	57.10%	Sometimes

ideological perspectives implied in events/documents from English cultures.			

DISCUSSION

The first point of this study is knowing about English teachers' intercultural communicative competence associated with three elements, namely attitude, skill, and knowledge. In general, English teachers at Junior High School have a high level of intercultural communicative competence. It can be said that they highly respect cultural differences (Altan, 2018), and believe that they can behave in relation to the proposed indicators namely attitude, skill and knowledge correctly (Rajic & Rajic, 2015). In addition, they also seem to understand well what they have understood about cultural differences, values, and norms so that they can easily incorporate some cultural elements into the learning and teaching process (Byram et al., 2002; Kramsh, 2013). In addition, they are also able to show tolerance. This is in line that the essence of intercultural communicative competence is respecting people who have different cultures, values, and norms (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). They have high intercultural skills but they have low intercultural knowledge. So, what Huber & Reynolds (2014) said that high intercultural knowledge can show their understanding of various types of interactions that have different goals and rules that have not been fulfilled by them.

The second point explores the teacher's cognition about intercultural communicative competence in the English Foreign Language Classroom. English teachers view the use of English in real-life situations, help their students become competent in everyday interactions, and encourage them to learn English. They also believe that teaching languages means teaching culture that will help students become aware of cultural differences and develop intercultural communication skills. This is in line with the purpose of teaching culture to help students understand cultural differences. Therefore, the teaching and learning process must be able to bring students to an awareness of the differences between their own culture and the culture of the target language (Kramch, 2003) and how these two cultures can interact (Wintergerst and McVeigh, 2011). This is corroborated by the finding that what teachers know and believe about target language culture is the main main factor influencing cultural teaching (Nilmanee & Soontornwipast, 2014).

The third point is about integrating intercultural communicative competence into teaching practices in the classroom. English teachers have not been able to integrate intercultural communicative competence well. They have not fully tried to integrate topics that are relevant to different cultures. They sometimes even rarely incorporate culture into their teaching by sharing cultural experiences, asking questions about culture, and discussing cultural topics. This finding is not consistent with that presented by Sercu, et al, (2005); Atay, et al (2009) that teachers tend to be aware of culture in teaching English even though they appear to rarely integrate culture into teaching practice. To develop student cultural competence, teachers have not fully offered activities to encourage students to see their own culture and the culture of the target language. So, this is not in line with Wintergerst & McVeigh (2011); Byram & Fleming (1998) who said that the activities of students should be directed to create awareness of students' culture which aims to analyze the beliefs, values, and attitudes of their own and other cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study has discussed English teachers' intercultural communicative competence, the teacher's cognition about intercultural communicative competence in the English Foreign Language Classroom, and integrating intercultural communicative competence into teaching practices in the classroom. The results of this study reflect that English teachers at junior high school understand well what they have understood about cultural differences, values, and norms. However, they have not fully included several cultural elements in their teaching and learning process. If an English teacher can fully integrate cultural teaching, students will have good intercultural communicative competence.

There is still a long chance for English teachers to ensure that intercultural English learning becomes meaningful learning. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide insights for future research related to the success of intercultural English for foreign languages in Indonesia. Greater efforts must be made to improve, for example, more data collection and more complete data analysis methods. Further research can investigate ICC teachers at various levels of education to reflect their perceptions of cultural teaching through language education.

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