

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: FOSTERING THE STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN AN EFL CLASSROOM (A CASE STUDY AT THE FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS OF STKIP PASUNDAN)

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Abstract: Being a multicultural nation requires Indonesians to develop their intercultural competence, since they interact and communicate with people from diverse cultural background. This study explores how intercultural communication could foster the students' intercultural competence in an EFL classroom. The research used a case study, involving the fourth year students selected as the participants of the study. These five students live in Cimahi-Bandung, West-Java, and all of them are Sundanese. A Self Assessment Intercultural Experience Portfolio and the students' records of direct intercultural communication were used as instrument for data collection. The data were analyzed using divisions and categories of intercultural competence model from Byram (1997) and Deardorff 2006). It is confirmed that intercultural communication fostered intercultural competence proportionally in the area of cultural awareness, knowledge and skills. Cultural awareness increases primarily as a result of the students' interaction with people from various cultural background, differences in pattern of communication; and difficulties in mastery of local dialect. Adaptation to the local culture was a way of overcoming cultural barriers. In addition, cultural appreciation, acceptance of cultural differences, and knowledge of verbal communication pattern have helped the students enhanced their cultural awareness to be more flexible in intercultural communication.

Keywords: intercultural communication, intercultural competence.

INTRODUCTION

It is acknowledged that teaching language cannot be separated from the teaching of culture of that language. In other word, language cannot be taught without culture and that culture is a necessary context of language use (Singhal, 1998). Thus, learning a foreign language also includes learning culture. In foreign language learning context, the immanent tie between language and culture bears a significant potential for intercultural learning process.

The learner of second or foreign language and culture does not cease to be competent in his or her mother tongue and the associated culture (...) the learner does not simply acquire two distinct, unrelated ways of acting and communicating. The language learner becomes phonological and develops interculturality. The linguistic and cultural competence in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skill and know how (Council of Europe, 2001 in Shudoff, 2010).

We can see the notion of students' interculturality development in the process of becoming plurilingual and develop interculturality as well as the notion of merging the "linguistic and

cultural competence in respect of each language” (Kramersch, 1993 in Shudoff, 2010). In international language teaching, the teacher has responsibility to place between their own culture and that of the target language community (Liddicoat, Crozet and Bronco (2000 in Ge, 2004).

In Indonesian context, experiencing and understanding a foreign language in a content based way opens the doors to intercultural learning processes. As multicultural nation, Indonesians do communicate with people from vastly different cultural background. This condition primarily help them to develop their intercultural competence and become more tolerant to encounter racial minorities, ethnic minorities, and any other cultural manifestation such as their dress, language, food, and religious beliefs.

In this study, it is important to address the issue of how Indonesian students who study English as the first foreign language, and even as English teacher candidates could foster their intercultural competence through intercultural interaction and intercultural communication. As it is emphasized by Liddicoat, Crozet and Bonco (2000 in Ge, 2004) that in international language teaching, the teacher has responsibility to provide opportunities for students to develop their own intermediary place between their own culture and that of the target language community.

In addition, it is very important for students to observe and describe social and cultural groups. By observing and reflecting the way other cultures manage their social relationships through language, and comparing the practices of others with their own, students become intercultural learners/speakers (Byram, 1997).

This study tries to analyze whether the students intercultural experience and intercultural communication could foster their intercultural competence. Therefore, the goals of this study are: a) to explore how intercultural communication could foster the students’ intercultural competence; and b) to investigate as to what areas of intercultural competence could be fostered through intercultural communication. In line with these, main focus of this research is formulated into two research questions:

- a) Does intercultural communication foster the students’ intercultural competence in an EFL classroom?
- b) In what areas of competence does intercultural communication foster the students’ intercultural competences?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This part is central as it deliniate main theories used as the bases of this research. It embraces tow main theories: intercultural communication and intercultural competence.

Intercultural Communication

Before discussing further about intercultural communication, we had better first talk about cultural diffrences and communication. As we agreed with that culture is different from society to society or from one ethnic group to another. Cultural differences do exist because people who live in different places see the world, time and space in different ways. They eat different foods, build different kinds of houses, speak different language or dialects, and greet each other in different ways (Hiebert, 1983).

Cultural differences can lead to misunderstanding, as people move from one culture to another, particularly when the same behavior has different meaning in the new setting

(Hiebert, 1983). In other words, cultural differences can cause conflict, when two cultures come into contact. Conflict is often caused by clash of values. Furthermore, cultural differences can be barriers to communication (Nida, 1976).

Communication is an element of culture. It derived from Latin word *communicare*, meaning to share with or to make common, as in giving to another part or share your thoughts, hopes, and knowledge (Jandt, 1998). Intercultural or cross-cultural communications are often used interchangeably, which is an interdisciplinary field of research that studies how people understand each other across group boundaries of various sorts: national, geographical, ethnic, occupational, class or gender.

Talking about intercultural communication must relate to the very source of the original paradigm from Hall (1959), who conceptualized his work with the Hopi and Navajo. He learned “firsthand about the details and complexities of one of the world’s most significant problems: Intercultural relations” (Hall, 1992, p. 76) as cited in (Rogers, Hat & Mizke, 2002, p.3).

Intercultural communication can be defined as face to face interaction or communication between members of different cultures (Samovar, 1980; Jandt, 1998). In addition Bennet (1998) states that intercultural communication – communication between people of different cultures- cannot allow the easy assumption of similarity. By definition, cultures are different in languages, behaviour patterns and values. Furthermore, some experts elaborate the definition of intercultural communication is simply described as the sending and receiving messages across languages and cultures. It is also a negotiated understanding of meaning in human experiences across social systems and societies (Arent, 2009). Furthermore, Gudykunst and Kim (1984) describe a very important step in their attempt to describe the intercultural communication process. They that we shall see intercultural communication as a dialogical process, in which both persons involved are both addressee and addressed. Their model describes interpersonal intercultural communication as person A and B message/feedback influences with psychocultural, sociocultural and cultural filters. Framing the whole communication process is environmental influences (Gudykunst & Kim 1984:14).

Intercultural Competence

To communicate with people from diverse and different cultural background, we should develop our intercultural competence in order to deal with them easily and smoothly without misunderstanding or miscommunication. In this globalization era, inevitably cultural diversity will manifest within the global market place including education field, making intercultural competence an extremely important skill. The ability to relate to and with people from vastly different cultural and ethnic backgrounds is an increasingly important competency both domestically and abroad (Lustig, 2005).

Intercultural competence is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interaction. Fantini (2000) puts forward his opinion about intercultural competence. He states that three principal themes (or domain of ability) should emerge in this competence: 1) the ability to develop and maintain relationship, 2) the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion, and 3) the ability to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others (p. 26).

Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality. Intercultural competence teaching pointed out the link between language and culture and the need to understand communication as the intercultural communication between non-native speakers and native speakers, rather than communication the target language. Its ultimate goal is to “help learners transcend their single world view (source culture) through learning a foreign linguaculture (target culture), leading them progressively towards intercultural competence (interculture) (Crozet and Liddicoat, 1999, p. 115).

In addition Deardorff (2006) puts forward her opinion that many scholars seemed to use either intercultural competence or intercultural communication competence. Thus, intercultural competence refers to multiple abilities that allow one interact effectively and appropriately cross cultures (p.40). Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence

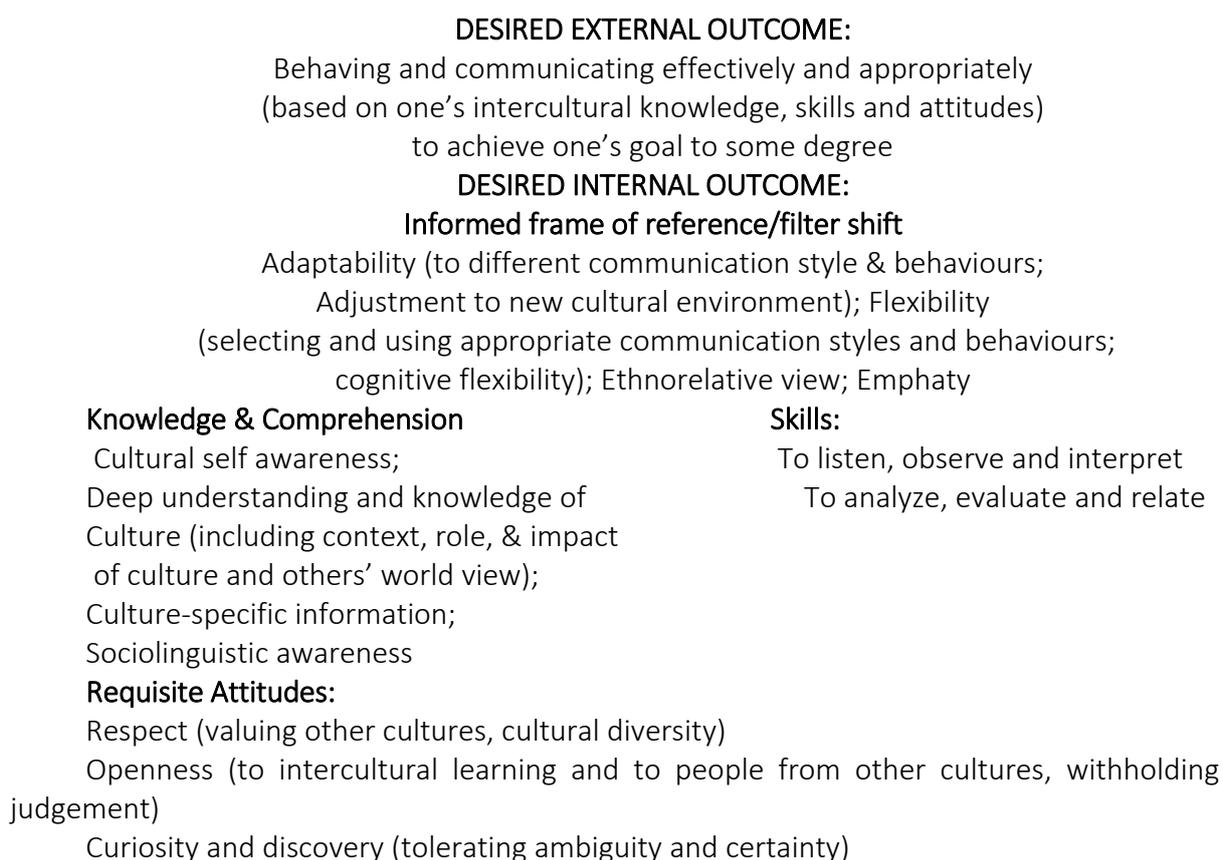


Figure 1 Model Pyramid of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006)

This model from Deardorff (2006) take the form of pyramid where the basic foundation functions as the bases for students achievement in the desired outcome. Students’ intercultural competence moves from personal level (attitude) to interpersonal or interactive level (outcomes). Thus, degree of intercultural competence depends on acquired degree of underlying elements.

Another model of intercultural competence used for this study is taken from Byram (1997). This model consists of several components, they are: knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social groups. These values are part of one's social identities. The foundation of intercultural competence is the attitudes of the intercultural speaker and mediator.

Intercultural Attitudes (savoir être)

Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own. This means a willingness to relativise one's own values, beliefs and behaviours, not to assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones, and to be able to see how they might look from an outsider's perspective who has a different set of values, beliefs and behaviours. This can be called the ability to 'decentre'.

Another crucial factor is knowledge, not primarily knowledge about a specific culture, but rather knowledge of how social groups and identities function and what is involved in intercultural interaction.

Knowledge (savoirs)

Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor country, and one of the general processes of societal and individual interaction. So knowledge can be defined as having two major components: knowledge of social processes, and knowledge of those processes and products; the latter includes knowledge how other people are likely to perceive you, as well as some knowledge about other people

Intercultural speaker/mediators need to be able to see how misunderstandings can arise, and how they might be able to resolve them, they need the attitudes of decentring but also the skills of comparing.

Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre):

Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.

Intercultural communicators need especially to know how to ask people from other cultures about their beliefs, values and behaviors, which because they are often unconscious, those people cannot easily explain. So intercultural speakers/mediators need skills of discovery and interaction.

Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre / faire):

Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction

Intercultural speakers/mediators need to become aware of their values and how these influence their views of other people's values. Intercultural speakers/mediators need a critical awareness of themselves and their values, as well as those of other couple.

Critical cultural awareness (savoir comprendre):

An ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative case study in which the researcher seeks to construct description of total phenomena within the context (Maxwell, 1996; Cohen and Manion, 1989; Merriam, 1988); using purposively one research site (Nunan, 1992) combined with two data collection techniques (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1988; Silverman, 2005).

Participants of the study were the fourth year students of English education department who took Cross-cultural Understanding subject in the seventh semester in the academic year 2017/2018. During one semester of the CCU class, the students were assigned to write portofolio about their experiences when having intercultural encounter and intercultural communication with people whose cultural background were vastly different from them. That kind of portofolio is called *A Self Assessment Intercultural communication experience*.

A Self Assessmet Intercultural Experience Portofolio was taken from Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (1997) and modified as a tool to measure attitudes whether the students become more tolerant of difference and the unfamiliar. This kind of a record of the students’ competences in the form of portofolio. Specifically the portofolio emphasizes the language biography which introduces the notion of self-assessment which considered significant both as a means of recording what has been experienced and learnt, and as a means of making learners become more conscious of their learning and of the abilities they already have. The students filled out the form by answering four questions as self assessment of intercultural competence. Here is the form of

Record of my Intercultural Experience

A. Feelings

Ways in which my curiosity and interest were aroused: (examples from ordinary daily life, especially when they made re-consider my own culture)

B. Knowledge

What I have learnt about customs and conventions of talking people (topics which interest them, topics to avoid how to greet people and take leave from them)

C. Attitudes

Incidents or problems which I resolved by explaining different cultures to people, helping them see the points of view of different cultures and how misunderstandings can happen.

The second instrument that the researcher used to collect the data was *The Students' Records of Direct Intercultural Communication*. This was used to obtain the real life experience when the students communicated with people from different cultural background. The intercultural communication was recorded and transcribed to make them easier to analyze.

Data from students *Self-assessment Intercultural Competence Portfolio* were analyzed by dividing the answer into each category: a) Feeling; b) Knowledge and c) Attitudes. Then, the data from the students records of direct intercultural communication were analyzed based on the theme underlying the topic, such as: 1) the differences in his/her own culture and the person he/she communicates with; 2) the pattern of communication; 3) the barriers in intercultural communication; and 4) the way in overcoming communication barrier. These two analysis technique were used to triangulate the findings from the emerging data.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section reports the findings from data analysis to answer the research questions. Firstly, the data from Students' questionnaires were presented in the form of table below:

A. Data from Self Assessment of Intercultural Competence

The participants of this research were homogeneous people from Sunda, Cimahi, West-Java. There are 25 students in the classroom, but five were chosen as the representative for data analysis. By filling their portfolio and recording direct intercultural communication, they intentionally met and encountered people from vastly different cultural background. Thus, the data will answer the two research questions put forward in the previous section.

The data from the students' records of direct intercultural communication were transcribed, analyzed and categorized based on the themes involved in measuring the intercultural communication competence. Below is the data displayed in the form of table.

Respondents	Feelings	Knowledge	Attitudes
R#1	Uneasy when she has to follow different cultural habit & values.	Positive thinking about cultural differences	Understand accept new culture, be kind & friendly
R#2	Hard to mingle with people from different culture	Understand and appreciate cultural differences	Strengthening her mentality to face people from different culture
R#3	Uncomfortable living in a different culture	Understand the habit and rythm of life in my Surrounding	Adapt and obtain new experience from the new culture

R#4	Strange with the local culture, particularly when see the ritual tradition	Telling frankly to the people and asking for forgiveness for not knowing the local culture	Learning and accepting cultural differences
R#5	Weird and strange with the local culture	Understand the differences in habit and festival of the local culture	Trying to adapt with the environment & the local culture

B. Data from the Students' Records of Direct Intercultural Communication

Data from the students' records of direct intercultural communication were transcribed, analyzed and categorized based on the themes involved in measuring the intercultural communication competence. The results were shown in the table below:

Respondents (R)	The ethnicity of the interlocutor during the Intercultural Communication	Cultural Differences	Patterns of Communication	Barrier of Communication	The way in overcoming Communication Barrier
R#1	Javanese (Solo/Surakarta)	Values of life: Go overseas (<i>merantau</i>)	Similar pattern between Javanese & Sundanese (levelage of language, ngoko, krama, tiyang jawi)	Language mastery (Sundanese)	Knowing basic characteristics of the culture
R#2	Batakne	Tradition	Bataknes	Language	Adaptation

	se (North – Sumatra)	ion & practices of the Bataks;	e: open, direct, heated conversation, high involvement; Sundane se: polite, soft voice	mastery	g to local culture
R#3	Ambon ese (Moluccas)	Sunda nese people are friendly; the differences of weather, people and culture (musical instrument)	Moluccas people are open, loud voice in conversation and high involvement	The language is difficult	Adaptin g to the local culture
R#4	Colombi an	Differ ences: Spicy food, Indonesian people are very kind & interesting, religions are different	High involvement	Mastery of bahasa Indonesia & Sundanese	Practice using the language
R#5	America n	Indon esia & America are	Direct, high involvement in	Language mastery; goal of	Learn the language; become

		multicultural countries; independent & community oriented; holiday tradition	communication, egalitarian,	communication;	flexible & tolerant
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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

- a) Does intercultural communication foster the students' intercultural competence in an EFL classroom?

The data from Self Assessment Intercultural Experience Portfolio showed that all five respondents initially The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astrayed had uneasy, hard, uncomfortable, strange and weird feelings when they had to mingle and live in the local people whose culture, language, ritual and tradition were vastly different from their own. Gradually, they developed positive thinking and tried to understand and appreciate cultural differences, habit and festival of the local culture. Finally, they developed positive actions and attitudes toward these differences by accepting, adapting and learning new cultures, and even one respondent tried to strengthen her mentality to face people from different culture.

This finding closely relates to the theory which is called 'decentre'. That is a willingness to relativise one's own values, beliefs and behaviours, not to assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones, and be able to see how they might look from an outsider's perspective who has different set of values, beliefs and behaviors (Byram, Gribkova & Starky, 2002). This is in line with Deardorff (2009) in its model in which the students are able to respect, openness and curiosity toward people from vastly different cultural background. In Deardorff (2009) model, this is the first layer of the Pyramid model of Intercultural competence in which the students fulfilled 'requisite attitude'

- b) In what areas of competence does intercultural communication foster the students' intercultural competences?

Data from A Self Assessment Intercultural Experience Portofolio and from the Students' Reords of Direct Intercultural Communication were used to answer the second research question. Five respondents were chosen as the participants of this study primarily because of their records of direct intercultural communication. These five respondents interacted with people from different areas such as R#1 with person from Java, R#2 with Bataknese, R#3 with Ambonese, R#4 with Colombian and the last one R#5 with an American.

The five respondents perceived differently about the person whom they communicated with such as, Javanese's values of life is go overseas, Batakese's values of tradition and the practice of the Bataks, Sundanese values of friendly people, food and culture, while Colombians perceived Indonesian values of friendliness, kindness, and religious, and lastly American perceived Indonesian as having similarity with him in the status as multicultural country, and independent.

Seing from pattern of communication, all respondents stated that Javanese and Sundanes used levelage of language; Batakese were open, direct, heated conversation and high involvement, and these were pretty similar to Ambonese; these patterns of communication were also similar to those Colombian and American. All respondents said that the only barrier in intercultural communication was language mastery.such as Sundanese, Batakese, Mollucas and indonesian language.

The last part of data analysis was how to overcome communication barrier. R#1 stated that knowing basic characteristics of the culture could help overcoming communication barrier; while R#2 and R#3 stated that adapting to the local culture helped them overcoming communication barrier; in addition R#4 and R#5 stated that learning & practicing the language helped them overcoming cultural barrier. R#5 specifically stated that becoming flexible and tolerant could help him overcoming communication barrier.

From data analysis we may find that the areas of competence in intercultural competence which were fostered by intercultural communication are cultural awareness, knowledge and skills. Indeed, it is being confirmed by Byram, Gribkova & Starky (2002) that the acquisition of intercultural competence is never complete and perfect, but to be a successful intercultural speaker and mediator does not require complete and perfect competence. It is not possible to acquire or to anticipate the knowledge one might need in interacting with people of other culture, because cultures are constantly changing, and in one country there may be many different cultures. Another reason is that everyone's own social identities and values develop. Everyone has therefore to be constantly aware of the need to adjust, to accept and to understand other people.

Byram (1997), Byram, Gribkova & Starky (2002), Deardorff (2006) altogether mention that the components of intercultural competence consists of knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social groups. These values are part of one's social identities. The foundation of intercultural competence is in the attitudes of the intercultural speaker and mediator.

Knowledge of how social groups and identities function and what is involved in intercultural communication. In this case knowledge can be defined as having two major components: knowledge of social process and knowledge of illustrations of those processes and products which includes knowledge about how other people are likely to perceive yo as well as some knowledge about other people.

Skills are just as important as attitudes and knowledge. Intercultural speakers/mediators need to be able to see how misunderstandings can arise and how they might be able to resolve them, they do not only need the attitude of decentring, but also the skills in comparing. By putting ideas, events, documents from two or more cultures side by side and seeing each might look from the other perspective, intercultural speakers/mediators can see how people might understand what is said or written or done by someone with a

different social identity. Intercultural speakers need especially to know how to ask people from other cultures about their beliefs, values and behaviours, which because they are often unconscious, so they need the skills of discovery and interaction.

Finally, intercultural speakers need to become aware of their own values and how these influence their views of other people's values. They need an ability to evaluate, critically on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. The one and only values that is worth to be promoted is that a position which acknowledges respect for human dignity and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction.

The areas of intercultural competences fostered by intercultural communication are in the second layer of Deardorff (2009) Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence which covered knowledge and comprehension where the students showed their cultural self-awareness, deep understanding and knowledge of culture, culture specific information and sociolinguistic awareness. The students fostered their intercultural skills by listening, observing, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and relating their knowledge to the real intercultural communication context. Then, this would gradually go up ward to the third layer of this model that is the desired outcome where the respondents would have adaptability to different communication style and behaviours, adjustment to new cultural environment and flexibility in selecting and using appropriate communication styles and behaviours.

There are some factors that have been identified as central to intercultural communicative competence, such as cultural knowledge and awareness, communication skills, and tolerance for ambiguity, strongly impact the favourability of intergroup contact (Gydkunst, 1986; Lustig & Koester, 1996 in Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). These findings strengthen the findings of this study.

In addition, when the respondents experienced intercultural communication barrier, it arose mainly from language barrier. It is conformed by (Dodd, 1995; Gudykunst, 1986; Lustig & Koester in Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002).that intercultural communication barriers arise from differences in cognition, affective and pattern of behaviour including language, customs, communication styles, etc. Effective intercultural communication requires cognitive, affective, and behavioural (including linguistic) adaptation that can be arduous and troublesome to participants in an intergroup encounter. Individual must meet the challenges of language barriers, unfamiliar customs & practices, and cultural variations in verbal and non verbal communication styles in order to achieve successful intercultural understanding (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern 2002).

It can be concluded that intercultural communication fosters the students' intercultural competence, particularly in the areas of cultural awareness, knowledge and attitudes. These findings are confirmed by the data from A Self assessment Intercultural Experience Portofolio in which the students are aware of cultural differences and similarities between the people they interacted with; language mastery is the main barrier in intercultural communication; adapting to the local culture is a way of overcoming the communication barrier. Adaptation to the local culture was a way of overcoming cultural barriers. Adaptation tends to be used in two senses: micro and macro. In the context of the study, adaptation in macro level happened in which the communicator is adept at making adjustment to the host culture across episodes and contexts of interaction within that

culture. In addition, cultural appreciation, acceptance of cultural difference, and knowledge of verbal communication patterns have helped the students enhance their cultural awareness to be more flexible in intercultural communication. This is also in line with (Gydkunst, 1986; Lustig & Koester, 1996 in Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002) who state that some factors that have been identified as central to intercultural communicative competence, such as cultural knowledge and awareness, communication skills, and tolerance for ambiguity, strongly impact the favourability of intergroup contact. These factors are the same areas of intercultural competence that has been attained by the students as the respondents of this study.

As they are English teacher candidates, the attainment of intercultural competence is an important prerequisite for effective teaching. Indeed, it has been shown from the data that intercultural communication has helped them fostering their intercultural competence. As it is stated by Hanley (1999) that to promote the students intercultural competence is through training and education. Since Indonesians are multicultural people, learning other cultures and comparing them with their own culture have helped the students understand the target language culture (Kramsch in Singhal, 1998).

Suggestions

The findings from this study are as meaningful contribution to the teaching intercultural communication in which it helps the students fostering their intercultural competence. Relevant with this, there are some suggestions put forward as follows:

For the students:

Since intercultural competence enhancement is not stagnant, the students' interaction in multicultural life, their roles as English teacher candidates, and their life learning experiences would help them become more mature and will lead them to the level of intercultural competence proficient.

For other researchers

From this study, it would be recommended for other researchers to elaborate deeper investigation in intercultural competence particularly investigating aspect of critical cultural awareness (CCA) from Byram (1997) model, as it will contribute beneficially for students' improvement in communication interculturally and intercultural competence.

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