

BRINGING STUDENTS' HOME AND FOREIGN CULTURE INTO LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: UNVEILING INDONESIAN EFL TEACHERS' BELIEF AND PRACTICES

Ulil Fitriyah

(fitriyah_ulil@yahoo.co.id)

English Literature Department

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century teaching, the function of English language classroom is not limited merely to preparing students to be able to communicate with native English language users. But, it is widely to prepare them to be successfully engaged with a global milieu in intercultural settings. However, this situation remains challenging for EFL teachers worldwide. It was evidenced by many scholars that teachers' positive perception toward interculturality in language teaching did not concurrently lead to the practice of language pedagogy in the classroom. This paper attempts to explore how Islamic Indonesian teachers perceive intercultural competence in the language classroom as well as how it is reflected in their teaching practices. By using electronic questionnaire, data were collected from 20 lecturers teaching Intensive English Course offered in the first semester of new college students majoring English. The results of the study indicated a strong positive belief toward intercultural competence, yet it is not congruent in its pedagogical activity in the classroom. Following this, further research possibility is also discussed in last section of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

The vast array of information, technology and communication as one of the effect of globalization gives much impact on many aspects of life, including toward the pattern interaction. English, which was formerly learned as to prepare students to communicate with native speakers, has functioned more broadly as a tool of international communication, even as global language as well as a lingua Franca (Tran & Dang, 2014). This means that English today, is not only about native and non-native, but it is more about how we can communicate and interact with other people around the globe with multi various cultural backgrounds. This global shift inevitably impacts on the objective of English pedagogy—communicative competence only in language classroom is considered insufficient (Byram, Holmas & Savides, 2013; Gu, 2016; Byram & Wagner, 2018). Hence, Intercultural competence becomes a crucial part to be integrated in today's English

language teaching (Tran & Dang, 2014; Zhou, 2011) as to prepare students to be intercultural speakers in multicultural settings (Chlopek, 2008; Tran & Duong, 2018; Dhanaraj, 2013; Thao & Tai, 2017; Byram & Wagner, 2018)

Even though there has been still an ongoing debate on which culture should be integrated in language teaching (Cahyono, 2018), a growing body of literatures has suggested that assisting English learners with equal information of all languages and cultures—including target language culture, and students' home culture, in the classroom will benefit them to be more critical as well as a rise students' intercultural awareness and sensitivity (Wahyudi, 2012). In this case, students are used to be encouraged to compare, evaluate, and interpret both students' own culture and other different world culture(s) (Chlopek, 2008). As a result, this pedagogical activity may also foster students' tolerance, acceptance, understanding, and respect toward others.

On the contrary, as Cahyono (2018) stated that some scholars might have argued that teacher should give priority on students' home culture in English learning as it may give much impact on the way they learn the target language. In other words, students' cultural background and belief may affect the way they perceive other foreign language and culture. Therefore, students' own culture should be taken as the starting point in teaching the target language (Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño, 2018). Conversely, Padem (2013) mentioned that adorning students with inadequate information of the key concept of other culture(s) will lead them into cultural offense in interaction. Besides, it also may lead to amusing situation and even conflict as a result of miscommunication (Chlopek, 2008). While, merely exposing students toward target language culture, on the other hand, may generate them into wrong perception toward their own native culture (Kramersch in Liddicoat, 2002), even may cause a cultural cringe and the loss of self-cultural identity (Shakiyyah, 2011).

Within the term of intercultural in language approach, Thao & Tai (2017) differentiated Intercultural Competence (IC) and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). Pointing out the work of Byram (1997), Thao and Tai defined IC as “the ability to interact in their (students) own language with people from another country and culture”. Of little difference, Aguilar (2010) had been defined ICC as student's competence to use a foreign language appropriately with other people from different countries and various cultural background with awareness of the specific meaning, values and connotations of the language (cited in Thao & Tai, 2017).

In contrast to Thao & Tai, Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño (2018) considered IC and ICC as similar concept which have a similar working definition. IC, according to them “is the competence that arises in the process of interaction among one's culture (known as C1) and others

(C2, C3), where communicative aspects are involved in carrying out a procedure of comparison of cultural aspects between the interlocutors”. In a similar vein, Tran & Duong (2018) defined ICC as the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with other people from different linguistic and cultural background. Yet, slightly different from those of Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño (2018) and Thao & Tai (2017), Tran & Duong (2017) put Intercultural competence (IC)—within which comprises of attitudes, knowledge, skills and awareness to be a part of ICC along with Language Competence (LC)—within which consist of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence. Simply stated, ICC covers both IC and LC within which have different intercultural component.

In regard to the salient role of intercultural competence in 21st century language teaching, a number of researchers have shown that there had been a greater attention taken toward intercultural competence in ELT amongst academician as well as practitioners worldwide. Albeit, some indicated the doubt on its applicability into classroom teaching practice (Castro, Sercu & Garcí ´a, 2004; Young & Schadev, 2011; Tran & Dang, 2014; Li, 2016; Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño, 2018; Chau & Truong, 2019). Following those of discussion on my paper attempts to voice the Indonesian teachers’ belief on intercultural teaching and their classroom practices. Some previous studies on this issue have been conducted by some researchers (e.g. Castro, Sercu & Garcí ´a, 2004; Young & Schadev, 2011; Zhou, 2011; Han & Song, 2011; Xiaohui & Li, 2011; Dhanaraj, 2013; Tran & Dang, 2014; Li, 2016; Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño, 2018; Chau & Truong, 2019), yet none of study on teachers’ belief and practices can be found in Indonesia, and especially in the context of Islamic University Classroom.

By following intercultural framework proposed by Byram (1997), this research attempts to examine the Indonesian teachers’ belief on intercultural competence and its classroom practices through the following research questions:

1. What are the Indonesian Islamic university EFL lecturers’ belief about intercultural competence in EFL teaching?
2. How do the Indonesian Islamic university EFL lecturers promote intercultural competence in EFL classroom?

METHOD

To investigate EFL teachers’ belief and its classroom practices, survey method was used in this study, by involving 20 participants consisting of 11 female and 9 male lecturers. From the total

participants, two of them hold doctoral degree while the others obtained master degree, with a half of them had experienced less than 10 years teaching, while the other 10 lecturers had more than 10 years' experience of teaching. In addition, 85% of the participants had experience (s) to travel abroad, and only two of them who stated that he/she never joined with intercultural seminars, training or workshop.

Table 1. Main Personal Data of Participants

1. Gender	Male	Female			
	9 (45%)	11 (55%)			
2. Age	29 - 30	31 - 35	36 - 40	41 - 45	46 - 50
	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	5 (5%)
3. Education	Master	Ph.D			
	18 (90%)	2 (10%)			
4. Teaching Experience	< 5 YRs	5-10 YRs	11-15 YRs	16-20 YRs	> 20 YRs
	7 (35%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)
5. Intercultural Seminar/workshop/training	Never	1- 5 times	> 5 times		
	2 (10%)	10 (50%)	8 (40%)		
6. Traveled Abroad	Yes	No			
	17 (85%)	3 (15%)			
7. Frequency of interaction with people from other country(s)	everyday	once a week	once a month	sometimes	Never
	0	2 (10%)	0	18 (90%)	0

All the lecturers participated in this survey are teaching Intensive English Course (IEC) — henceforth will be designated as IEC lecturers. IEC class is offered for new students majoring in English literature in one of the most leading Islamic universities in Indonesia. The course is offered

as a compulsory subject in the first semester and function as a pre-requisite course for other skill or component subjects, i.e. Paragraph Writing, Literal Reading, Basic English Grammar and Academic Vocabulary. The class is divided into 10 classes—started from A – J class, which is classified based on the level of students' English proficiency. The class is taught by team teaching, meaning that 2 lecturers are responsible for one class. Therefore, total number of the participants are 20 lecturers.

Data was collected by using electronic questionnaire, namely google docs. The question on questionnaire was adapted from Zhou (2011) which had been adjusted to Indonesian context. Prior to its distribution, the questionnaire was validated to 4 EFL lecturers, the two of whom are IEC lectures and the other two are lectures from different universities who are considered to be the expert of EFL teaching. To respond the aforementioned research questions, the questionnaire was divided into three sections, they are: (1). Teachers' personal and cultural background; (2) Teachers' belief toward intercultural competence, and (3). Teachers' classroom practices.

The first section of the questionnaire was provided in the form of semi-open ended question, the second section was in the form of four-point Likert scale with various degrees of importance, starting from "not very important" to "very important". This second section consist of 5 items covering language competence as well as intercultural competence as teaching objective, and the degree of what culture should be integrated in EFL classroom. Similar to the second section, the last was in the form of four-point Likert scale with different options varying from "never" to "always with eleven questions. The questions in the last section was correlated with Byram's five intercultural dimension, encompassing: (1). Intercultural attitude; (2). Intercultural knowledge; (3). Skills of interpreting and relating; (4). Skills of discovering and interacting; and (5). Critical cultural awareness skills or political education.

FINDINGS

Teachers' Belief on the Objectives of Intercultural Competence in EFL Language Teaching

From the result of the study it indicates that, generally Islamic university IEC lectures have strong believe on teaching both language competence as well as intercultural competence in EFL classroom. This is as shown in table. 2 on teachers' belief on the objective of EFL teaching which indicates that from the question related to language competence (item 1 and item 2), and intercultural competence (Item 3, Item 4, and Item 5), the total means scores are all almost nearly 4. However, if it is seen from the degree of the importance, it can be noted that IEC lecturers consider language competence is more important to be the learning objective of EFL teaching than

intercultural competence. More particularly, the data shows that most lecturers take reading and writing skill in the first place of teaching objective in IEC classroom with the total means score 3.75 out of 4 and listening and speaking skills in the second place with the total mean score 3.65.

Table 2: Teachers' beliefs on the objectives of EFL teaching

Questionnaire Item	Total Value	N	M	SD
1. Help students to acquire listening and speaking skills.	73	20	3.65 (2)	0.572
2. Help students to acquire reading and writing skills.	75	20	3.75 (1)	0.536
3. Promote students' understanding of the culture of English-speaking country(s).	71	20	3.55 (4)	0.589
4. Promote students' understanding of Indonesian or local culture such as Javanese, or even religious values and beliefs.	72	20	3.60 (3)	0.584
5. Help our students to be open and positive to foreign cultures in English language classroom other than the culture of English-speaking countries, such as Japanese culture, Singaporean Culture, India Culture, etc.	69	20	3.45 (5)	0.669

In regard to the intercultural competence, interestingly, the result of the study indicates that IEC lecturers believe that inserting students' home culture is more pivotal in EFL classroom than those of other countries' culture. Even so, this does not mean that other countries' culture—including western culture (S) and other foreign culture(s), is not important to be introduced in the EFL classroom. Amongst the three of cultures—students' home culture, western culture(s) and other foreign culture(s), are necessary to be promoted in EFL classroom with slightly different degree of importance (students' home culture, M= 3.60, western culture(s), M= 3.55, and other foreign culture(s), M=3.45)

Teachers' Practice on Intercultural Competence in EFL Classroom

Generally, the result of the study indicated that more than a half of IEC lecturers did not frequently acknowledge intercultural competence in their classroom. Specifically, following the work of Byram (1997) on intercultural dimension, lecturers were working in almost similar rate in all five dimensions—e.g. intercultural attitude, intercultural knowledge, skills of discovering and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness. However, some differences are found in each item of its dimension as indicated in table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' practice on Intercultural Competence in Language Classroom

No	Questionnaire Item	Not Frequently %		Frequently %	
		Never	sometime s	Frequen tly	Alwa ys
A. Practices that address intercultural attitude					
1.	I ask students to share the interesting or strange cultural symbols, norms or acts from English-speaking country(s). (C2)	20	40	25	15
		Σ	60	Σ	40
2.	I encourage students to questions their own values, beliefs, and perspectives which may be understood differently by people from other cultures. (C1)	15	50	20	15
		Σ	65	Σ	35
B. Practices that address intercultural knowledge					
3.	I ask students to discuss the way in which Indonesian people and Indonesian culture is seen by English speaking people. (C1)	25	40	35	0
		Σ	65	Σ	35
4.	I ask students to explore different perspectives of Indonesian and English speaking people may have on a particular event/phenomena (C1-C2)	30	35	25	10
		Σ	65	Σ	35
5.	Besides cultures of English speaking countries, I also touch upon cultures of other countries (Ex: Japan, India, Korea, etc.) (C3)	10	25	60	5
		Σ	35	Σ	65

C. Practices that address skills of discovering and interaction					
6.	I ask students to explore cultural symbols, norms or cultural acts implied in events or other sources (book, internet, movie, magazine) from English-speaking country(s). (C2)	10	50	35	5
		Σ	60	Σ	40
7.	I ask students to use their prior cultural knowledge and skills to explain events or other documented cultural norms from English culture(s). (C2)	30	30	35	5
		Σ	60	Σ	40
D. Practices that address skills of interpreting and relating					
8.	I ask students to discuss the cause of stereotypes that Indonesian people have for English cultures. (C1 – C2)	30	30	25	15
		Σ	60	Σ	40
9.	I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Indonesian and English speaking people and explain the causes. (C2)	30	20	50	0
		Σ	50	Σ	50
E. Practices that address critical cultural awareness					
10.	I ask students to explore values, beliefs, and ideological perspectives implied in events or other documented cultural norms from English cultures. (C2)	35	25	30	10
		Σ	60	Σ	40
11.	I ask students to discuss how their own values and beliefs influence the way they see other culture(s). (C1)	50	15	25	10
		Σ	65	Σ	35

In the case of *intercultural attitude* dimension (table 3.A), it is pointed out that 60 % – 65% lecturers mostly did not quite much stimulate students to think both of their own home culture as well as other foreign culture, especially English speaking country(s). Even so, as indicated in the table, there was no any remarkable differences of which culture should have been taught in EFL

classroom (see table 3.A, 25% for item 1 and 20% for item2). Either local or English-speaking culture took almost the same amount of intensity in EFL teaching practice.

Similar to that of intercultural attitude, addressing intercultural knowledge in IEC classroom was also barely done by most lectures in their teaching practices (see table 3.B). Apart from this, in terms of the frequency of three pedagogical activities, both introducing the way how foreign people perceive Indonesian (item 3) to the students and assessing different perspective that might happen on both cultures (item 4) had the same portion of frequency (each of them are 35% in total). Yet, interestingly, number of lectures—touch up to 65%, had acknowledged that they often promoted students to other foreign culture(s) aside from English-speaking country (item 5).

The similar point also happened on the third intercultural dimension, i.e. skill of discovering and interaction (table 3.C). 60% of lecturers acknowledged that they did not frequently either take the benefit of students' prior knowledge and skills to promote English-speaking culture or encourage them to explore the culture of English-Speaking country. Even 30% of lectures stated that they did not use students' knowledge and skills to learn other foreign culture.

While the fourth intercultural dimension which is shown table 3.D, it is shown that albeit generally the lecturers occasionally ask students to interpret and relate the cause of stereotyping that Indonesian people have for other foreign culture (see item 8), a half of them attempted to encourage their students to explore the cause of communication barrier occurred between Indonesian and English-speaking people. Yet, a half of the lectures stated that they never stimulated students to reflect back toward their own culture and its impact on how other people perceive them which may encourage them to have better critical cultural awareness (see table 3.E, item 11). In addition, regarding to critical cultural dimension, students were also rarely provoked to explore English cultural values, beliefs, and ideological perspectives (table 3.E, item 10)

To sum up, from the above table it can be assumed that although IEC lectures did not quite much address intercultural competence in their classroom practice. Indeed, culture is somehow inseparable from the language teaching. From the data shown, concerning to what culture was taught in IEC classroom, the data pinpointed that even though more English-speaking culture got the first place in EFL classroom teaching, there had been only slightly different proportion (5%) of both students' home culture and English speaking culture to be taken into EFL teaching practice (see table 3.A; 3.B and 3.E). Yet, surprisingly 65% of lecturers noted that oftentimes they promote other foreign language culture(s), with English-Speaking culture as the exception, in EFL classroom (see table 3.B, item 5). This might happen as a result of the shifting paradigm on the role of English as global language used by people around the world.

DISCUSSION

Teacher, according to Young & Schadev (2011), is a key “broker” between theories of interculturality and its classroom practices. It is, therefore, the salient role of teacher in the success of intercultural teaching in language classroom cannot be neglected. As a key broker, teacher should actually be able to fill “the gap” between the theory and the practices. In doing so, teachers’ belief should be taken into account since it is a crucial foundation for teacher to be a good decision maker in their own classroom (Castro, Sercu, Garcia, 2010). Yet, many studies on teachers’ belief and practices on intercultural teaching resulted that mostly, strong confidence on the importance of intercultural teaching was still not followed with good classroom practices for many reasons (Castro, Sercu & Garcí a, 2004; Young & Schadev, 2011; Xiaohui & Li, 2011; Tran & Dang, 2014; Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño, 2018; Chau & Truong, 2018)

Taken a part in the teachers’ belief and practices on intercultural competence discourse, the result of this study reveals that all participants teaching at Islamic University in Indonesia, has high positive responses to intercultural teaching. This result is in line with the result of the study conducted by Castro, Sercu & Garcí a, 2004; Young & Schadev, 2011; Zhou, 2011; Han & Song, 2011; Dhanaraj, 2013; Tran & Dang, 2014; Li, 2016; Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño, 2018; Chau & Truong, 2019. However, the research result also shows that when intercultural competence is corresponded to language competence, all the participants acknowledged that language competence—including reading and writing, and listening and speaking needs greater attention than intercultural competence. This probably happens because lecturers’ belief was affected by the level of students’ language proficiency, and the main teaching objective. In the context of IEC class, lecturers are demanded to be able to boost students’ language proficiency. Thus, although lecturers have big opportunity to create more challenging materials, curriculum demand may inevitably shape teachers’ belief on the main objective of their teaching practices.

As a response to the common question of which culture should be taught in the classroom, the result of this study is in line with Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño (2018), stating that students’ home culture was considered to be more pivotal to bring into EFL classroom. However, this belief was inconsistent with the finding on teachers’ classroom practice in this study. While all lecturers confidently believed that local culture should be taken in the first place than English speaking culture, in fact, in the classroom teaching practice, it was expressed in the other way. Similar finding also happens on how lecturers perceived other foreign cultures—such as Japan, India, Korea, etc., and its classroom practice. There had been remarkable discrepancy between lecturers’ belief in which they stated that no slight differences amongst three cultures (local,

western and other foreign cultures), yet in its classroom practices 65% lecturers address other foreign cultures more frequently than those of local as well as western.

Furthermore, in regard to classroom practices, the result of this study revealed that lecturers did not frequently incorporate cultures into IEC classroom. As has been previously mentioned by some scholars, teachers' strong belief, especially in intercultural teaching, does not concurrently affect the way they teach in the classroom for some reasons (Castro, Sercu & García, 2004; Young & Schadev, 2011; Xiaohui & Li, 2011; Tran & Dang, 2014; Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño, 2018; Chau & Truong, 2018). This finding is opposite with common scholars' argument stating that teacher's belief drives directly teachers' classroom teaching practice (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Clark & Yinger, 1987 as cited in Young & Schadev, 2011). Since intercultural issue in language teaching is considered to be novel additional competence in language teaching, sufficient support which is intended to improve lecturers' intercultural teaching skills is absolutely necessary as suggested by Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño, (2018) and Chau & Truong (2018)

In relation to Byram's intercultural dimension, the previous stated research finding is also impactful on the way how lectures address those five intercultural dimensions. There was no clear pattern can be found in the classroom practice concerning to those dimension. This means that, lecturers' lack of knowledge on intercultural model of teaching limits them to explore the five intercultural dimensions proposed by Byram (1997) into their teaching practice

CONCLUSION

In today's English language teaching, Intercultural competence still becomes wide spectrum of discussion amongst scholars as well as practitioners. To be engaged in the discussion, this study aims at voicing intercultural teaching practices, particularly in Indonesian Islamic institution context, by considering teachers' belief as the starting point. In addition to other scholars' research finding, this study also reveals that teachers' strong belief on the importance of integrating intercultural competence in language teaching was not congruent with its implementation in classroom teaching practice. There may be many reasons lie behind this problem, however those are not becoming the focus of this study. Therefore, this can be a limitation for this study and at the same time can be further suggestion for other researchers to deeply investigate the problems.

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