

Intercultural Communication Competence for Public School Teachers: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

One of the successes of education lies in the quality of good teachers. One of them is competence in the field of intercultural communication, especially because Indonesia a saais very multicultural so it cannot be avoided that in every class student from different backgrounds such as culture, religion, race, socio-economic conditions, and also students with special needs are encountered. However, until now, there are still many teachers, especially in public schools, who are considered not to have intercultural communication competence. However, until now, there are still many teachers, especially in public schools, who are considered not to have intercultural communication competence, causing students with different cultural backgrounds to feel uncomfortable studying in public schools. This study aims to answer the question of how the intercultural communication competence of teachers in public schools and what obstacles are encountered by students who have different cultural backgrounds in pursuing their education in public schools, and what efforts should be made so that teachers in public schools can improve their competence in intercultural communication. This is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach because this study wants to dig deeper into the experiences experienced by parents and public elementary school students with special needs and students of different ethnicities and religions. Data collection in this study used semi-structured interviews semi structured interview with 21 informants consisting of students, parents and education practitioners. The results of this study indicate that the intercultural communication competence of teachers in public schools still needs improvement.

Keywords

intercultural communication competence; public school teachers; phenomenological study



I. Introduction

The ability to communicate with others is one of the keys to a person's success. Likewise in the learning process, the success of the teaching and learning process can be measured from the success of students who take part in learning activities. The learning process will run well if there is good communication between teachers and students and students with students. Education cannot run without the support of communication, even education can only work through communication. The ability to communicate can help and

facilitate students to express ideas, and exchange information with teachers or fellow students (Marfuah, 2017:151).

Communication between teachers and students sometimes does not run effectively. The teacher is always in a position that is superior to the students, while the students are in a weak position in front of the teacher, for example, it can be seen in many social media such as physical attacks and others. Building effective communication between teachers and students does need to be accompanied by an attitude of respect and mutual respect between teachers and students. Class rules also need to be communicated to students so that they cannot be unilateral. These rules become a kind of learning contract, agreed upon and ready to be implemented, therefore when someone violates them, they are ready to accept the consequences.

Therefore, teachers must have good competence in communication, in order to become professional teachers, as is also demanded by the global community. This can be seen in the contents of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2015-2030 document, which states that all governments of the world's countries by 2030 must be able to ensure that students must be educated by qualified, trained and motivated teachers.

Indonesia already has a national education system as stipulated in the National Education System Act No. 20 of 2003. However, a number of educational problems are still encountered. There are still many teachers who do not have the competence to communicate with their students, especially those from different cultural backgrounds. Even though teachers should understand that our country is a very multicultural country. The identity of the Indonesian nation cannot be separated from the existence of the diverse Indonesian nation. Therefore, every teacher should understand the diversity that occurs in the world of education, especially the diversity of ethnicity, culture, language, religion, social status, gender and race. However, differences in students in the world of education are not only the problems above, teachers must also understand that there are students with special needs backgrounds, who require special attention with an intercultural communication approach.

The problems above are still commonly encountered, especially in government schools or commonly known as state schools or public schools. Public schools and private schools have their own characteristics, so that with each characteristic will show differences between one another. If we think wisely, both public and private schools have the same goal as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, namely to educate the nation's life. With their own methods and characteristics, public schools and private schools have certainly tried to achieve this goal.

Dedi Kurniawan (2010) in Nadia dan Nopriatin (2015) explained the dichotomy of public teachers and private teachers, which puts a negative position on state teachers whose work patterns are increasingly non-standard, from teachers who are often absent, teachers whose teaching is not standard, teachers who are often late, teachers who are more in the office than in the classroom, teachers who work outside a lot, to teachers who often take other advantages by holding lessons at home. Private teachers, in this context, they are more serious in teaching their students.

This study aims to answer the question of how the intercultural communication competence of teachers in public schools and what obstacles are encountered by students who have different cultural backgrounds in pursuing their education in public schools, and what efforts should be made so that teachers in public schools can improve their competence in intercultural communication. The results of this study will contribute to teachers in Indonesia, especially those who teach in public schools, and also to stakeholders in field of education.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Definition of Intercultural Communication

The definition of intercultural communication according to Gudykuns is Intercultural communication involves communication between people from different cultures (William B. Gudykunst, 2003:1). Deddy Mulyana, intercultural communication is the process of exchanging thoughts and meanings between people of different cultures. The communication principle put forward by Deddy Mulyana states that the more similar the socio-cultural background, the more effective the communication (Deddy Mulyana, 2004:107). While two different cultures bring so many differences, different values, norms, attitudes, behavior, and many other things. So it is natural to say that the bigger the difference, the more difficult it is to create effective communication. Meanwhile, Stewar L. Tubbs-Sylvia Moss (2005) defines intercultural communication as communication between people of different cultures (either in terms of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic differences).

Lewis and Slade (1994) describe three of the most problematic areas in the sphere of intercultural exchange, namely language barriers, differences in values, and differences in patterns of cultural behavior. The three aspects are: (a) The language barrier which is something that appears, but the barrier is easier to overcome because language can be learned. (b). Differences in values. These are a serious obstacle to the emergence of cultural misunderstandings because when two people from different cultures interact, these differences will prevent reaching a rational agreement on important issues. c. Intercultural misunderstandings due to differences in cultural behavior are more caused by the inability of each cultural group to appreciate the habits carried out by each cultural group.

Samovar et al (2010) mentions several inhibiting factors of intercultural communication, namely (a) Ethnocentrism, which is the degree to which individuals perceive other people's cultures as inferior to their own; (b). Stereotypes, namely generalizations about some groups of people that greatly simplify reality; (c) Prejudice, which is a rigid attitude towards groups based on erroneous beliefs or preconceptions, can also be understood as judgments that are not based on knowledge and testing of available information.

2.2 Intercultural Communication Competence

Intercultural communication competence is a person's ability to communicate with other people who have different cultural backgrounds. The word competence is a state of being capable, or can be interpreted as a condition that shows a person's capability or ability so that he can function in urgent and important ways. (Webster in Liliweri, 2002: 261). Chen and Starosta (1996) suggest that intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the ability to carry out various communication behaviors effectively and appropriately, which can integrate one cultural identity with one another or various identities in different cultural environments.

According to Chen (2014) competent individuals in an intercultural context must have the capacity, among others: knowing their own cultural values and those of others, showing positive feelings, respecting, and even accepting cultural differences and being able to behave appropriately and appropriately context of intercultural interaction. In addition, Kim (cited in Williams, 2005) summarizes into one hypothesis that intercultural communication competence is the result of adaptability, namely a person's ability to adapt some old ways or customs of a culture, where he will learn and adapt to new customs. , and can creatively find ways to manage the dynamics of cultural differences or intimacy, intergroup styles, and control over pressure.

According to Samovar, Porter, and Mc. Daniel (2010:461), intercultural communication competence includes: (1) motivation to communicate; (2) sufficient knowledge of culture; (3) appropriate communication skills; (4) sensitivity, and (5) character.



Figure 1. *Intercultural Communication Competency (ICC) Components*

Source: Samovar, Porter, Mc Daniel (2007)

a. Motivation to Communicate

Motivation in relation to intercultural communication competence means that you have a personal desire to improve your communication skills (Samovar, Porter, and Mc.Daniel, 2010:461). Motivation are drives that initiate a person's behaviour to act in a certain way. For someone to act either positively or negatively depend on incentives that is available (Takwate, 2021). Purwanto in Khairani (2020) which states that "motivation is a conscious effort to influence a person's behavior so that he moves his heart to act to do something so as to achieve certain results or goals". According to Mc Donald in motivation (Kompri in Irhamna, 2020) is a change in energy in a person's personality which is marked by the emergence of affective (feelings) and reactions to achieve goals, so that the emergence of motivation in individuals can be realized or not.

b. Sufficient Knowledge of Culture

The knowledge component in intercultural communication competence means that you are aware of and understand the rules, norms, and expectations associated with the culture of the people with whom you interact (Samovar, Porter, and Mc.Daniel, 2010:461).

c. Appropriate Communication Skills

As a competent intercultural communicator, you must be able to hear, observe, analyze, and interpret and apply these specific behaviors in a way that enables you to achieve your goals (Samovar, Porter, and Mc.Daniel, 2010:462). You must realize, however, that successful communication skills with one group may not be appropriate for another culture (Samovar, Porter, and Mc.Daniel, 2010:462).

d. Sensitivity

Communication competence requires participants in an interaction that is sensitive to each other and to the culture displayed in an interaction (Samovar, Porter, and Mc.Daniel,

2010:461). Sensitivity according to Pittinsky, Rosenthal, and Motoya (in Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, 2010: 462), includes flexibility, patience, empathy, curiosity about other cultures, being open to differences, and feeling comfortable with others.

e. Character

According to P.B. Fitzwater (in Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, 2010:463), that character is the whole of one's choices. The point is how you exercise those choices when you interact with people from different cultures. The traits associated with characters are whether they can be trusted or not (Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, 2010:463). Traits sometimes associated with trusted people are honesty, respect, fairness, and the ability to make the right choice, as well as honor, altruism, sincerity, and goodwill (Samovar, Porter, and Mc. 2010:463).

f. Public School

According to their status, schools are divided into public schools and private schools. Public schools, namely schools organized by the government, ranging from elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, vocational high schools and universities. Private schools, namely schools run by non-government/private sectors, the organizers are bodies in the form of educational foundations which until now legal entities providing education are still in the form of draft government regulations (Ariana, 2016).

The first and main difference between public schools and private schools lies in the legal basis. Although public schools and private schools serve the same service sector and society, the legal umbrella is different. All schools are required to comply with the National Education System Act No.20 of 2003.

The advantages of sending children to public schools include: (a) cheaper school fees. (b) Far from a luxurious lifestyle (usually in a private school the social environment is luxurious). Meanwhile, in addition to the advantages, there are also disadvantages of public schools, namely: (a) inadequate facilities due to limited sources of funds, and (b) teachers who do not play an active role in educating students, mostly teaching modestly, not trying to get to know their students closely (Ariana, 2016).

III. Research Method

This is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology wants to reveal what is the reality and experience experienced by individuals, to reveal and understand something that is not visible from the individual's subjective experience. Therefore, the researcher cannot include and develop his assumptions in his research (Creswell, 1994).

Phenomenology is a view of thinking that emphasizes the focus on human subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. This phenomenology comes from the philosophy that surrounds human consciousness which was initiated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) a German philosopher. Initially this theory was used in the social sciences. According to Husserl, there are several definitions of phenomenology, namely: (1) subjective or phenomenological experience, and (2) a study of consciousness from the main perspective of a person. Furthermore, Martin Heidegger argues about Husserl's phenomenology (in Mujib: 2015) that it is impossible for humans to have "consciousness" if there is no "field of consciousness", namely a place, panorama or world so that "awareness" can occur in it which leads to existence worldly.

The definition of phenomenology is also expressed by several experts and researchers in their studies. According to Alase (2017) phenomenology is a qualitative methodology that

allows researchers to apply and apply their subjectivity and interpersonal skills in the exploratory research process. Second, the definition put forward by Creswell quoted by Eddles-Hirsch (2015) which states that qualitative research is a study that is interested in analyzing and describing the experience of an individual phenomenon in the everyday world.

Data collection in this study used semi-structured interviews. According to Sugiyono (2010), semi-structured interviews are interview guides carried out in an effort to find problems more openly, where the parties involved are invited to ask each other for opinions, ideas in depth. Meanwhile, Arikunto (2010) found that the meaning of semi-structured interview is a kind of interviewing technique which is done by the researcher first asking questions that have been structured so that then one by one it is deepened to extract further information in depth about the research topic that he wants to study.

In this study, the researchers interviewed 21 informants consisting of 10 parents of students and 10 elementary school students, grades 5 and 6. The reason the researchers took informants from grade 5 and 6 students was because students who were on average between 11-12 years old had already can provide a more objective opinion than students who are still sitting in lower grades. The informants were further classified into: 5 parents of students with special needs, 5 parents of ethnic Chinese students. Students are also classified into 5 students with special needs and 5 ethnic Chinese students. This is done to get a more detailed picture of their experience attending public schools. To get an idea of what solutions should be taken by the government and schools so that the intercultural communication competence of teachers can be increased, the researchers also interviewed an education practitioner.

There are things that are conveyed to the research subjects before the interview process is carried out, namely: (1) the goals and interests of the researcher, (2) confidentiality, (3) research procedures, and (4) preparation to start the interview. The data analysis method used in this research is data explication technique. This technique is a data analysis technique that includes several steps, namely: (1) obtaining an understanding of the data as a whole, (2) compiling Individual Phenomenon Descriptions (IPD), (3) identifying episodes in each IPD, (4) theme explication in each episode, and (5) synthesis of the explanation of each theme in each episode.

IV. Discussion

From interviews conducted to 10 parents of students obtained data as summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1. The Results of the Researcher's Interview with the Parents of the Students Related to the Teacher's Ability to Communicate between Cultures

No	ICC Components	Parents of students with special needs	Parents of Chinese Ethnic Students
1.	Teacher motivation to communicate	Lack of attention to children with special needs	Paying less attention to ethnic Chinese children
		Teachers do not fully have the desire to establish communication with parents of children with special needs	Teachers do not fully have the desire to establish communication with the parents of Chinese ethnic children
2.	Teacher knowledge about culture	Lack of knowledge about handling children with special needs	Lack of knowledge in dealing with students of different ethnicities and religions

		Not teaching students to appreciate differences	Not teaching students to appreciate differences
3.	Communication skills	Does not have good communication skills	Does not have good communication skills
4.	Sensitivity	Does not have high cultural sensitivity	Not sensitive in conveying issues related to ethnicity, race and religion
		No attempt to stop bullying	There is an omission of bullying
5.	Character	Can't be a good role model	The teacher's character does not appear

From the results of the interviews above, it is obtained data that teachers in public schools still lack the competence of intercultural communication. This is evidenced by the opinions of parents who all say that teachers in public schools do not have cultural sensitivity, knowledge of culture, communication skills, do not have the motivation to build communication and do not have the character as a teacher. One of the attitudes taken is to allow bullying to occur, as said by one parent of a student with special needs.

“Initially I intended to send my child to a special school, but because I wanted him to be able to socialize with friends from various backgrounds, I enrolled my child in a public school. However, what happened was that he was always the victim of bullying at his school. What is very disappointing is that the teachers don't seem to want to reprimand bullies, instead they tend to act like they don't know that bullying is happening to their students.” (EK, parents of children with special needs).

This is in stark contrast to the statement by Samovar, Porter and Mc Daniel (2010: 462) which states that if we want to be competent in intercultural communication, we must be willing and able to listen, observe, analyze, interpret and apply them in life in order to avoid conflict and can solve problems better.

From interviews with parents, information was also obtained that teachers in public schools are lack knowledge of culture, so they are less able to teach their students to respect differences. This is also experienced by non-Muslim Chinese parents where their children attend public schools.

“According to the law, state schools are public schools and not only schools for Muslim children. So all teachers should be able to respect differences. How can he teach about tolerance and others if he doesn't understand himself. As a result, our children are victims, not only bullied but also not paid attention by their teachers. My child seems to be a minority at school.” (DW-Parents of non-Muslim students)

This is not in line with Chen's (2014) opinion which requires us to be able to respect, and even accept cultural differences and be able to behave appropriately and appropriately in the context of intercultural interactions. Meanwhile, the results of interviews with elementary school students are summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2. The Results of the Researchers' Interviews with Elementary School Students Related to the Experiences They Experienced while Attending Public Elementary Schools

No	ICC Components	Special Needs Students	Chinese Students
1.	Teacher Motivation to communicate	Feeling uncomfortable and insecure at school	Feeling uncomfortable and insecure at school
		Fear of being bullied	Fear of being bullied
		Teachers very rarely ask if I have a problem or not	The teacher pays less attention
2.	Teacher knowledge about culture	Lack of opportunity to be involved in school activities	Teachers seem to think that Chinese are not Indonesians
		Not teaching students to appreciate differences	Not teaching students to appreciate differences
3.	Communication skills	never talk specifically from heart to heart	Teachers often show their dislike for Chinese
4.	Sensitivity	Insensitive to seeing students being bullied	Insensitive to seeing students being bullied and take it as a joke
		There is no attempt to stop bullying	There is no attempt to stop bullying
5.	Character	Unfriendly to students	Students are afraid to ask or say something

From the results of the interviews above, it was obtained data that students with special needs often get bullied from their friends and they feel that their teachers are not sensitive or do not care about the bullying they experience. The teachers just thought of all of this as an ordinary kid's joke.

“When I went to a public school, I was bullied almost every day because I used a wheelchair. They always did something to me, like pulling my bag and then throwing it somewhere else and I had to pick it up myself. Sometimes they put chewing gum on my desk so my books stuck and tore. At that time my friends laughed. But strangely, my teacher never reprimanded them. Maybe they thought they were joking. Fortunately, there was one kind-hearted friend, who always helped me.” (AR-special needs student)

Meanwhile, other students who are from Chinese ethnic also feel the same way. He often gets unfavorable treatment from their friends because physically he is different from the others. However, the teacher never gave them a warning. He even laughed.

“When I entered a public school, I was treated badly by the students at that school. They always called me by various names that show that I am different from them, like....slanted eyes, Chinese...etc. Surprisingly, my teacher never reprimanded them. He even blamed me more often and said that I always made noise in class. He even said that I was a trouble maker. I felt that the school was not for me.” (IT- Chinese student)

From the answers above, it can be concluded that teachers still have high ethnocentrism, who often do stereotyping. He considers people from different cultures to be troublemakers. This is one of the obstacles in intercultural communication (Samovar, 2007). In fact, teachers can provide a sense of comfort for their students. Teachers must also be open

to differences (Pittinsky, Rosenthal, and Motoya in Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2010:462).

Meanwhile, in overcoming problems related to intercultural communication of teachers in public schools, the government must provide effective training so that teachers understand the importance of increasing professionalism as educators by having good competence in intercultural communication. The training is carried out not only by the government but also by contributions from the private sector through educational institutions, Non Government Organizations (NGOs), or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) so that every teacher can improve their professionalism with quality intercultural communication competence, because teachers are basically not only educators but also as motivators.

V. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the intercultural communication competence of teachers in public schools is still low. Teachers do not yet have cultural sensitivity. This is evidenced by the teacher's insensitivity when he sees his students getting bad treatment from their friends. In addition, teachers also do not have sufficient knowledge about culture and how to realize and understand the rules, norms, and expectations of students from different cultures. This study also shows that teachers do not yet have the ability to listen, observe, analyze, interpret and apply behavior according to the background of each student, and do not appear to have the motivation to build good communication, both with students from different cultures and with their parents. For further research, the researchers suggest that research that focuses on intercultural communication competence with a different approach should be conducted.

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