Role of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) to Improve the Quality of English Language Lecturers in the Digital Era

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Abstract

In this modern era, challenges and competition on a global scale are getting tougher. For this reason, language skills, especially English, are very important as a provision to participate in global competition. English itself has become a unifying language of various nations because it has been used in various countries. Up to the present time, English is actively used by more than 1.75 billion people in the world, both for everyday language and for business and academic needs. The main problem identified in this study was the low ability of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) among the English lecturers in private universities in Jakarta. This study was carried out in the form of a phenomenological approach. The research is defined into two major aspects namely to know how the perspective of Indonesian lecturers on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and how to improve the lecturers' abilities on English Language Learning. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand how participants experienced the phenomenon. The research proved that intercultural communicative competence (ICC) plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of the English language lecturers in the digital era.

I. Introduction

Language skills are the ultimate digital era social skill, linked to creativity, problem solving, and the ability to effectively communicate. Foreign language skills, whether acquired in the classroom, through study abroad, or as a heritage language, are also a definite career advantage (Smith, 2017). According to the (OECD, 2016) "global competence requires numerous skills, including the ability to: communicate in more than one language; communicate appropriately and effectively with people from other cultures or countries; comprehend other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and see the world from their perspectives; adjust one's thoughts, feelings or behaviors to fit new contexts and situations; and analyze and think critically in order to scrutinize and appraise information and meanings."

The Minister of Education Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22 of 2006 places English Language in subjects for every level of education, starting from Elementary School, Middle School to Higher Education. The position of this language is the second language in Indonesia that is used in several fields of life such as business, education, entrepreneurship, travel and several other fields therefore, at present, almost all

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curricula in each field of study have English courses in it to provide provisions to students to obtain academic skills in their fields as well as English language skills which are currently very necessary both for graduation prerequisites, applying for further studies or seeking employment (Rachmawati and Fibriyani, 2018).

The study of any foreign language cannot be equated with the study of history or math because it involves adapting to certain customs and traditions of different social groups as well. Language is defined as a vocal system which is used by human beings to communicate with each other. Thus language is more than communication; it's a social action and functions to express thoughts. In most cases, language is a dominant leader and ruler of the dependent. People are also dependent on it (Finnegan, 1999). Knowledge of foreign languages means knowledge of other countries or their cultures, identities, histories, etc.(Karimova, 2016).

In reality, many universities now have various complete and sophisticated language facilities, such as foreign language laboratories and teleconference equipment in accordance with the demands of the digital era. Problems arise when no matter how sophisticated the facilities a university has, but if the teaching staff do not have the ability to speak foreign languages correctly, the teaching method provided is not appropriate and the enthusiasm of students is also low, the learning process of teaching foreign languages will still find obstacles. This condition certainly affects the final results of foreign language mastery skills among university graduates. In fact, in the era of globalization, the ability to understand foreign languages, especially English, is very necessary.

At present the university has a compulsory English language curriculum in all faculties. But most of them only focus on reading and writing. Vocabulary learning is emphasized. Students are taught reading skills and various aspects of English grammar. Only certain study programs provide the material for speaking skills. And that does not guarantee that students can speak English well because the instructors are still only focused on the preparation of correct sentences without equipping students with knowledge related to cultural differences whereas the second language teacher must teach cultural competence alongside linguistic and communicative competence (Mc Ginnis, 1994). When you learn a new language, you also learn much about a new culture. That can be an enriching experience provided that experience does not teach you to look down on your own mother tongue and thus at part of your own identity (Gaarder, 1972; Brock-Utne, 1994).

This is one of the factors why many Indonesian students who have graduated from universities still cannot speak proper English. They only learn to read, multiply vocabularies, compose sentences, but they have never been taught about cross cultural communicative so that there is no miss communication in speaking. In line with this, this study aims at answering the questions how the perspectives of Indonesian English-Lecturers on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and how to improve the lecturers' abilities on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

II. Review of Literature

2.1 The relationship between language and culture

Culture may mean different things to different people. In the anthropological sense culture is defined as the way people live (Chastain, 1988:302). Trivonovitch (1980:550) defines culture as "...an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behavior of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal

systems of expressive behavior starting from birth, and this "all-inclusive system" is acquired as the native culture. This process, which can be referred to as "socialization", prepares the individual for the linguistically and non-linguistically accepted patterns of the society in which he lives.

Tang (1999) propounds the view that culture is language and language is culture. He suggests that to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language, and thought is extremely powerful. Language is the soul of the country and people who speak it. Brown (1994) is convinced there is a connection between language and culture. He says:

"It is apparent that culture… becomes highly important in the learning of a second language. A language is part of a culture, and a culture is part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.' In a word, culture and language are inseparable." (p.165)

Furthermore, Smith (1985:2) adds that the presentation of an argument in a way that sounds fluent and elegant in one culture may be regarded as clumsy and circular by members of another culture. Research done by Robinson Stuart and Nocon in 1996 as well as Scollon and Scollon in 1995 confirm this belief (as cited in Brown, 2002). Wenying Jiang (2000) wrote an article discussing the inseparability of language and culture. Hammerly (1985) believed language learners were not fully trained until they exhibited the knowledge and behavior of the culture of the language they were learning (as cited in Mc Ginnis,1994). Many linguists explore the relationship between language and culture. Nida(1998:29) holds the view that language and culture are two symbolic systems.

All of the above-mentioned findings indicate a strong existence of a relationship between culture and language. Wardhaugh (2000) deems this connection as obvious – with the only unknown being to what extent and manner culture influences language. When you learn a new language, you also learn much about a new culture. That can be an enriching experience provided that experience does not teach you to look down on your own mother tongue and thus at part of your own identity (Gaarder, 1972; Brock-Utne 1994).

There had been before that several efforts to include "culture" in language education (Lado, 1963; Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984; Kramsch, 1993; Seelye, 1984) but culture was not a concept that resonated with scholars in second language acquisition/applied linguistics, who were more psycho and socio-linguistically oriented and preferred to study language in its social or situational context (e.g., Selinker & Douglas, 1985).

2.2 Language Lecturers of Digital Era

Learning in higher education in the digital era has undergone a lot of development. It is no longer limited by space and dominated by long lectures. Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) have revolutionized in order that lecturers can teach and students can learn (Sanderson, 2008). Referring to the digital era lecturers, the discussion then mainly comes to the high-tech era that gives big influences to every aspect of life, including the education sectors. The idea of bringing technology-based media and activities for the learning has been done since a decade ago considering good impacts of it. Modern education which is conducted in the 21st century must not exclude the technology in teaching and learning process (Bates, 2009:3; Palmer, 2015: 4).

According to Granados (2015), one of the challenges faced by universities and other institutions of higher education in 21st century is that teaching and learning must be more active, connected to real life, and designed with students and their unique qualities in mind. Therefore, it takes more than just the ability to carry out

routine activities of teaching and learning process. In this case, the 21st century lecturers need to be able to master in operating the high-tech facilities and in taking the advantages of the internet connection. Then, they have to bring the good of technology into the classroom to empower themselves and to create better activities of teaching and learning (Kariuki, 2009: 5; Bernhard, 2015: 6; Bruniges, 2015: 2).

Modern education, besides facilitating the development of technology, should also facilitate the characteristics of present students, so-called millennial students. Monaco and Martin (2007: 44) and Bart (2011: 2) stated that the students, in this case, are different to the previous generation in their sensibility of technology and personality. By the aids of technology (the internet, smartphones, and social media), the lecturers are expected to have more relevant, up-to-date, and communicative activities and assignments in enhancing both the learning achievement in the classroom and personal interactions (Kumar, 2011: 46 ; Ezemenaka, 2013: 171). Furthermore, the lecturers have to be able to bring the global issues digitally into the classroom tasks to empower students' critical thinking and sensitivity. Discussing global issues can be more interesting than reading or comprehending theoretical events printed in textbooks. By talking about the actual events, it is believed that the students are engaged in their own learning activities (Norahmi, 2017).

Dealing with English subject, English lecturers are faced with the great demands to deliver students achieving high competences in English. It is because the importance of English is in accordance to the digital era which requires many skills to get high standard use of English language (Suherdi, 2012b). Learning language is about living, thinking, experiencing and feeling other people and the world around us. According to Baskara (2007) our challenge as language lecturers is to find a way to make language learning personally contextualized, socially engaged, and culturally embedded. Our ultimate goal is to humanize a structural learning system drawn from the world of administration. In other words, to make language learning about what really matters – the learners. Sometimes, some lecturers are hardly aware of the necessity of cultural orientation. Communication is seen as the application of grammatical rules in oral and written practice. In some cases, learning about the target culture is taken as a threat to the native values, and the importance of linguistically relevant information is neglected (Cakir, 2006). Therefore language learning in this global era is not only learning grammar, vocabulary, listening and reading but also learning how culture is applied in English-speaking countries.

2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Several decades ago, Noam Chomsky introduced the concept of linguistic competence as the ideal model for any speaker. In the 70s, Hymes proposed a new concept, that of communicative competence, which corrected and complemented the first term, since the ability to discern when and how to use language in specific contexts was added to sheer linguistic ability when speaking. By paying attention to the way in which the ability to use language appropriately was acquired, Hymes was placing emphasis on sociolinguistic competence, a fundamental concept in the development of communicative language teaching when it was applied to foreign language teaching and learning (Byram, 1997: 7-8).

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in general terms will be defined as "the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett and Bennett, 2004; also similarly to Byram, 1997; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Corbett, 2003; Moran, 2001; and

Samovar and Porter, 1993, among others). Canale and Swain (1980) identified the elements of communicative competence as consisting of linguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence. Van Ek (1986) added two more components to the above list: sociocultural competence, or the ability to function in several cultures, and social competence, meaning familiarity with differences in social customs, confidence, empathy and motivation to communicate with others as seen in Figure 1.

Canale & Swain (1980)	Linguistic Competence Discourse Competence Strategic Competence Sociolinguistic Competence
Van Ek (1986)	Added 2 more: Sociocultural Competence Social Competence

Source: Canale & Swain (1980)
Van Ek (1986)

Figure 1. *The Elements of Communicative Competence*

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is seen by many language teaching professionals as an extension of communicative competence. In Beneke's (2000)
" Intercultural communication in the wider sense of the word involves the use of significantly different linguistic codes and contact between people holding significantly different sets of values and models of the world … Intercultural competence is to a large extent the ability to cope with one's own cultural background in interaction with others".(p. 108-109).

The success of intercultural interaction cannot be judged only in terms of an effective exchange of information, the capacity of establishing and maintaining human relationships is as important as communication itself, and that capacity depends on attitudinal factors (Byram, 1997:32-33). According to Byram's well-developed model (1997:51) intercultural Communicative competence requires certain attitudes, knowledge and skills in addition to linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. The attitudes include curiosity and openness as well as readiness to see other cultures and the speaker's own without being judgmental. The required knowledge is "of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction". Finally, the skills include those of interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction in addition to critical cultural awareness and political education :
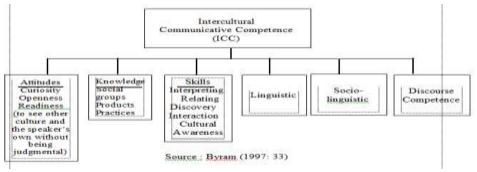

Source : Byram (1997: 33)

Figure 2. *The requirements of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)*

Byram and Fleming (1998: 9) claim that someone who has intercultural competence "has knowledge of one, or, preferably, more cultures and social identities and has the capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared directly". Fantini (2000: 28) describes five constructs that should be developed for successful intercultural communication: awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge and language proficiency. Furthermore, he also cites the following commonly used attributes to describe the intercultural speaker: respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, a sense of humour, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgment.

III. Research Method

In this research, a qualitative research method is applied. According to Patton (1990) as quoted in Crabtree & Miller (1992:19) the purpose of qualitative research is not formulating general statements but exploring specific social contexts to achieve better understanding of specified social settings. That is why the qualitative sample is selected purposefully and case study approach was adopted in this research.

In this study, a phenomenological approach is employed. According to Creswell (2007:57), a phenomenological study "describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" . In other words, it focuses on describing a phenomenon that all the participants have experienced, such as learning a second language in a school system. The purpose of the phenomenological method is to "reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" (Creswell, 2007: 58). To achieve this goal, a researcher will usually identify a phenomenon for study. For example, Miller et.al. (2003) identified children who experienced life with diabetes. She then collected data from the children who experienced this phenomenon; and then, described what all the experiences had in common, which is considered the essence of the experiences of this group of children. This description provides "what they have experienced" and "how they experienced it" (Creswell, 2007:58).

The types of data required in this study include primary data and secondary data. Data collection takes place through in-depth interviews and multiple interviews (Creswell, 2007). Other forms of data, collected through observation or reviews of journals and art, can be included as well (Creswell, 2007). During an interview, an investigator may ask very general questions. The data were collected by interview, questionnaires and documentation techniques. This study employed semi-structured interviews, because it can direct the interview more closely, to have a pre-determined set of questions while simultaneously allowing the interviewees sufficient flexibility to shape the flow of information given (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). Robson (2002) also says that it is appropriate to use the interview when the individual perceptions of processes within a social unit are to be studied and the interviewer can ask more questions, if the answer does not come up to expectations. Therefore, the researcher believes that the phenomenological approach is suitable for this research.

Participants for in depth interview consists of 31 people namely 20 university students to gain information whether the lecturers applied the ICC in English teaching and learning process, 10 English Lecturers to dig deeper their perspectives on the ICC and 1 English language expert to get the perspectives on the ideal of English Lecturers in digital era and what Indonesian lecturers should do to achieve it.

Data analysis is carried out continuously, taking place during data collection and after data collection is complete (Sugiyono, 2009: 273). In carrying out the data analysis process, there are several stages that must be carried out (Moustakas (1994), namely:

a) Horizonalization At this stage, it is done by describing individual experiences. The described individual experiences include not only the experiences of the participants but also the experiences of the researchers themselves. Interview transcripts were conducted to obtain more textural data. The function of the transcript is to be able to find out about the understanding/experience experienced by the participants (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

b) Texture Description. At this stage the researcher focuses on what experiences the participants get. The process of textural description is how the researcher tells what experiences the participants have gotten. These experiences include the participant's experience of receiving sociology learning, the participant's experience of interacting with friends in the classroom or at the cottage and also the participant's experience of a multicultural society outside of school or in the community.

c) Structural Description. At this stage, the researcher describes the multicultural experiences that students have or get. The experience description process at this stage can be seen based on the setting, which includes the time (when) and the place (where) the experience takes place. At this stage, the researcher conducts an analysis of how multicultural means according to the participants.

d) Description of the Meaning of the Phenomenon. This last stage is a process of combining structural descriptions and textural descriptions. In this process, the researcher explains what experiences the participants get at school after receiving the sociology material, namely multicultural society and how the participants experience this phenomenon so that multicultural meaning is born according to the participants. (Creswell, 2014: 268-269)

IV. Result and Discussion

3.1 Population Policy During Turki Utsmani 1512-1566 M

Of the 20 students interviewed, 18 said that although there are already Law Number 22 of 2006 which states that English Language in subjects for every level of education, starting from Elementary School, Middle School to Higher Education, in general Indonesian university students cannot speak English well. Students are only given material related to writing, reading, listening and composing sentences or grammar. Lecturers deliver material in English, but students are never trained to speak English. As a result, students can only understand English passively.

Even more concerning is that lecturers only teach how to compose sentences correctly and understand reading without providing an understanding that the native English culture and our culture is different so that when we speak, we must also understand the context so as not to cause miscommunication. "We've never got things like this at university."

> "I gained knowledge about this when I attended an English language course for 6 months in Australia, while English language lecturers at the university in Jakarta never taught about this matter. In my opinion, the most important thing in learning a foreign language is how we are able to speak naturally like native speaker. We can master this thing if we understand their culture."
> (IR – student)

> " Based on my experience, many English lecturers only focus on teaching all aspects related to grammar or linguistics. They never teach things related to the habits of people in native-speaking countries, such as what is and isn't allowed to be asked, such as age and salary issues which are very sensitive. Apart from that, there are also very personal issues such as those related to religion. This is very important to be taught to students so that they can apply the use of English properly." (AD-student)

This is in line with the statement of Karimova (2016) that knowledge of foreign languages means knowledge of other countries or their cultures, identities, histories, etc.(Karimova, 2016). This is also in line with the ICC Model of Byram (1997:33) which includes sociolinguistics in English language learning.

The seven students also said that English lecturers who integrate the culture of the native English are those who have an overseas education background or those who have lived long enough abroad. While lecturers graduating from local universities who do not have foreign experience and do not have sufficient hours are unable to provide insight to students.

Interview was also conducted with lecturers. When asked how important Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is for English language instructors, only two of the five lecturers interviewed said that ICC was very important because language could not be separated from culture, as Wenying Jiang (2000) said.

> "Teaching culture must be integrated with every topic provided, for example, how to apologize well, what topics of conversation should and should not be discussed when eating, what kind of attitude, body language and facial expressions should not be shown when talking to people. These things must be taught by lecturers to students so that they understand and can speak English properly as the culture of the native speakers. " (EN- Lecturer)

This is in line with the statement of Hammerly (1985) who said that language learners were not fully trained until they exhibited the knowledge and behavior of the language they were learning (as cited in McGinnis, 1994). The other three lecturers said that in the digital era, the most important factor for the English lecturers is the implementation of intercultural communicative competence in class along with the use of multimedia equipment to support the language teaching and learning process. However, up to the present time, the lecturers only have a target to pursue the theory and students have a little time to practice speaking.

> " I even have little time to train students to be able to speak in English because they are required to complete the lessons that are quite a lot based on the curriculum. However, most importantly, English lecturers in the digital era not only have to be skilled in using high-tech equipment but must apply the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) which includes attitudes, knowledge and skills because today we live in a borderless world and cultural differences can be united with technology. (RU- Lecturer)

Based on an interview with a linguist, data was obtained that the English lecturers seemed fixated on the established curriculum by often giving a portion of theory, memorization and objective tests, while the portion of training which was an important part

in learning languages was not enough, so the results what students get is still limited. Therefore, the stakeholders need to address the problem of the lack of mastery of the English language of the students and students seriously in order to immediately be addressed and overcome all problems, obstacles faced. Learning English is not only about mastering the language but also understanding the culture. From this point communication skills can be achieved. Learning English is not only learning to compose sentences, learn to understand reading, understand dialogue, but more important is how to speak naturally in accordance with the culture of the native speakers. Here lies the mistake. Many English language lecturers do not understand the ICC, so the result is that our students can only speak like a text book, are very rigid, and do not understand the words or body language that are taboo to say or show.

Speaking English also requires strengthening on the sides of the ability to interact with others (interpersonal skills) and controlling aspects of themselves (intra personal skills), namely: attitudes, awareness, skills, knowledge and language skills themselves so that language learning also learns how to improve students' soft skills . Of course, before training students 'soft skills, it is necessary to ensure the quality of lecturers and lecturers' soft skills is also at a level that is able to transmit these skills to their students. This is in accordance with the statement Fantini (2000: 28) which says that there are five constructs that should be developed for successful intercultural communication: awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge and language proficiency.

V. Conclusion

From the findings described above, it can be concluded that there are still many Indonesian lecturers who do not understand the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). They only emphasize on teaching students about Reading, Writing, Listening and Grammar. If there is an opportunity to practice speaking, the lecturer only teaches students to speak according to the textbook without teaching the customs or culture that exists in native-speaking countries. Lecturers only teach how to compose sentences correctly and understand reading without providing an understanding that the native English culture is different from our culture so that when we speak, we must also understand the context in order not to cause miscommunication. However, in the digital era, since we live in a borderless world with multiculturalism, we need English lecturers who have Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). Therefore, efforts should be made to improve the English proficiency of Indonesian students. For future research, the researchers recommend to dig deeper the issues on building Intercultural Communicative atmosphere in the classroom with different approaches to be adopted.

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