**INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSES**

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**ABSTRACT**

Language and culture are inseparable. Foreign language learning is not only the language learning, but also the culture learning. Intercultural awareness, according to Chen and Starosta (1996), refers to an understanding of one’s own and others’ cultures that affect how people think and behave. The cultivation of students’ cultural awareness in EFL teaching can encourage students to break the obstacles of intercommunication and master the culture of the target language by analyzing a survey which investigates the students’ present condition of intercultural awareness. The key point of learning cultural knowledge and cultivating cultural awareness is to create a good learning environment in the classroom. Teachers should change the conventional concepts, as well as the attitudes of regarding exams as the standard of evaluating students’ ability. This paper tries to put forward some measures to cultivate the students’ intercultural awareness in EFL teaching.

**Keywords: Intercultural awareness, English as Foreign Language(EFL), Indonesian, EFL classroom, EFL students, EFL teachers.**

**INTRODUCTION**

For quite a long time, English as Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia mainly emphasizes on the students’ grammar and the language skills of the students, and rule out the cultural differences that occur inside the classroom. However, nowadays people in Indonesia begin to realize that grammar and language skills alone can not guarantee success in intercultural communication, especially when the international connection has increased massively, and they realize that language and culture can’t be separated. Therefore, nowadays teachers have to prepare materials that are not only contains English language skills, but also intercultural awareness in order to create balance inside or outside the classroom. However, nowadays Indonesian teachers still do not realize about this issue, they keep using the same method and the same materials as their ancestors used to teach English in EFL classroom. A statement from the writer said that these English  teachers still using the same method and the same materials is because they do not know how to implement intercultural awareness inside the classroom.

It can be seen, that Indonesian English teachers know less about how to implement intercultural awareness inside the classroom. This statement supported by the fact that many teachers do not apply this issue in their classes, and also there are only a few information about this that does make the teachers probably do not know about this issue. That is why we need to figure out why is this issue important for the continuity of EFL classes in Indonesia.

In this study, first of all, the author take aim about what makes Indonesian English teachers do not apply this issue inside the Indonesian EFL classes. Second of all, the author takes aim about why English language teachers in Indonesia should apply this issue inside their classes. And third, the author takes aim about how to implement this issue inside the Indonesian EFL classroom. Based on these points, hopefully the English teachers in Indonesia would apply intercultural awareness inside their classes in the future.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Seelye, H. N. (1975) proposed some practical teaching principles for improving cultural awareness in his book “Teaching Culture”: (1) Acquiring cultural knowledge through language learning; (2) Making cultural behavior an important part of class; (3) Letting student have the capacity of occupying their social economic status; (4) A better understanding of native culture and target culture; (5) Making students know that people’s behavior was affected by culture. According to Hanvey (1979), “A global perspective consists of certain modes of thought, sensitivities, intellectual skills, and explanatory capacities, which is a combination of many things and any person may be rich in certain elements while relatively lacking in others”. Hanvey describes four levels of intercultural awareness: (1) awareness of superficial or visible cultural traits, such as isolated facts or stereotypes; (2) awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one’s own and interpreted as unbelievable and irrational; (3) awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one’s own but can be understood cognitively; (4) awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider. Intercultural awareness, according to Chen and Starosta (1996), “Refers to an understanding of one’s own and others’ cultures that affect how people think and behave”. Robert G. Hanvey developed the idea of global perspectives that has been widely used as a framework in intercultural awareness.

The cultivation of students’ cultural awareness in EFL teaching can encourage students to break the obstacles of intercommunication and master the culture of the target language, and in turn, promote teaching effect. Therefore, to gain knowledge on culture difference and to promote the students’ cultural awareness is one of the aims of the present language teaching.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Design**

In this study, qualitative research technique has been used  in order to present the descriptions and the patterns clearly. “Qualitative research is a research in which data collection methods like questionnaire, interviews, observation,  etc are used and events are put forth in their natural environment in a realistic and integrated way” (Merriam 1998; Yildirim and Simsek 2013).

**Participants or Subject of the Study**

         The researcher did the research at SMA AL ISLAM 1 Surakarta. The participants were the English teachers and eleventh-grade students of SMA AL ISLAM 1 SURAKARTA, in the academic year 2019 /2020. The researcher involved 40 students at eleventh-grade senior high school because it is consider as the crucial years in senior high school and involved the 4 English teachers because the researcher needs teacher’s perspective about Cultivating Intercultural Awareness in Indonesian EFL Classes.

**Procedure of the Data Collection**

In conducting research, instruments were needed in order to collect the data. In this research, the researcher use observation and interviews. The observation was done inside the EFL classroom to find out the the initial knowledge of students and teachers about intercultural awareness. The observation objects were activities, events, the participants’ feeling, and conditions or certain atmosphere that were occurred inside the EFL classroom related to intercultural awareness in EFL classroom. Next, the interview was done after the EFL class finished. The objects of the interview are 40 students of eleventh-grade senior high school and 4 English teachers of SMA AL ISLAM 1 SURAKARTA. The goal of the interview is to get deeper information about how far the students and the teachers know and understand, and also to know how their opinions are about intercultural awareness that is occur in the EFL classes. Specifically for teachers, the researcher also wants to know what they think about how to cultivate intercultural awareness inside the EFL classes.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study used Qualitative research which was used data collection methods like interview and observation. In this study showed thatmost of the students indicated that they have nothing to do about intercultural awareness in EFL classes. Based on the interview, it shows that there are 17 students who have initial knowledge about intercultural awareness and 23 students who did not know about intercultural awareness. 10 Students said that having intercultural awareness inside EFL classroom is important, 5 students who said that it is not important, and 25 students that have no idea about this issue.  17 students said that they notice whenever intercultural awareness attitudes or behaviors occur in the EFL classroom, 5 students said that they did not notice whenever this issue occurs, while the rest 18 students said that they do not have any idea about it. When the students asked whether they agree or disagree if their EFL teachers give them any background knowledge about intercultural awareness and implement it in the EFL classes, 30 students said that they agree, while 4 students said that they disagree, and 6 students said that they did not have any idea about it. The researcher then conducted interview with 4 EFL teachers. When these teachers asked whether they already applied intercultural awareness in their EFL classes or not, 4 of them said no. Then the researcher ask whether these teachers think that applying intercultural awareness in their EFL classes is important or not, 4 of them said yes. 2 teachers said that they have plan on how to apply and educate the students about intercultural awareness in the future for their EFL classes, while the other 2 said that they do not have any plan on how to apply or educate their students about intercultural awareness. These data show that the cultural dimension to language has usually been present in language pedagogy implicitly (Risager 2007). Given the closely intertwined nature of culture and language, it is difficult to teach language without an acknowledgement of the cultural context in which it is used. From the interview, when the students asked about “Do you think that having intercultural awareness inside EFL classroom is important?”, 30 of them answer with “I don’t know, I did not notice when it happens, so I don’t know whether this issue have to be taught in my EFL classes or not”.

**Summary of Results**

Based on the observation form above, it was found that there is no information or knowledge that educate/cultivate the students and teachers about intercultural awareness, even though there are some teachers and students who have knowledge about intercultural awareness. In their opinion, intercultural awareness is not very crucial in EFL learning process, that is why they do not need to explain anything about it. However, intercultural awareness attitudes and actions still occur in EFL classroom implicitly. “The cultural dimension to language has usually been present in language pedagogy implicitly” (Risager 2007). Unfortunately, most of the students do not aware when it happens. Most of the students do not aware when it happens because they do not know that this issue is real, while some other students who aware deny to be open about it. Teachers rarely resort to various methods of intercultural education in school practice. and the family role in teaching intercultural diversity is low as well, it makes students have low intercultural awareness ability (.They think this issue is not very important in the EFL classroom and also they think that the other students already aware about this issue, same thing happens with the teachers. Sadly, these situations happened in a classroom that has many students that came from many places that also have different culture to each other.

**CONCLUSION**

This study focused on the implementation intercultural awareness in Indonesian EFL classes. While most of the previous studies have different focus and places. This topic is still relatively rare to be discussed in Indonesia. So, the researcher tried to conduct this study in order to get deeper data and evidence about the implementation of intercultural awareness in Indonesian EFL classes.

The data had been displayed by the researcher about how the implementation of intercultural awareness in Indonesian EFL classes which is still not working properly. The result of the study also showed that in the classroom, both the teachers and the students still have minimum thoughts about intercultural awareness. From the 40 students and 4 teachers that the researcher observed and interviewed, then the data has been processed, these data leads to a conclusion that the implementation of intercultural awareness in Indonesian EFL classes is still very low. There are only a few students who know, understand, and care about the intercultural awareness phenomena. While the majority of the students do not know or understand about intercultural awareness. This issue happened not only because of the students, but the teachers also played role in the occurrence of this issue. Until know, there are only a few english teachers who educate intercultural awareness in their EFL classes to their students, it leads to the minimum knowledge of the students about intercultural awareness that is happening daily in their classes, especially in EFL classes. The researcher hope that there will be another studies that find the way to implement/apply intercultural awareness in Indonesian EFL classes, so that the teacher will be able to know some ways on how to implement/apply it inside their EFL classrooms, so that the learning process would run better, more accurate, and add more provisions for the students to face their real life.

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**APPENDICES**

**Interview**

**INTERVIEW FORM OF INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN EFL CLASS**

**Participants                                    :  40 students and 4 english teachers of EFL class**

**School                                             :  SMA AL ISLAM 1 SURAKARTA**

**Subject                                           :  English**

**Class                                               :  XI (11(2nd year of senior high school)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Amount of Students/Teachers (Yes) | Amount of Students/Teachers (No) | Have No Idea |
| Do you have any initial knowledge about intercultural awareness?  (Students) |  17 |  23 |  0 |
| Do you think that having intercultural awareness inside EFL classroom is important?  (Students) |  10 |  5 |  25 |
| Did you notice whenever intercultural awareness attitudes or behaviors occur in EFL classes? (Students) |  17 |  5 |  18 |
| Do you agree if your EFL teachers give any knowledge about intercultural awareness and implement it in EFL classes? (Students) |  30 |  4 |  6 |
| Have you applied intercultural awareness in your EFL classes? (Teachers) |   0 |  4 |  0 |
| Do you think that applied intercultural awareness in your EFL classes is important? (Teachers) |  4 |  0 |  0 |
| Do you have any plan on how to apply and educate intercultural awareness to your students in EFL classes? (Teachers) |  2 |  2 |  0 |

**Observation**

**OBSERVATION FORM OF INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN EFL CLASS**

**Participants                                    :  40 students and 4 english teachers of EFL class**

**School                                             :  SMA AL ISLAM 1 SURAKARTA**

**Subject                                           :  English**

**Class                                               :  XI (11(2nd year of senior high school)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Observed Aspect** | **Yes** | **Not** | **Note** |
| **Intercultural Awareness** |   |   |   |
| 1 | Educating about what intercultural awareness is |   | x | There is no information or knowledge about intercultural awanress at all, whether it’s from the teachers or from the students, eventhough when some teachers and students already have knowledge about intercultural awareness |
| 2 | Intercultural awareness attitudes and action | x |   | There is some attitudes and acions that show intercultural awareness. |
| 3 | The awareness of any intercultural awareness attitude or action | x |   | There is some students and teachers who aware about intercultural awareness, but most students don’t aware. |
| 4 | Intercultural differences | x |   | The students are come from many different places and have different culture. |