

# Best Practices Technique in Teaching Intercultural Competence of English to Young Learners: Some Classroom Activities in Primary Schools

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**Abstract.** The topic of intercultural competence (so forth IC) is essential recently in young learners' teaching/learning context. IC requires learners to develop relevant knowledge and skills regarding the target language and their cultural awareness. Teaching/learning process generally includes the learning of how the language works in terms of social function, generic structure, and linguistic features; otherwise, they also need to know how to use these forms appropriately to communicate successfully in the target language. This process of learning is related to communicative competence. This paper focused on best practices technique in teaching IC of English to young learners context, which is hope to contribute to the development of learners communicative competence. This idea is to claim that in EFL teaching, the knowledge about target language culture is an essential contextual factor to achieve the successful target in learning English in a meaningful way [1]. Some best practices concerning the intercultural activities are presented in a set of teaching technique/instructions as supported by the theory of [2] that links to life and learners' experiences. The techniques revealed from this present study are; describing and explaining the culture, dialogues, skits and mini-dramas, masks and puppets, role play, songs and dances, games, outdoor activity, craft and making a poster. Those best practices bring a new paradigm of EYL teaching techniques.

**Keywords:** *intercultural competence, communicative competence, teaching technique, English to young learners (EYL).*

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital natives currently, the teaching of English as a foreign language has been engaged gradually with theories of intercultural competence (so forth IC). This integration of an intercultural dimension has changed the way EFL teacher understand about today's language teaching/learning. The importance of intercultural knowledge in language teaching/learning is merely to support language competence. Intercultural communicative competence can, therefore, be considered

as one of the central aims of foreign language teaching/learning so that learners can successfully communicate with people from different linguistic and cultural worlds [1]. To make learners of a foreign language more competent, both linguistic and sociocultural, language teaching at present need to modify it with multiple models of approach and technique.

Intercultural competence in English for primary schools is of urgency to acquire to equip students with interactional competence in using a foreign language. The so-called competence covers up not merely a social skill, but training sensitivity and awareness of values, point of view, way of life, and way of thinking of the target language users as well. Besides, students' independence in communicating values and personal point of view is also an integral aspect to be aimed for [2]. Intercultural competence in elementary school is to be adjusted to students' characteristics, needs, competence level, and learning styles.

Arriving at intercultural competence in English has sought for well-designed instructional activities to equip students with verbal communication skills, both in limited and straightforward forms. It is expected that students are competent to use the target language and to get themselves involved well in communication. This current study is likely to result in instructional design in the form of written ideation and conception covering some instructional materials, such as lingual forms, lesson plans, and instructional strategies.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, young learners also integrate linguistic and cultural learning and referred to as the discussion of this present paper. As stated by Scott & Ytreberg [3], when young learners learn the foreign language, they want to talk about things that are related to their cultural upbringing, their hobbies, ideas, or dreams. When talking to a speaker from another cultural background, young learners do not only need to be able to express these ideas in a linguistically appropriate way, but they also need to listen and try to understand what the interlocutor has to say. They have to be open to and interested in the conversation, and since language is culturally grounded, they have to relate to the person's cultural background. Learning to become intercultural speakers is a long-life process and in young learners level (in this case a

primary school) teacher can begin to develop this competence on a very simple level, using challenging technique and impressive materials [2].

It is obviously that IC is the ability to interact in one's language with people from other cultures. It requires learners to develop relevant knowledge and skills regarding target language and culture and their cultural awareness and to be reflective and transferable among different languages and cultures. This competence is essential to gain by the EFL young learners to enable them having effective and correct communication using a foreign language from an early age. The IC proposed in this paper is for young learner's level and to prepare them for interactions with non-native speakers teachers of standard English and their communication with the native speaker in their future learning.

There are some considerations to take into account in teaching EYL. [4] claimed that knowing that children learn from the world around them, then it is necessary for the teachers to provide a contextual environment for their students to learn. Learning by doing is the main principle of EYL teachers; as a result, the lesson taught should be inefficient and hands-on activities that integrating with actual, physical, and particular aspects (here and now). Besides, it is also necessary to present students' need materials by simplifying the learning tasks, providing the simple vocabularies, giving guiding questions or phrases, and following the stages of teaching from controlled, guided, and free activities, etc.

Also, EYL teachers should provide adequate support of intercultural information to the learners as they are still the beginners because their ability to grasp a new language should not be underestimated. It is also worth to notice that we are trying to provide opportunities for these learners to find out about and use of the new language. The topics of the teaching/learning process should closely be related to their self, their family, their school, their everyday life, and more importantly, should be fun and exciting. As we know that young learners have a short attention span; therefore, the teachers should be ready with various authentic materials, teaching media, and learning activities to avoid their boredom [5].

Enabling the young learners with intercultural integration in learning English, their learning styles must also be taken into account so that the teachers can manage the classroom activities well. For instance, providing good classroom interaction and engaging visual media such as pictures, photos, realia, posters, and others to facilitate visual learners. Moreover, teachers can also teach through music, songs, mini dialogue or audio stimuli for auditory learners and invite them to do sorts of physical movements: performing acts, drawing or coloring, dancing, demonstrating, role-playing, etc. for kinaesthetic learners.

The reasons for familiarizing learners with the intercultural components should be to; develop their communicative skills, understand the linguistic and behavioral patterns both of the target and the native culture at a more conscious level. EYL classroom should include the teaching of the culture of both the native

language and the target language. Elements of the target culture are expected to be included in teaching materials and teaching technique.

Bearing all the above-mentioned in mind, there are many considerations to take into account in integrating the IC in EYL context. Consequently, EYL teachers need to incorporate young learner's environments and prepare them for intercultural encounters in their direct surroundings. The focus is not merely on the communicative competences in the language of the contract but on learning about cultures, especially those that were represented by the learners in the classroom. In practice, teaching intercultural to young learners at least refers to these three particular behaviours: 1) the use of contextual clues, such as gestures, facial expressions, use of visual props to facilitate comprehension and meaning, 2) the provision of purposeful hands-on learning experiences for students, and 3) the use of linguistic modification, in spoken interaction, to make the target language more comprehensible for students [6].

Teaching technique and contents should be employed to make learners aware of the IC mainstreams, encouraging them to compare and contrast foreign cultures with their own. Teaching technique that does this will prove to be successful with learners. The present study has found that teaching techniques to young learners Halliwell [7] and Task as plan and task in action [6] provide good examples of teaching technique that offer plenty of opportunities for learners to examine other cultures and their own from a "third place" perspective.

Standard activities Corbett [8] to engage students actively in the target culture and language can be in the form of teaching technique, such as; role plays, reading activities, listening activities, writing activities, discussion activities, and even singing. All such actions and materials should be deliberately chosen to portray different aspects of culture, highlighting attractive issues vs. shocking ones, similarities vs. differences, facts vs. behavior, historical vs. modern, older people vs. young people, and city life vs. rural life, and so on.

## METHOD

Employing Research and Development (R&D) postulated by Gall, Joyce P, & Borg [9] as a method, this current research analyzed quantitative and qualitative data. This research has resulted in the description speech act of intercultural competence-based English instructions for elementary schools. It aims at improving the quality of English instruction in primary schools to be more contextual as well as achieving students' communicative competence.

The stages of this study are as follows. At the first stage, the initial study was conducted, aiming at detecting whether intercultural competencies have been inserted in English instructional activities for elementary schools. The procedures of this study are based upon the stages proposed by M. Gall, Joyce P, & Borg [9]. The data were collected utilizing observation,

in-depth interview, questionnaires, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving experts by integrating the techniques of listening, recording, taking notes, and making a checklist. In the field implementation, the audiovisual recording was used to gather accurate data. There were quantitative and qualitative data to be collected. Observation and interview were conducted to collect primary data. It was done in class during the teaching-learning process.

Meanwhile, the interview was conducted with the teachers, key informants, and students. Both observation and interview aimed at revealing: (1) lingual forms manifesting intercultural competence-based instructional materials; (2) lesson plans; (3) instructional activities; and (4) instructional strategies. The interview was done to supplement the data collected during the observation, in particular, to tap the information about the teachers' and students' knowledge and perceptions on intercultural competence. The questionnaire was designed to be closed-ended to draw the information related to the effective teaching technique. The data were displayed informally, in which the data were presented descriptively and narratively, comprising lingual forms, meanings, functions, and the types of speech act found in the English instructional activities in the elementary school and summarized in the way of instructional design.

## RESULT

There were some teaching techniques or activities implemented by the teacher to present intercultural awareness to children: 1) Describing and explaining culture: The most common method for developing cultural awareness was exposition and explanation. The teachers have talked about the target language speaking community or communities. In this research, the teacher told a short story and supported by using visual materials; 2) Experiencing the culture through language use: It was found that through language use, students become conscious of correct levels of discourse and behavior: formulas of politeness and their relation to the social attitudes of people, appropriateness, turn-takings, etc. are considered here. In her daily conversation in class, the teacher always used classroom instruction in English; however, her language instruction seemed not in the form of transferring cultural experience rather than drilling in using the target language; 3) Dialogues, skits, and mini-dramas, drama games: One of the most common devices used in the early stages found in this research was dialogues. Drama games were also used and usually utilized for young learners, but they were also applicable for older learners since they can be used with them only with a few minor changes. Dialogues, skits, and mini-dramas all implemented once to each by the teacher in a simple way; 4) Masks and puppets: Masks and puppets were also a great use, especially for young learners. In this research, the teacher used teacher-made masks and puppets to support their role-playing; 5) Role play and simulation: Roleplay is perhaps the most well-known

cultural awareness developing activity among all the others. Simulation is a large scale role play. Or, simulation can be defined as "an activity where the learners discuss a problem, perhaps a series of problems, with a defined setting." Since the observation was conducting, the teacher did not implement any kinds of simulation in her class; 6) Songs and dances: Songs and dances help a lot about culture. It was found the teacher used song and dances almost to all topics she presented in class. The songs used were related to the issues about cultures both their local culture and western culture, for example; *Old Mc Donald*, *Baa Baa black sheep*, *Itsy Bitsy Spider*, *Down by the station*, etc. Along with singing songs, the teacher also performed dances to motivate students to learn culture more and to train them to sensitive toward rhythm; 7) Native speakers in the class: The presence of native speaker was not accessible for the school, so the teacher only presents a model of a native speaker speaking and gestures by showed them a video of dialogues and story related to children knowledge; 8) Using the bulletin board and keeping up with the news: In presenting the cultural learning, it was found in this research that the teacher did not use discussion on the news, watched Television, radio, newspapers, or utilizing an internet. The students have a significant influence on the development of cultural awareness of the foreign language learners through the bulletin board and keeping up with the news snake ladder game, flash cards, and outdoor activity. Besides, the teacher also implemented daily activity by making crafts, play, and created posters, and 9) Using pictures, films, filmstrips, and video: Pictures present a lot more than many other devices as far as culture is concerned. Pictures enable the learners see the target language speaking societies in their environments, so some concepts become more concrete. In this research, the teacher used pictures more than that of film, film strips, or video. The reasons the teacher did not implement film or video was because of the limited times, and it was also uneasy for the teacher to find suitable contents, especially for the films/film strip.

Classroom Interaction in Teaching IC. There were some classroom interactions identified through the techniques implemented above, which was taken from the observation results. The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 1.

In presenting the IC by using teaching techniques, the teacher used twenty-one media. They were; flashcard, videos and films, realia, puppets, big books, picture card, power point, real things, stereo foam of fruit, magic quiz, worksheet, snake and ladder game, board game, family chart, a big watch, script, craft, roulette, poster, diorama, treasure hunt route, and map. Classroom interaction was related to the learning instruction presented by the teachers to students in the class to enable them getting real experience in learning L2. They were using language, making linguistics connection, and moving between cultures.

Table 1. Results of Data Analysis

Classroom interaction	Data and Notes
<b>Using Language</b> 1. Teacher explanation L2, QA L2 2. Teacher QA L1 3. Student QA in L2 interactive talk 4. Student presentation L2, roleplay 5. Student L1 6. Student codemix L1+L2 7. Student unsolicited speak L2 8. Student construct oral/written text 9. Teacher corrects/models language orally 10. Teacher corrects/models language written 11. The teacher encourages 'noticing,' allows time for reflection	DTI-1.1: Explained about the term 'Halloween' and 'Snowman.' DTI-2.2: Asked about clothes and weather. DSI-3.2: 'Do you like a sandwich?' Yes, I like it. DSI-4.2: 'I am wearing script. It's cold in here,' 'I am wearing a skirt. It's scorching in here.' DSI-5.5: 'I am <i>berkedip</i> (blink) with my eyes' DSI-6.6: 'I love my hobby. I like berenang, bersepeda and menyanyi' (I love my hobby. I like swimming, cycling, and singing). DSI-7.1: 'yes, yes,' calling teacher, 'miss.' DSI-8.1: "'How often do you ...?'," never, once, twice, (3) times, etc. DTI-9.5: "'How are you going there?' "I am going by ..." DTI-10.1: 'It's sunny. It's Windy'. (correct form: 'It's sunny, it's rainy.' DTI-11.2: 'How is your feeling?' 'Today you have study about ...?' Students: 'Going to the Park.'
<b>Making Linguistic Connections</b> 12. Student question/comment L1/L2 syntax, features, etc. 13. Teacher question/comment L1/L2 14. Teacher comment on the usage of language in context.	DSI-12.1: 'Which months have 30 days? 'January ya mam?' (=Is it January?, 'No, It's 31 days') 'Which months have 31 days? (It is January, March, May, etc.) DTI-13.4: Teacher: "Where are you going?" Student: "I'm going to the library." Teacher: "How are you going there?" Student: "I'm going (e.g., by bus, by car, by bicycle, by taxi, on foot, etc.)" DTI-14.6: 'on food,' 'How did you get here today?' 'I got here on foot / by ... Berjalan kaki (walking) is ... on food' bukan (not) 'by food.'
<b>Moving Between Cultures</b> 15. Student question/comment C1/C2 16. Teacher question/comment C1/C2 17. Non-verbal behaviour-gestures teacher 18. Non-verbal behaviour- student 19. C2 practices, activities 20. C2 cultural values, positive comments C2	DSI-15.3: 'What is freeze?' DSI-15.7: 'I like kangaroo too' 'Kangaroo is cute.' DTI-16.3: 'Do you know to hide and seek?,' 'Can you play hide and seek?' DTG-17.1: [take a bow, finger tip] DSG-18.2: [facial expressions showing feelings] DTSA-19.1: [make a mask, mini role play, a game using bulletin board] DTSCv-20.5: [celebrating friend's birthday, making a poster about schools rule, making a sandwich using L2]

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings written in the above chapter, it can be summarized here that: There were 9 (nine) techniques applied by practice teachers in presenting the intercultural awareness. There were describing and explaining the culture, dialogues, skits and mini-dramas, masks and puppets, role play, songs and dances, games, outdoor activity, craft and making a poster. In implementing those techniques, the teacher utilized some strategy, for example, using the bulletin board and keeping up with the news snake ladder game, playing with the flash card and pictures. All in all, the techniques

used to teach cultures to English to Young Learners had immersed correct understanding. By developing and implementing culturally aware materials, the practice teacher had accomplished their tasks to help students become culturally aware without tearing them from their own culture.

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