

# Educator's Role in Involving Intercultural Competence in Spoken Communication

(A Case Study at English Education Study Program at IAIN Bukittinggi)

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## Abstract

Teaching English is identical to teaching the students being good at grammar that finally aims to be able to communicate well in English. However, being good at communication means the students are not only good at producing sentences which are grammatically correct, but should also be able to produce acceptable sentences. One of the indicators that influence the acceptability of a language produced is cultural contents which are linked on the language used. Thus, it is really important for the educators to not only teach the student about the grammar, but also involve the intercultural competence, as a competence that deals with the cultural values that are integrated on the language. This paper is a research-based paper that investigates how the lecturers at English Education study program of IAIN Bukittinggi involve intercultural competence in English classes, especially for oral communication. The research was conducted through qualitative method in terms of case study design. The result deals to the way the lecturers involve intercultural competence in the classrooms and some problems during the process of involving this competence in oral communication.

**Keywords:** *educator, intercultural, competence, spoken, communication*

## Introduction

The involvement of intercultural competence nowadays in teaching English as a foreign language is not something new anymore. Experts and practitioners of English teaching have widely known that intercultural competence is one of the important competences in communicative competence. By considering this fact, the aims of teaching English, which is building students' ability to communicate well, fluently and accurately, cannot be gained if intercultural competence is not included during teaching and learning processes. In other words, it can be stated that intercultural competence is one factor that may influence the successful of English teaching and learning processes. Why?

It is reasonable to say since intercultural competence is a competence which dealt to an ability that leads to effective and appropriate communication with people who have different cultural background. Whenever two people with different cultural background do not have intercultural competence, they may break the rules of politeness and may produce ineffectiveness communication. When one person does not know that he says something which breaks the politeness, inappropriateness of communication may occur. In other words, the intercultural competence is needed to guarantee that the communication built is on the track of politeness, effectiveness and appropriateness. Thus, the language produced may be acceptable and understandable.

By considering the explanations above, it can be argued that intercultural competence should be taught in English teaching process. The educators are expected to involve this competence in teaching English while also teaching language content and language features. Since cultural aspects are linked in English materials, the teachers can always involve and discuss the cultural aspects in the classroom. Thus, the teacher should know the materials which may include the cultural aspects, such as in expressing opinion, invitation, etc. the cultural aspects which are bounded to the language expression should be discussed by the teachers so that the students may notice and then be aware of those cultural values. It is expected that those notices and awareness can be formulated into their intercultural competence. Thus, the students can have an ability to express ideas by considering the context of cultural values that could be existed.

Many researches have been conducted by experts or even practitioners in relation to intercultural competence. De Leon (2014) investigated about the factors which influence the intercultural competence in the classroom. She found that time and effort are the factors that can make an intensive and high quality intercultural-service learning program. She told that to build up students' intercultural competence, the

practitioners should spend time and intensive service program which help learners to know and be aware of the intercultural aspects. Besides, Friganović Sain et al (2017) did a research to see the intercultural competence in four categories; they were motivation, strategy, knowledge and behavior. The result of the research shows that intercultural competence in the areas of motivation and strategy were founded higher than on knowledge and behavior. It proves that the students still did not have such knowledge and accustomed to learn more about intercultural competence while they had high desire, motivation and strategy for improving intercultural competence. Based on this research, it is suggested for the educators to build students' intercultural competence through experience in active learning community, through both academic and social activities within and outside of classroom. Furthermore, these two researches proved that to enlarge students' intercultural competence, the teachers should spend more time and effort to share the knowledge, increase students' awareness of intercultural aspects, and motivate them to learn it whether in or out of classroom.

Both of researches above are in line with the theory proposed by Byram (1997) in which he explains that the competences in intercultural competence consist of five competences; they are knowledge, attitudes, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness. In other words, to build students' intercultural competence, the educators should teach the students about cultural knowledge, build students' ability in discovery, interpreting and build their critical ability of cultural aspects. It can be stated that the educators have a high responsibility in building students' intercultural competence.

Besides those researches, the research on intercultural competence also investigated any implementation of models in teaching English which may integrate intercultural competence. One of the researches was conducted by Bennet (2004) in which he found that person's worldview must shift from avoiding cultural difference to seeking cultural difference. He explains that intercultural competence cannot be built up whenever the students avoid any discussion of the intercultural aspects. In other world, he says that the educators and the students should participate actively in seeking any cultural differenced which may influence students' ability in producing English accurately and acceptably.

Furthermore, Gudykunst (1998) also states that for English courses that aimed to improve students ability to going abroad, the students should be given such knowledge of perspective in receiving the knowledge of culture. Simply, he says that students' anxiety in new environment influence their ability to receive and learn new culture which may direct them to their capacity in enlarge their intercultural competence. it is in line to ideas proposed by Byram (1997). Byram (1997) uses such words as openness and curiosity to explain his conviction that an individual must remain open to learning about new beliefs, values, and worldviews in order to participate in relationships of equality. Thus, it can be clearly stated that students' preparation and feeling and also perspective influence their ability in receiving new cultural and adapt through that culture while producing the English which is acceptably.

Based on the explanation above, the educators can be claimed as one of factors which influence the successful of building students' intercultural competence. The educators are the ones who directly help and guide the students to get the knowledge of cultural aspects, help the students to be aware and be critical to any cultural issues so that the students can build up their intercultural competence. In other words, it can be stated that the role of educators are the key factor in building students' intercultural competence.

By considering the importance of the educators' role as stated above, it is important to discuss this point in terms of spoken communication. By looking at the previous studies, there is a gap between the needs to investigate the role of the educators in intercultural competence and the previous researches which have not discussed about the educators roles yet. This article is derived from the research done entitled of Intercultural competence in spoken and written communication at English education section IAIN Bukittinggi which conducted on August 2019. This article focuses on the discussion of the role of educators in involving intercultural competence in spoken communication.

## **Method**

This research was conducted in terms of qualitative approach by using case study as the design of the research. This research used case study since this kind of research because case study is a kind of depth investigation research which explore the causes of underlying principle to a specific single individual, group or event. Since the case of involving intercultural competence in this research was investigated in English education section IAIN Bukittinggi, this design of research was used.

The informant of the research was the English lecturers who taught at English education section IAIN Bukittinggi, especially English lecturers who taught speaking subject. In this case, they were 3 English lecturers. They were chosen based on the consideration of the research purpose. To collect the data, the instruments used were interview as the main instrument. It was used to gather the data about the lecturers' role during speaking class in integrating intercultural aspect in speaking activity. Besides, the observation was also used to triangulate the data gotten from the interview. The lecturers and the students were observed during speaking class to see whether intercultural competence was involved in classroom activity. For deeper data, the lecturers were

observed related to their role in involving intercultural competence in speaking class. It was aimed to see their roles in relating intercultural competence in spoken communication.

After the data were gathered, the data were analyzed by using qualitative method. The theory proposed by Patton (1980) was used to analyze data of case study. Here were the steps followed:

1. Assembled the raw case data
2. Constructed a case record
3. Wrote a case study narrative

Based on the steps of data analysis above, the data were explained as stated in the previous part, result and discussion.

## Results and Discussion

The research was conducted in order to analyze the educators' role in involving intercultural aspects during spoken communication. The research was conducted through interview and observation. The data were divided into two parts based on the research guidelines. Here are roles of educators in involving intercultural aspects in speaking classes.

Table 1. Indicators of educators' roles in involving intercultural in speaking class

No	Indicators	Sub-indicators
1	Have sufficient intercultural knowledge	linguistic knowledge teaching experiences knowledge of applied linguistics and second language acquisition ability to integrate knowledge with practice
2	Should have some abilities	can communicate with others in English in and outside the classroom can make full use of the teaching materials and other authentic language materials to teach cultures guide learners to concern about cultural issues can put learners' personal experiences with the cultural ideas given in the textbooks together capable of using multiple teaching methods and approaches, in order to impart the cultural knowledge and communicative skills in an all-round way can integrate the language teaching with the culture teaching in a sound way design relevant activities which will improve language proficiency as well as their intercultural communication competence

By using the indicators above, the lecturers were interviewed and observed. Based on the research, it was found 2 main findings. The first finding is related to lecturers' knowledge of intercultural. It was found that lecturers' intercultural knowledge is influenced by some factors. Here are explained the factors which influence their intercultural knowledge:

1. Linguistics knowledge.

Based on the interview with the informants of the research, it was found that all of them were graduated from English education section. They have lots of knowledge of teaching English, but lack of knowledge related to linguistics. As stated by the informants:

Transcript interview 1:

Informant 1: "... I actually do not really master linguistics aspect. I learnt it, but if you ask me about the deep content of linguistic, I do not really remember it.. *(laughed)*"

Informant 2: "... I am not sure whether I still remember the linguistics. When I studied, I did not really assumed that it was important so.. yeah..."

Informant 3: "yeah, I learnt and know a little bit about linguistics because it is important for teaching English, right? But I am of course not the master of linguistics. When I was university student, we focused more on education subjects and linguistics just a part of it. Not really focused on it. "

The data of transcription above showed that the informants have knowledge of linguistics but they are not the master of linguistics. In other words, it can be stated that their education background is the factor

which may influence their knowledge of linguistics. Meanwhile, the linguistics factor itself is one of the factors that decide whether the lecturers can lead the students to notice any components of language during communication, especially in speaking. As stated by Nazarenko (2015), intercultural competence is an integration of linguistics and cultural knowledge which may lead to an effective communication. Thus, whenever the teacher teaches English, they should notice to teach the students about the linguistics aspects while informing the cultural knowledge. It is the reason why educators' linguistics knowledge is important in involving intercultural during speaking class.

2. Teaching experience

In relation to teaching experience, the way the educators involve the students to intercultural competence is influenced by their teaching experience. Based on the interview with the informants, it can be assumed that they did not have any experience in teaching foreigners, but they have teaching experience for years. Besides, their experience in teaching speaking is mostly for 3 semesters so far. In other words, it can be stated that they have not really experienced in teaching English. Thus, it can be understandable whenever the lecturers did not really pay attention to intercultural competence in speaking class.

3. Knowledge of applied linguistics and second language acquisition

Based on interview with the lecturers, it was known that all lecturers have an understanding and knowledge related to applied linguistics and second language acquisition. The problem is underlying on the next point as stated as follow.

4. Ability to integrate knowledge with practice

The knowledge they have were not integrated maximally in the practice of teaching, especially speaking.

Even the lecturers know about second language acquisition and applied linguistics, but they did not integrate it all to teaching speaking. Based on their statements during interview, the focus of teaching speaking is helping the learners to speak confidently and fluently. Because of limitations of vocabulary, they cannot fulfill all aspects of teaching speaking, including intercultural competence.

The second finding of this research belongs to educators' ability in teaching by involving intercultural competence. The data stated follow shows the lecturer's performance:

Table 2. Educators' role in relation to abilities in integrating intercultural competence in classroom activity

No	Sub indicators	Educators' skills		Note
		Yes	No	
1	can communicate with others in English in and outside the classroom	√		All the informants
2	can make full use of the teaching materials and other authentic language materials to teach cultures		√	All the informants
3	guide learners to concern about cultural issues		√	All the informants
4	can put learners' personal experiences with the cultural ideas given in the textbooks together		√	All the informants
5	capable of using multiple teaching methods and approaches, in order to impart the cultural knowledge and communicative skills in an all-round way		√	All the informants
6	can integrate the language teaching with the culture teaching in a sound way		√	All the informants
7	design relevant activities which will improve language proficiency as well as their intercultural communication competence		√	All the informants

Based on the data on the table above, it can seen that all informants did not use any authentic materials for including culture during classroom activity, guide learners to concern on cultural issues or related their experiences on cultural aspects, use any method to impart on cultural knowledge or integrate and do any activities that can improve students' awareness and proficiency on intercultural competence. Thus, it can be assumed that the informants still did not have enough capability to involve intercultural competence and integrate it in teaching English especially in speaking class or spoken communication. The fact proves that there are so many limitations in teaching speaking so that students' intercultural competence cannot maximally be built up. Shortly, it can be stated that the educators' role in including intercultural competence is the important

aspect which influences the integration of English teaching with intercultural aspects. Thus, whenever the facts found are lack of integration among intercultural aspects to teaching and learning processes, it automatically affects students' awareness and their production of language. In other words, students' language production are possibly not good enough because of there is a possibility to do miscommunication and creates misunderstanding.

The findings of this research is in line to the theory proposed by Zhang (2017) in which he states that for being able to penetrate intercultural during communication, the teachers should be an intercultural communicator who have great confidence and sufficient experience. Furthermore, teacher's confidence can be arising when the teacher has experience as intercultural communicator. In relation to the result of the research above, it can e stated that one of reason why the lecturers' have lack of ability to integrate intercultural aspects is because of their lack of experience as intercultural communicator. On the other hand, Nguyen (2018) argues that intercultural competence still can be integrated in teaching activity although the teacher has lack of experience as intercultural competence. However, he adds that it should be followed by lots of discussion about cultural values from movies, library, books, journals and discussion among the teachers. He further explains that the teacher can improve their competence to integrate culture in their teaching process by facing some curriculum changes in the area of curriculum. In other words, it can be explained that the teacher will rarely discuss about authentic materials if there is lack of enforcement on the curriculum used. It is also the reason why the educators, in this research, never use authentic materials. They argued that there is no enforcement to use authentic materials so they commonly did not use it. Instead, they chose to make it easier by focusing on students' pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and their fluency during speaking.

By considering the explanation above, the finding of the research gives significance for the educators. The educators may improve their own competence of intercultural while also teach the students. Besides, the students may also realize the

## Conclusions

The research was conducted in order to see the educators' roles in including intercultural competence in spoken communication. Thus this research was conducted in speaking class. Based on the result of the research, it can be concluded that the educators' role can be maximized when the educators have high confidence which arise from lots of experience as intercultural communicator. In other words, the educators should have experiences in communications to native speakers or even have experiences to socialize in English speaking country. Thus, it can help them to take the cultural values and transfer it during teaching the students on spoken communication.

Furthermore, the educators should be able to increase their own abilities in intercultural through using authentic materials in teaching which finally end up by designing any relevant activities which can improve students' awareness and abilities on intercultural competence.

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