

Evaluating EFL Students' Attitudes Towards Cultural Differences: Conversation analysis of Intercultural Communication

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ABSTRACT

Anchored from Byram's model (1997; 2000) of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) namely knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness, this study explores the relevance of the conversation analytic perspective for the evaluation of EFL students' attitude toward cultural differences in spoken discourse. This research used a qualitative method in which the data were collected using zoom recording, observation, and interview. This study uses pictures that reflect cultural differences to see how EFL students' attitude competence is perceived in the online discussion. In the discussion process, the researcher uses the conversation analysis (CA) framework which focuses on turn-taking to see how intertwined discussion interactions and to find students' attitude competence are perceived in FGD conversation. In the conversation, it revealed that turn-taking could be used to see the students' attitude competence which is shown by each student in commenting on the picture showed cultural differences. Through Conversation analysis particularly turn-taking, each student has the opportunity to express their perspective about cultural differences one by one. In the end, the data shows that EFL students accept cultural differences with their perspectives.

Keywords: *EFL students' attitude, Conversation analysis (CA), Intercultural Communication, Turn-taking*

1. INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communication is social communication that learns about different cultures (Gudykunst, 2002) Given the importance of intercultural communication competence (ICC) in teaching English (EFL)., Therefore it is important for students, to learn intercultural communication (Isin & Turner, 2002; Deardorff & Jones, 2012). In recent years, the discourses of cultural, economic, and educational globalization and internationalization have shaped changing and now roles of English as an additional foreign language (Galloway, 2017; Widodo, Wood, & Gupta, 2017), for an international landscape (Renandya, & Widodo, 2016), a global language (Leitner, Hashim & Wolf, 2016) and a lingua franca (Fang, 2017). Considering this issue, intercultural communication becomes an important skill to be mastered by EFL learners in Indonesia.

Intercultural communication competence becomes very important in the ELT context in terms of English pedagogy starting from elementary, junior high school, and senior high school. (e.g., Kiss & Weninger, 2017; Liu & Fang, 2017; Porto, 2019). For this reason, many teachers make a variety of efforts to help students learn about ICC by giving them learning about the cultural difference of each country (Chao, 2013; Kiss & Weninger, 2017; Polisca, 2011; Ribeiro, 2016; Tanghe & Park, 2016).

Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013) conceptualize the ICC as a communicate ability to understand and negotiate cultural differences with people from other cultures appropriately using language and the capacity to deal effectively with others. In most of Byram's (2000) work cited, the ICC includes the following five main components: Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills of interpreting and relating, Skills of discovery and interaction, Critical cultural awareness/political education.

Furthermore, Byram's ICC model (1997) claimed that ICC can encompass intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills, which help students to navigate, analyze, connect, interpret, and evaluate the cultural reality represented through social practice from their perspective and also be done through student discussion of intercultural themes from different cultures. This perspective is based on the historical, geographical, political, social, and cultural domains. In this case, situational and cultural parameters guide the critical analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the students' own culture and other cultures. Their knowledge and experience are the basis for critical analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of cultural reality which will be discussed in various themes of discussion about intercultural communication. In the context of the EFL student discussion forum, ICC is a dialogue that discusses intercultural differences for English learners in different cultural-lingua settings where English acts as a global lingua franca (Galloway, 2017; Hoff, 2020). However, this study will only focus on EFL students' attitudes in discussing intercultural differences.

As the framework of the analysis, the writer uses Conversation Analysis (CA). The Role of Conversation Analysis here aims to describe, analyze, and understand the conversation as the nature and basic part of human social life (Sidnell, 2010). Hester and Eglin (1997) and Schegloff (2000) mentioned that CA concern with the culture in action in which cultural accomplishment is achieved through social interaction talk. In short, CA focus on the ways technical conversation is used in social interaction including FGD conversation in the classroom.

Many scholars have used CA framework that concern with the examination of common understanding towards cultural differences in a common language within a conversational practice. As far as intercultural pedagogy is concerned, interaction studies (CAs and forms of discourse analysis) are useful in investigating linguistic practices and in-class discussions, to enable practitioners to make decisions about teaching methodologies (Holtzer, 2003). More recently, they have been used to highlight class discussion practices that can promote cultural learning. However, the study which just focuses on EFL students' attitude that perceived in conversation is still rare. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study aims to evaluate EFL students' attitudes while discussing cultural differences in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the classroom.

Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the attitudes of EFL students during the discussion of intercultural communication that occurs in Focus Group Discussion in the classroom. As the framework of the analysis, we use CA theory particularly as a means to conduct an observational analysis of interactional details that focus on turn-taking. Turn-taking is an approach to the study of social interactions that emerged through the collaborative

research of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, Gail Jefferson, and they took students in the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1974, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson published an important paper in the Language entitled, 'A Simple Systematics for Organizations Turn-Taking for Conversation'.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Attitude as a dimension of Intercultural Communication Evaluation

This present study applies Byram model of ICC (2000) to evaluate EFL students' attitudes that are perceived in a conversation about cultural differences. IC, as indicated by Deardroff (2012), is dynamic in nature and awareness of cultural factors that are built at the beginning of new language learning. Further, she also has conceptualized it as the process of the way people appropriately and effectively behave and communicate in intercultural situations. There are Five components that makeup Byram's model of ICC 1) knowledge 2) attitudes 3) Skills of interpreting and relating 4) Critical cultural awareness/political education and 5) Critical cultural awareness/political education.

Specifically, Bryam (2004) defined attitude as the willingness to associate one's values, beliefs, and behaviour not to assume that they are the most correct, but able to see how the perspectives of others who have a different set of values, beliefs, and behaviour. Intercultural Attitude aspect includes to these, being risk-oriented, empathic, open-minded and respecting differences are among the other. Furthermore, Byram (2008) mentions several indicators of intercultural attitude that refer to aspect of attitude competencies, including:

(1) Being risk-oriented. It is a willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality. This should be distinguished from attitudes of seeking out the exotic or of seeking to profit from others or their attitude in determining and looking for specificities to take lessons from other cultures.

(2) Open-minded. It means that their attitude interest in discovering other perspectives on the interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena. Both in one's own and in other cultures and cultural practices, their attitude that is willing to be open to accepting their own culture and other cultures. Further they can accept different ways of life from different points of view.

(3) Empathic; their readiness if they have to adapt and interact with other cultures if they live in a new place and their desire to know the values of other cultural practices. An attitude of empathic also means that we understand the 'difference' of people in their world to

understand what other people mean and how they feel in the situation. Attitude where a person expresses concern not to hurt the feelings of others and then trying to understand other people' in their socio-cultural context and realizing that what may appear 'strange' to themselves may be 'normal' to them.

(4) Respecting differences is a readiness to learn and understand verbal and nonverbal communication interactions. Attitude where someone wants to respect the diversity of different cultures is related to the attitude of respecting the uniqueness of individuals and respecting the views and ideas of others. Profound attitude understanding about our own culture first and then starting to learn about other people.

In this regard, the attitudes of EFL students are evaluated from the perspective of CA. It is possible to analyze the process of interaction in which CA has been widely used for descriptive studies of intercultural interactions (Carbaugh 2005; Spencer-Oatey 2000).

2.2. Conversational Analysis (CA), turn-taking and Interculturality

Many previous studies have drawn on CA framework concern in terms of intercultural communication. Mori, J. (2003) examined the achievement of intercultural discourse and how it is worked through continually shifting of discourse. The finding revealed that cultural differences as shown in linguistic ability are visible aspects of participants' talk to structure their conversations in orientation to their understandings of other cultures that they are orientating to. In line with this, Park, I. (2007) identified the categories of Native Speaker (NS) and Non-Native Speaker (NNS) through the relevant procedure in conversational interaction. The study showed that NS and NNS are related to the terms 'expert' and 'novice' that are treated as emergent, sequentially realized, and negotiated features of the talk.

CA has been widely used for descriptive studies of intercultural interactions (Carbaugh, 2013; Spencer-Oatey 2000). Schegloff (2000) identified that CA is directed towards the examination of talk as a constitutive site of culture. Furthermore, CA also not only focuses on the language produced by someone in a conversation or interaction but also on the understanding and interpretation of the speaker from each other's words as long as the conversation itself can achieve a successful communication. Conversation analysis deals with the structure of conversation, turn-taking, topic changes, and conversation structure - the rules governing the opening and closing of conversations (Johnson, Funk, & Clay-Warner, 1998). In particular, the study used CA as a means to evaluate social interaction that happened in FGD conversation that focuses on turn-taking.

Turn-taking is a matter relating to the allocation and acquisition of turns when we are talking or how turns are exchanged in a conversation or conversation (Hutchby, 2017; Wooffitt & Hutchby, 2008). Turn allocation is about giving a turn to the next person, while turn acquisition explains how a turn is acceptable. In other words, changes must be taken by the next speaker when they can turn (Willemsen, Gosen, Koole, & de Glopper, 2020). In other words, turn-taking is a method of interaction for humans when they have a conversation, so that interaction can be delivered properly, and the speaker or listener must know their turn to speak. For example, when someone talks, other people must listen and wait their turn to speak, so that the message delivered by the speaker can be conveyed properly. Also, listeners will be able to have an understanding of what they are talking about. However, many people do not follow this rule and they do not wait for their turn to speak at the right time. This can cause messages from the speaker to be sent incorrectly. So we need to make turn-taking during a conversation so that the conversation can run smoothly.

In this study, CA is directed towards the evaluation of talk as a constitutive site of culture: as Schegloff (2000) has famously put it, the interest is in the mechanisms of "talk in social interaction". In this regard, CA and turn-taking raise some issues that emerged through intercultural communication in which problems of cultures coming together in intercultural exchanges and gain definition as the investigation of contexts for conversational praxis. This then reveals distinctive issues raise in the 'speech community' through the discourse of cultural learning. Therefore, this study explores the relevance of the conversation analytic perspective for the evaluation of students' attitudes toward cultural differences in spoken discourse. Further, this paper explores how the concepts of turn-taking patterns of conversation and attitudes as one of the intercultural competences may help to make sense of the spoken discourse of intercultural settings.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

The methodology that the writer uses in this study is a qualitative analysis that produces descriptive data in the form of speech and behaviour of people observed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The purpose of this study is to describe the analysis and transcript of the conversation focused on the EFL students perceived their intercultural communication as seen from their attitude competence (Byram 2000) when engaged in discussion and focus on turn-taking strategies namely turn constructional and Sacks turn allocation mechanism (Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974).

3.2. Participant

A total of 20 EFL students as participants of the study were asked if they would like to complete an optional face-to-face interview session. Because only six participants consented to the follow-up interview, only these six participants were used in this study's analysis. According to Kitzinger (1996); Twin (1998) that to conduct focus group discussions, one group was enough for 4-8 participants. Thus, the six SFL students are interviewed as the participants of the study. Demographically, the participant consisted of three men and three women. Participant's average was 20-21 years old and were all enrolled as full-time students at public university in Cirebon West Java.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The data were taken from observation and recording of EFL students' discussion about intercultural communication by using a media of interconnected digital images. The participants communicate about the cultural differences in the picture and then the way they respond to the existence of cultural differences are analyzed using CA framework that reflected attitude competence. In the discussion context, the EFL students' attitudes are perceived through digital images that can stimulate their intercultural understanding. They remember and then try to understand what they see when entering another culture for the first time (Verluyten: 2007). All four participants were interviewed by two members of the research team. The semi-structured interview, lasting approximately 15-minutes, was audio-recorded and consisted of Yes/No and open-ended questions relating to their perception towards intercultural communication showed from the video. All interviews took place in the participants' first language, Indonesia. The data were first analysed thematically and then were textually analysed deploying attitude competence of Byram's model of ICC (1997, 2000) - informed CA framework. Although interviewers followed a script consisting of sixteen pre-established questions, depending on the answers received, the participants in some cases get additional questions to gain relevant details. Since these interview questions elicited data focusing on the same themes of the pre-survey questions, apart from the background information, only the interview data was used for this study.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the conversation analysis carried out by the EFL students' conversation, how to see students' attitudes competence perceived in the conversation which discusses intercultural communication competence during students FGD through picture based on Byram's theory and to find out whether the discussion is going well, conversational analysis is used which focuses on the turn-taking based

on Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks et al theory. The first step of analysis is finding some significant data in conversation students. In this research, there are 10 pictures selected to display in this discussion. Where 1 slide consists of two pictures that show cultural differences.

As the first finding from the data analysis revealed that the turn-taking strategy of talk can be implemented to view how EFL students perceive their attitude towards cultural differences. It happened in the construction of conversation in different ways. It presented in quite basic features of talk such as greetings that taking quite distinctive cultural forms that are constituted in the sequential ordering of talk. As such, the fact that turn-taking strategy is an important element of CA which means is to be a useful way for reflecting on the working out of intercultural practices. By evaluating the exchanges between participants, and the ways that conversational dialogues are worked out in a turn-taking framework, then cultural differences that are perceived by students can be identified.

In terms of how CA may be used to capture EFL students' attitude towards cultural differences, turn-taking represent discourse features that became the basis for asking questions about potential cultural differentiation within the spoken discourse and their sequential handling. With this in mind, cultural differences were treated as an observable phenomenon that is noticeable in the conversation among the participants. Furthermore, turn-taking aims to make visible the facticity of social praxis and the methods by which people treat it as a real and constraining feature Gibson (2009). Thus, turn-taking is a way in which the participants can use sequents and categories as features of their talk/discourse in spoken discourse.

Regarding the EFL students' attitude towards cultural differences then are represented in these thematic analyses:

4.1 Students are respecting differences



Figure 1 Different culture for how to say goodbye

These two pictures (Figure 1) represent a different way of saying goodbye. The left picture shows the Indonesian cultural habits to say goodbye to their parents, while the right picture represents other cultural habits of how they say goodbye to their parents. These pictures were chosen because every country has a different culture

for how to say goodbye. Regarding these pictures, the participants perceived their attitudes of respecting cultural differences. One of the participants even honours the value of politeness.

Student 6: *“Yes basically, there is nothing wrong with the two differences. Both of these certainly have good goals, namely teaching the values of politeness and mutual respect.”*

Another response that perceives respecting cultural differences also represented towards these following pictures (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 Indonesian and foreign country uniforms in the classroom.

The left picture represents Indonesian culture where Indonesians are accustomed to wearing uniforms at school, while the right picture the customs of other cultures who are accustomed to wearing casual clothes for school. This picture was chosen because every country has different school regulations. In this respect, the participant mentioned their respect perceived in this comment.

Student 2: *“Indeed, not many countries require school students to wear uniforms. However, Indonesia applies a different system.”*

The students’ response showed that it is related to the attitude of respecting the uniqueness of individuals. This attitude shows that appreciating diversity will help people to realize that everyone in the world is unique and different. Readiness to learn and understand verbal and nonverbal communication interactions, attitude where someone wants to respect the diversity of different cultures.

4.2. Being Risk-Oriented

Other indicators of attitude competence reflected from the participant towards figure 1. Being risk-oriented means that an expression of their attitude in determining and looking for specificities or taking lessons from other cultures. This perception perceived from these two comments:

Student 2: *“while for the culture of kissing the cheek abroad itself, it means indicating individual affection for other individuals. However, in Indonesia itself, actually both cultures exist, but specifically for kissing the cheek in Indonesia itself it is only intended or mostly done by one’s relatives and sometimes it still feels taboo if it is*

done by a foreigner, unlike kissing the hand that anyone can do to respect more.”

Student 2: *“In my opinion you more have two choices, namely whether they want to be social beings or become individual beings. In some cases, in everyday life humans can become individual beings in dealing with personal problems and become social creatures in social life.”*

4.3. Empathy

The expression of empathy showed in Figures 1 and 2. Byram’s (2000) defined empathy as the expression of attitude where we understand the 'differences' of people in their world so that we understand what other people mean and how they feel in that situation. An attitude where a person expresses concern not to hurt the feelings of others trying to understand other people' in their socio-cultural context and realizing that what may appear 'strange' to themselves may be 'normal' to them. The participant showed empathy reflected through these comments.

Student 5: *“Basically, since we were little, parents have been taught good manners, for example, like kissing the hand of an older person when meeting or saying goodbye, but it is the same with foreign cultures, namely kissing the cheek, so it doesn't matter because it has the same meaning”.*

Student 6: *“Clothing is indeed one of the most important needs in carrying out daily activities, one of which is at school.”*

4.4. Open-minded

Their attitude Interest in discovering other perspectives on the interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one’s own and in other cultures and cultural practices, their attitude that is willing to be open to accepting their own culture and other cultures and they can accept different ways of life from different points of view. The attitudes in which they are interested in finding and accepting other perspectives on the interpretation. The open-minded perception is reflected in figure 1 and then catches this opinion from the participant.

Student 1: *“My opinion of respecting parents does not have to ‘salim’, it can also be done by kissing the cheek depending on the traditions and customs that exist in the family.”*

5. CONCLUSION

After analysing the data of students’ attitude and their turn-taking strategy through a conversational analysis framework, the conclusion can be drawn that there are 4 types of student attitude competence are perceived in the online conversation. There are being risk-oriented, open-minded, empathetic, and respecting differences. The researcher also found 2 turn-taking strategies used

namely the turn-constructive units and turn-allocation mechanism. With these in mind, it can be concluded that the students showed a good attitude toward cultural differences. Further, they revealed that they have learned new lessons and experiences to learn to respect other cultures as a means to respect their own culture. Furthermore, the conversation process ran smoothly by applying two turn-taking strategies. In the discussion, students use a turn-taking strategy during the discussion so that the interlocutor changes and the discussion can run smoothly to minimize silence or overlap in the discussion to achieve the goals of discussion and make it easier for them to share the information. By turn-taking strategy, the EFL students' attitude competence is shown by allowing them to express their perceived in turn. Further, turn-taking can direct towards looking at cultural differences in spoken discourse in which its mechanism and organization of sequential ordering and intercultural communicative competence can be revealed.

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