

Intercultural Competence to Maintain the Nation's Identity

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Abstract—Learning a foreign language contains not only linguistics elements but also cultural elements. Introduce and teach a new culture that contains different perception, values and way of life from the culture of learner may cause the problems. Therefore, learning a foreign language should understand foreign cultures. The problem is not all foreign language learners understand it. Learn new culture could cause misunderstanding or even vitiate the local or national culture. That's why the intercultural competence is important for the learner to have tolerance to a foreign culture and enhance their own culture. This study aims to investigate the elements of intercultural competence and strategy to develop intercultural competence for learners of foreign languages, especially French. Field studies method employed in this paper. Samples were observed in this study were 30 students of the French Language Study Program in Universitas Negeri Semarang. Data was collected by class observations, focus group discussion and interview. The result of this study reveals that intercultural competence consists of perceptions of elements, verbal and non-verbal elements. Perceptions elements involve cognitive competence and competence emotive. Thus the strategies are developed by considering the language competence including verbal and non-verbal elements and psychological maturity of the learner.

Keywords—element; intercultural competence; nation's identity; strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Language and culture have a very close and complementary relationship. This relationship is like two sides of a coin, language on the one side and culture on the other side. Language represents a particular nation or community. In other words, the language represents culture. This is stated by some experts [1], [2], [3], that culture and language is a system that is inherent in human being. In other words, culture is a system that is inherent in human, regulate human interaction in society, while the language is a system that serves as a means of realization of such interactions.

Cultural and linguistic relationships are reciprocal [4]. He divides the relationship into two types: (1) Phylogenetic that language is part of a culture and (2) Ontogenetic that learning culture is done through language. The reciprocal relationship implies that learning the language, especially a foreign language, indirectly study the culture. Denis said that the language classes of foreign language allowing learners to recognize the perceptions and values, ways of life of others [5].

In short, learning a foreign language is basically a process of contact with a new culture.

Foreign language learning aims to make the learners as social actors enabling to act in the community of target language. Sometimes, in the learning process, teachers often use authentic speech such as commercial television. Audiovisual elements in this media can communicate the message. And to a certain extent, the ability to understand the messages conveyed by the television media becomes a necessity. But the perception of foreign culture (French culture in most of the cases) can put the learner and the teacher even in an identity destabilizing situation. Foreign culture is very often seen in a "hierarchy" (domination and inequality between cultures) in a high position relative to the culture of learners. The tendency is considering France as a land of dreams, superior to their native country, so it can change the orientation of learners' culture. It linked as Malinchismo, a beautiful girl who glorifies western values and cause inferiority feelings towards her own culture, so it doesn't support culture acculturation but raises enculturation [6].

As social actors, of learners equipped with new experiences, faced with the unknown tradition and was introduced with a different form of thinking that allows reprocessing her identity and relationship with the community. This article will discuss the elements of intercultural competence and strategy to develop intercultural competence.

II. THEORETICAL

A. Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is the ability to negotiate or to process the cultural meanings and to act in effective communication with the interlocutor has a diverse culture [7]. In other word intercultural competencies aimed at creating effective communication, remove xenophobia, racism, prejudice and ethnocentrism and opening up to others, and develop mutual understanding. Intercultural competencies necessary to avoid misunderstandings. This competency development must rely on their own reflections on cultural identity, knowledge of other cultures and interunderstanding. Understanding intercultural communication has three main elements, namely perception, verbal communication and non-verbal communication.

The third description of the main elements in cultural competence is as follows: 1) perception is understanding or interpretation of something, understanding of the physical and social environment. Everyone has an idea or a different interpretation of the reality around him. It was influenced by the experience or learning has been through, stimuli that caught his attention, the influence of internal and external factors, thus forming assumptions or conclusions that are built from the interpretation and subjective judgments; 2) Verbal communication is a symbolic world that is used to express the reality of mind, inner experience and the needs of users. The symbols used are always associated to culture; 3) Non-verbal communication is a system of symbol that is not in a category of words, all stimuli that do not include in verbal stimuli [8].

If the verbal and nonverbal communication is a symbol that is used for communication, perception is a mental process that involves cognitive competence and competence emotive. Cognitive competency is processing a lot of information to understand the characteristics of our culture, to perceive other cultures. And the dominant image that we have of other cultures will refine and define our relationship with the culture Affaya quoted by Alsina, while the emotive competence is a psychological process that occurs when intercultural communication takes place [9]. Communication is established when a person is able to express or receive a positive emotional response before, during and after the social interaction [7].

B. Model of Intercultural Competence

For a long time, cultures were considered as part of a mosaic model in which each culture is stable, independent entity with no interaction with other cultures. Today we recognize that culture has an interaction with other cultures. the spirit of interculturality in FLE (French as Foreign Language), the approach and understanding of cultures (foreign and/or maternal) must focus on this mirrored relationship between cultures, or between individuals from different cultures. Literature, cinema, travel stories can constitute a body of fruitful analysis for this dual perspective, subjective and relational.

Various theories and models of intercultural competence referred on the five basic concepts as motivation, knowledge, skills, context, and outcomes (conformity and perceived effectiveness, satisfaction, understanding, attraction, intimacy, assimilation, task, and achievement) [10]. Chen and Starosta offer a model of intercultural communication competence [7]. This model aims to enhance interactivity in understanding, appreciating, tolerating and integrating cultural differences, so that they are ready to become members of the world community. This model presents a transformational process of symmetric interdependence that can be explained through three perspectives: (a) affective, or inter-cultural sensitivity; (b) cognitive, or intercultural awareness; and (c) behavioral, or intercultural skills. These three perspectives are equally important, inseparable and form a holistic picture of the competence of intercultural communication.

III. METHODS

This is qualitative research with 30 informants from sixth-semester students of French pedagogical program in Universitas Negeri Semarang. To collect the data, we used class observation, focus group discussion and interview during in 5 sessions. The materials used to develop intercultural competence in this study were 9 French television commercials, including 3 auto ads, 3 food and beverages ads, and 3 cellular service ads. The nine commercials were chosen for the cultural content of French.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The elements of Intercultural Competence

This section will discuss the elements of intercultural competence of French learners at Semarang State University. French television advertisements often display messages implicitly and do not directly expose the benefits of the products offered. The implicit messages found in the nine ads used. Therefore the learner only catches the message explicitly. Perceptual elements are related to experience, verbal and non-verbal elements are interrelated in shaping intercultural competence. In learning a foreign language, limited knowledge, and language sometimes also be a barrier to understanding the message. For example in "Twingo Renault" ad, learners only catch the message that homosexual marriage has been recognized in France. Most learners state that this ad is not worth publishing. They have not been able to connect visual messages and linguistic messages related to the products offered, thus not getting a deeper understanding.

The following will be presented an example of the implicit messaging of French television advertising Renault Twingo (31 seconds). It is presented in five sequences.

1) Sequence 1: The blue car rode. Inside the car, there was a young woman in a sleeveless white dress kissing a bouquet of white roses. Beside him, a middle-aged man was driving. Their faces looked happy, looked at each other and smiled.



Fig. 1. Explanation of sequence 1.

2) Sequence 2: The car stopped in front of the church. In front of the church was a crowd of people who applauded the couple. The car door opened, the young woman went down. The middle-aged man smiled. The woman looked at her with a happy smile. She tidied the man's tie and took her into the

church. They walked past the invited guests. In front of the altar stands a younger man.

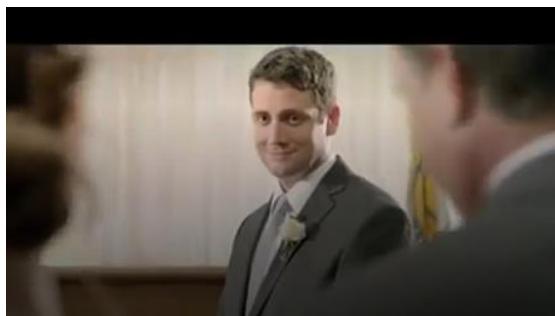


Fig. 2. explanation of sequence 2.

They passed a woman in a hat carrying a blond girl with flowers. The young man smiled at the woman walking to the altar to accompany the middle-aged man, then looked at the man next to the young woman.

3) *Sequence 3* : The young woman kissed a middle-aged man who was holding her and said, «Congratulations Papa». The woman smiled happily looking at them.

The middle-aged man approached the young man who was in front of the altar and clasped his hand. They held hands and looked intimate.



Fig. 3. Explanation for sequence 3.

4) *Sequence 4* : The two men were holding hands out of the church. Young man holding a little girl, and women in hats flowered, accompanied by applause and cheers invited guests.



Fig. 4. Explanation for sequence 4.

5) *Sequence 5* : They walked to the car. The writing appears: Time changes so does Twingo. The blue car drove followed by the slogan: Change a life, change the car.



Fig. 5. Explanation for Sequence 5.

6) *Sequence 6* : At the end of sequence, the slogan has appeared: Changeons de vie, changeons l'automobile. 'Change a life, change the car'.



Fig. 6. Brand Renault Twingo 2012.

B. Development strategies of Intercultural competence

In the previous section has been argued that the learner is prepared as a social actor. It is why learner has to learn frequently various authentic discourse used in the target language speech community. Thus they are accustomed to contact with verbal symbols but also a cultural symbol. One such discourse could be electronic media advertising. The media option has advantages in the audio elements that allow the learner to familiarize themselves with the hearing stimuli that can contribute to the pronunciation and visual elements that allow the learner to receive or understand the message. Both stimuli can provide meaningful learning experiences according to the cone of the experiential learning theory of Dale.

The strategy for developing intercultural competence was conducted with Bennett's intercultural sensitivity model, adapted by Navaiteine starting from the denial stage and ending with the integration stage [10]. The stages are described in Figure 6.

The denial stage is introduced by cultural differences. When learners encounter a new culture, they reflect in their own culture and assume that the foreign culture is not relevant to their culture. At the stage of defense, learners begin to recognize other cultures with the perspective of "us" versus "them". Cultural differences are recognized by the learner, and are considered as threat of self-awareness.

In third step, the minimization of different, learners are guided to build the cultural self-awareness. Learners are able to see their own culture from perspective of another cultural. They are aware about cultural differences but they are looking for similarities because the common value are considered more important than the difference. Acceptance of difference stage is an appreciation of cultural differences in behavior and value. It is a refinement of cultural contrast analysis. In this stage, learners appreciate difference without evaluating them as positively or negatively. This stage helps to develop the ethnocentrism to ethno relativism. The adaptation of the stage of difference allows learners to develop communication skills that ensure the realization of intercultural communication. And the last step is the integration of the difference. This step allows learners to internalize multicultural views.

By using the steps, most students accept the new culture even though it is quite different to its own. But it is important also to value their own culture by discussing the raisonnement local wisdom to enhance the appreciation of their own culture



Fig. 7. Stage of strategy for developing intercultural competence.

V. CONCLUSION

Perceptions, verbal and nonverbal communication are elements that contribute to intercultural competence. To build intercultural competence requires a mental process that involves cognitive competence and competence emotive. Through the implementation of the five stages offered by Bennet in the learning process, learners have a better understanding of their own culture and avoid prejudice to other cultures.

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