EXPLORING THE CROSS CULTURE UNDERSTANDING IN INDONESIAN EFL CONTEXT: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

The objective of the present study is to elaborate some cross-cultural understanding importance for Indonesian EFL students, and the role of EFL teaching in minimizing students' misunderstanding while using English. This study uses literature review study for collecting the data coming from some sources in the forms of books, and journal articles regarding Cross Culture Understanding in Indonesia. In analyzing the data, the qualitative data from the sources were read, analyzed, classified, and concluded. Based on the result of the study, it is important to teach and provide more cultural content for strengthening the cross culture understanding of the Indonesian students while they are learning English. This study also finds that cross culture understanding materials may give beneficial impact that support the improvement of their English language skills. Moreover, the role of integrating cross cultural understanding content in EFL practice in minimizing the misunderstanding in using English has been proven positively. To sum up, cross-culture understanding in English language teaching in Indonesia should be considered as an important element to be involved in English teaching and learning activity to achieve learning outcomes, and to create Indonesia's generation to be ready to compete in the era of global competition.

Keywords: *cross culture understanding; EFL; Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is not only about how to teach students to master English as a language only, however, it is also important to provide them a complete understanding of English as a part of a culture, society's identity, and media to express their language and communicative skill. Regarding the Indonesian EFL context, cross culture understanding become a crucial part of EFL practice in which all stakeholders who are involved in this activity should understand. Teachers, students, and curriculum designers should be aware that the elements of cultures must be included (Sidabutar, 2020). In English learning and teaching activities, minimizing miscommunication in using English during the real interaction are also important.

Language and culture are two parts that are not able to be separated and always be alive in society as a heritage. The connection between them needs to be a concern for us as our basic understanding (Rachmawati, 2018). Culture can be defined as the lifestyle of everyone who communicate using a language in their daily life (Larsen-freeman & Anderson, 2011). The way people behave and think are related to the language for expressing and delivering their thought. Along with their habit and behavior, the language will always accompany people's activities, until that combination will create an unconscious daily practice. This daily practice might gradually be done as a culture. It is in line with T. S. T. Mahadi & Jafari (2012) who state that the cultural

elements are related to the socially entirety transmitted, common behavioral pattern, belief, prototype, artistic creation, religious conviction, and the other human mind's products.

Culture is acquired via interactions among one and others. Thus, culture is the product of social interaction rather than something that is inborn, inherent, or driven by choice (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012). It means that culture and society have a close correlation in between. People will inherit the culture by social interaction and what people had done gradually will create a culture for people themselves as well.

In addition, the sociological point of view considers culture as the combination of the ingrained and intrinsic concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, and understanding, that make up or create the common basic knowledge for social behaviour (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012). As the social product, the role of society to create a culture is crucial. Without social interaction the habits and thoughts will not be appeared as unconscious daily guidance in life. In this case, the term of language as a medium of communication can get an important role to connect people. Language develops alongside individuals as they can create their own culture and the way of thinking. People from different cultures will have a different point of view in responding to a thing, it may happen due to different frames of thinking that derived from different languages and cultures. Then, the relation between language, culture, and society is clearly available.

However, the transmission process of delivering a language from one generation to the next generation is not that easy, a different era has different social circumstances and this may create a new culture at a certain time. In this case, the new form and style of language will be different as well as the era followed. Nowadays, in global society, people from various cultures, social backgrounds, and even from different languages can get interaction between one another (Pujiyanti & Zuliani, 2014). This condition forces people from all over the world to master several international languages as the primary media to communicate among them. Several languages in which are used as the official language in the United Nations draw that world society needs some global languages that can be used to communicate in the global society. Those languages are Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish, French, and Russian.

English as one of global communication media or EIL (English as an International Language) also has its role in society. English becomes a language that needs to be mastered by people and triggered them to do so because most of the international society uses it (Al-Obaydi, 2019; Hibatullah, 2019). Thus, the demand for English learning is higher and increase, it comes from various non-native English speaking countries as a sign of their willingness in the adaptation in facing the new era of a global society. In the world adjustment, English goes into formal education rather than only a certain culture and heritage of society's product. In EFL education context, the curriculum design is improved and more proper as time goes by. Involved in formal education, the English language teaching more concern toward several crucial aspects related to the basic understanding of teaching language (Rohmah, 2021). One of them is the relation between language and culture. This basic understanding is required for those who are teaching English because teaching English for native English students will be different from non-native English students. Teaching English in the country in which English needs more effort to be done, the elements of culture should be understood for teachers and students along with language itself. The conventional tradition that classified the cultural teaching matter to be executed after mastering enough linguistic knowledge or obtained several potential steps of the English language skill has been redefined into the idea that cultural contents must be introduced from the beginning period when students involve in EFL world (Morganna et al., 2018). Therefore, cross-culture understanding can be considered as an important English teaching practice basic frame for EFL students.

As well as other non-native English speaking countries, Indonesia has different cultural backgrounds toward native English speaking countries. English language teaching in Indonesia needs more concern to introduce English as the media of communication rather than to learn English from a linguistics point of view (Erwin Prasetyo, 2021; Mahaputri et al., 2021). Mostly,

students are able to arrange the grammatically correct sentences, however, they face some difficulties to use English effectively in their interaction and communication. "Several students noticed that although they could correctly compose sentences during a session, they could not employ the composition appropriately when conversing with others beyond classroom." (Larsen-freeman & Anderson, 2011). They are confused about how to use the proper vocabulary in a certain context. It is also strengthened by a lack of conversational practices. Some students are attempting to translate some thoughts based on Indonesian culture (Siti Marwah & Astuti, 2022) and behavior to English form, and it may create broken English. It means that what mostly Indonesian students did in translating the language word by word may create an incorrect grammatical sentence in English.

Some researchers have explored the studies on cultural understanding (Seniarika, 2017), however, only little studies focus their investigation regarding cross culture understanding study in EFL Indonesian context (Ramayana et al., 2022). Most of the studies focus on the cultural pragmatics and interlanguage field (Hartono, 2017). Thus, there is a gap between the study related to general cultural content in ELT and the study related to cross culture understanding in EFL context. Whereas, it has been explained above that the cross culture understanding is an important aspect in EFL classroom that need more analysis and exploration. Considering the gap and the evidence, this study can have novelty and originality that is expected to provide contribution to the knowledge. Therefore, in the present study, the exploration on some cross-cultural understanding importance for Indonesian EFL students, and the role of EFL teaching in minimizing students' misunderstanding while using English becomes the goal or objective of the research.

METHOD

The present study uses literature review study that collected some sources in the forms of books, and journals (Snyder, 2019). The sources were related to the instructional practice regarding Cross Culture Understanding in Indonesia. The data consisted of twenty-two resources. Sixteen data were from journal articles and the others were from books. In analyzing the data, the qualitative data from the sources were read, analyzed, classified, and concluded (Efriza et al., 2022).

It accommodated data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion. Data that have been collected and analyzed were categorized into themes. It could be recognized as data reduction process. Then, the data were interpreted and presented. To sum up the data and findings, the conclusion process was conducted. The present study elaborates some cross-cultural understanding importance for Indonesian EFL students, and the role of EFL teaching in minimizing students' misunderstanding while using English. On the other hand, this study could also be used to enrich the reference of Indonesia EFL teaching practice.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
English Language Teaching for Indonesia EFL Students

Academically, when Indonesians teach English at school, they are necessarily exposed to this society. It is the instructor's responsibility to provide these students with knowledge about the society underlying it, so that, they can be prepared in interacting with English speaking social community. Instructors and education practitioners should be mindful of being a cultural reason which is crucial for cross-culture communication. The teacher will not just learn linguistics aspects of English without learning society simultaneously. Therefore, teaching language structures and social rules should lead students to greater acquisition of communication and social ability. Toward that point, the present paper attempts to account for the requirement of interpreting cultural aspects regarding the context of English language education. It encompasses the value of

education society, whose culture to be taught at English language teaching classroom, some aspects of society that English language teaching involved with, and the use of the education culture in Indonesia.

According to Kompas News in the online version on 12 December 2019 edition, in its article, it was reported that based on the English First (EF) international education company that conducted a global survey to 100 countries for the English proficiency index (EPI). According to English First (English First, 2019), the survey outcome was merely showing the unsatisfied result. In that article, it was reported that Indonesia was on the 61st rank of 100 countries. It has a decrease score from the previous survey, the last result showed that 51.58 was Indonesia's score in EPI, but in 2019 Indonesia got a 50.06 score. In Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia was in the 5th position under Singapore (66.82), Philippine (60.04), Malaysia (58.55), and Vietnam (51.57). This survey outcome showed that the Indonesian English proficiency index is left behind to its neighbor countries. Research, curriculum development, improving teachers' capability, and the English teachers' amount need to be increased. Therefore, as a multicultural country that has a unique cultural background and its experiences society in diversity, Indonesia has to compete as an open-minded country.

Indonesia inhabitants are multicultural society. This condition is constructed due to the territory of its country itself is a combination of several islands. In this case, society in which coming from one island to another has a different character, and those people have their own local language for daily communication. To connect people in the whole of Indonesia's territory, Indonesia has a national language called *"Bahasa Indonesia"* in which mostly Indonesian are mastered it. Along with their own local language, Bahasa Indonesia can be easily found in the most level of society. For academic purposes and official language, Bahasa Indonesia is the main media to be used.

English language teaching in Indonesia is merely facing a complex problem in its position. At one point, English in society is seen as a tough and high-level language. People who are studying the language have an image that English is derived from formal education only, such as English courses, school, and university. Therefore, it looks like the people who have no chance to get formal education is no need to learn it, but this assumption which is growing up to the society is totally wrong. The use of English should be spread wider of its user, that is why English should be spread out to all levels of society then become familiar to Indonesia's citizens. Another problem that commonly comes out in English language teaching in schools is the unsupported circumstance. Students are studying English since early childhood in elementary school but still, lots of those students are not able to communicate in English properly. Lack of practice makes them feel the anxiety to use English in daily conversation. In the next level of English learning in EFL students in Indonesia faced the culture understanding issues along with language teaching. Mostly Indonesians learn English on the structural aspects only rather than language in a context related to the culture of its language which followed it up. The purpose of teaching English and cross-culture understanding is not to change the culture of the learner and the way students think as English native language but to clarify the language context and decrease the students' misunderstanding in understanding the language and its function in words, phrase, sentences and several language terms. It is more important for students to know that they still have their own original frame thinking but they are able to express their thought in native English speakers' way. Besides, research that is conducted in several elementary schools in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, explains some problems that may appear in English language teaching at the elementary level. Three primary problems found in this research and need more concern to the other school, those problems are: "The first is teacher's factor, the teachers do not use an interesting method to make the students interested in accepting the materials of the elementary students; second, Schools do not support the English lesson, for an example lack of facilities and never given English teachers training; Third, the English lesson is not included in the curriculum" (Maili & Hestiningsih, 2017). These problems basically arose before the last curriculum of

Indonesia's education is implemented that is *Kurikulum 13* (K13). From its research founding, it is explained that the problem of ELT in Indonesia is started at the elementary level. This can be an indicator that English in elementary school has no priority in its place, and this situation makes the students' basic foundation in learning English is insufficient. The development of teaching method and strategy needs to be improved as well as teachers' ability, and the English lesson itself needs to be given as a primary basic lesson to the elementary students. Whereas, the introduction of English is important to be delivered to the elementary students, as well as basic cultural aspects of the English language itself. However, this condition will be solved if all elements of educators in Indonesia are more concerned and look forward to the future that English is an essential skill to be mastered not only for academic purposes but also in daily conversation. And nowadays it shows the positive sign from various elements of society that indicate the awareness of the importance of English in the future.

Further, when we look at Indonesia from a different point of view English in Indonesia has good progress in the future; it can be seen in some societies who had been realized that this language is crucial in almost all sectors of Indonesia's development of its country. In academic purposes English has definitely contributed a high transformation in the education sector; in this particular case, the education minister encourages the academician to increase their productivity in research and publishing their research in international journals or conferences. "Since Indonesia's independence in 1945, English has been considered as an important foreign language, particularly due to its international status. For some time now, successive governments have mandated the study of English at the secondary and tertiary levels of education" (Gandana & Parr, 2013). This is a good sign of English communication skills for the academician, teacher, and researcher. On the other hand, tourism and business that close to one of Indonesia's economic target developments encourage the employee to go through the challenge of world-class competition in communication skills. This sector is required good communication in English proficiency. Nevertheless, those sectors are not able to cover the English communication skill in the whole society level. Those people who get the opportunity to be involved in these sectors will be triggered to learn English and using the language as their necessity. But for Indonesians who do not need English skills to their jobs and their daily conversation will always remain as a passive user of English. Therefore, English users in Indonesia in this case is only for several people who exactly need it and are forced due to their jobs rather than learn English for daily communication. This situation, the jobs are like a boundary to classify the people who require English and who do not require English, even though English is tough in school but still do not have an equal place in all level of society. Therefore, all those hopes are required people participation and any other elements to support it. Teachers and students are not able to work hard on their own side, others are also responsible to stimulate the program and cultivate the English as a global society's necessity to face the era of globalization.

Cross Culture Understanding in English Language Teaching for EFL Students

The responsibility of language teaching to deliver the essence of its language as a medium of communication is needed to be kept in mind. Language teaching attempts to simplify the complex elements of language in which related to the various factors along with. In this case, English language teaching also adopts the basic frame design in how to deliver the language teaching materials into the teaching and learning activities. Some other reasons why cross-culture understanding in English language teaching important because the notion is derived from the idea of mixing language teaching and culture. Cultural understanding in language teaching is able to simplify the different forms of some expression sentences in certain situations in both students' mother tongue and English, also the essence why some English sentences' terms are formed. So that, minimizing the misunderstanding in using English is working, as well as the goal of teaching EFL students to use English in communications get positive outcomes. These ideas are in line with the Communicative Language Teaching method which has communicative competence as a

target achievement of learners. "Applying the theoretical perspective of the communicative approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims broadly to make communicative competence the goal of the language teaching" (Larsen-freeman & Anderson, 2011). In this method, the elements of culture have significant impacts toward students' progress since some experiences and teaching materials in learning English are designed as similar as possible to the genuine resources, some essential parts such as adopting authentic materials, bring the target language as a vehicle for classroom communication, and communicative interaction will build cooperative relationship among students (Larsen-freeman & Anderson, 2011).

As it is mentioned earlier that authentic material should be included in teaching and learning activities, the basic cultural context such as greeting and expressing gratitude are better to be cultivated since the English learners begin their course. An authentic source in the CLT method is included as supporting equipment in creating an authentic circumstance in the learning process. Taking some places from English native speaking countries on the topic of discussion may be a little effort of injecting elements of culture in teaching English. Probably, some figure or activities in which has a close relation toward the native English society will also contribute a natural imagination of students to feel a reel English in use as a communication media. By this, it is "Needed for EFL teachers to integrate cultural knowledge and exploration practice since the beginning level"(Morganna et al., 2018b). The ideas are make-sense in the context of building a new habit in a language use form. For English beginners, learning English for the first time is similar to learn new knowledge of culture, ideas, and thought, but the aim of the process is introducing the culture of English and its relation toward communicative aspects. According to Byram and Morgan, as cited in Mukundan (2005), "learners cannot transform, or accommodate or even effectively assimilate into other cultures. They cannot simply shake off their own culture and step into another". The students will get difficulties in switching the language from their mother tongue to English, this may happen since students have different backgrounds and habit. Those elements in new language will be strange and the pattern will be unfamiliar. Therefore, giving an understanding of culture along with giving a language teaching is an obligation.

One another actor in this concept for running it well is the role of the teacher. According to Larsen-freeman & Anderson (2011), "the teachers of language have thought about their subject matter what language and culture are; and for their students, teachers must be concern who they are as learners and how it is they learn". Those essential thoughts must be exactly kept in the teachers' minds as guidance to apply what had they learn as former English learners as well as a teacher in the class. Their experiences as a former English student may help them to analyze their own perspective in learning English from the student's point of view combined by their understanding of the culture and its relation toward language. Larsen-freeman & Anderson (2011) state that "in English language teaching, the role of the teacher is really crucial; it is really useful to help students by sharing their experience as former language learners as well". On the other hand, the teachers are also responsible to analyze their students' backgrounds including English level and culture understanding. Further, teachers are required to understand the English itself as an object of study whether in a communicative perspective or linguistics perspective. Those combinations will encourage the teacher to seek the proper method, material design, problem-solving, and avoid the worse situation when the teaching-learning English is conducted. Therefore, the learning objectives of teaching English and cultural understanding of the English for foreign language students are achieved.

Teachers have a responsibility to set the conditions for teaching and learning as normal as possible. Description can be extended by interactive teaching materials that often refer to the language used in everyday life and include cultural and language aspects. Though, natural discourse can be extended to the students and teachers on a regular basis of social interaction. "Sociocultural theories and principles have given rise to innovative forms of education for L2 learners and have highlighted the importance of working to build strong relationships between teachers and students. Making sure the social and cultural context is taken into account is essential

for all the perspectives" (Dixon et al., 2012). In-depth, the subject of teaching material is required to create contextual learning, and it can be an image representation of language in everyday use to connect the teaching material to the real situation out of the class. Since often what students have learned in the class can vary considerably from what happens in real life. In addition, a natural discourse will be constructed not only of contextual teaching material that is essential but also of experience in the teaching and learning process. In the course of social experiences beyond the framework of teaching and learning between students, the normal condition may generate unexpected circumstances and contexts that may not be present in the structured class, enabling them to arrange suitable sentences relevant to the subject and circumstance. The willingness to learn some correct vocabulary, grammar, and grammatical sentences sooner or later will develop students ' language skills.

On the other hand, in the context of English as a foreign language in certain counties such as Indonesia indeed has to be more concerned regarding the experience in using English in daily conversation. When we look at the situation that English is barely used by people in the expanding country, the idea of ELT is supposed to be that the purpose of language acquisition is communicative ability. When we are going back to the basic skills of English, there are four skills that are required to be mastered those are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Similar to the children when they are trying to listen to their parent's utterance in a certain language, English language teaching is expected to do so to make a natural language acquisition to foreign students. Then, the process will be followed by the imitating process. This sequencing process is expected to accelerate foreign students to be able to communicate in English. It is indeed a difficult target to be reached if the expectation is quite high, it needs more time to achieve English learners to be mastered the fourth skills in a short time. In contrast, creating a natural scenario as children's language acquisition will spend so much time as well, meanwhile, people from expanding countries are forced to be mastered those skills in facing the era. Yet, at least people are able to use English in general communication whether written or spoken language. Here, the cross-culture understanding in English language teaching may be a stimulus of linking those skills to be more integrated rather than learned those parts in separate sections.

CONCLUSIONS

English, as one of the world's information channels, still plays a crucial part in its role. English is a language that needs to be learned by people and stimulated to do so. As a result, the market for English learning is higher and higher, coming from numerous non-native English-speaking countries as an indication of their readiness to adapt to the modern age of global society. In the sense of global transition, English is more concerned with formal schooling than with a certain history and tradition as the object of a society. Indonesia as part of the expanding circle of *World Englishes* is required this language to be able to rise up in global society. The understanding of cultural in English learning needs to be concerned as an essential material. In a particular context, English language teaching in Indonesia has to see this case as one of supporting idea to create a teaching and learning activities' outcome to achieve its goal. The proper English in use in communication either spoken or written language will be the primary target to be reached. Therefore, cross-culture understanding in English language teaching in Indonesia is an important element to be involved in English teaching and learning activity to achieve learning outcomes, and to create Indonesia's generation to be ready to compete in the era of global competition.

In other words, the implication of the present study is providing the information regarding some cross-cultural understanding importance for Indonesian EFL students, as well as the role of EFL teaching in minimizing students' misunderstanding while using English. This study also finds that cross culture understanding materials may give beneficial impact that support the improvement of their English language skills. In addition, the role of integrating cross cultural understanding content in EFL practice in minimizing the misunderstanding in using English has been proven positively. Thus, cross-culture understanding in English language teaching in

Indonesia should be considered as an important element to be involved in English teaching and learning activity to achieve learning outcomes, and to create Indonesia's generation to be ready to compete in the era of global competition

In conducting the research, there are some limitations, for instances, the book sources still need to be added, and it could be better if the perspectives of EFL teachers and students on cross culture understanding are also explored. Therefore, the further studies could explore more the cross culture understanding study by adding the book sources, researching the teachers' and students' perspective, and employing other research design.

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