

Linguistic aspects in intercultural communication (IC) practices at a higher education institution in Indonesia

Sukardi Weda – Haryanto Atmowardoyo – Fathu Rahman – Andi Elsa Fadhilah Sakti

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate intercultural communication practice in higher education in Indonesia. Participants (N = 77) were graduate students from the English Education Study Program, State University of Makassar (Males = 16 (20.78%) and females = 61 (79.22%)). The participants ranged in age from 21 to 50. The study found that cultural diversity is important in the EFL classroom, and the students respect other students from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds. The students also claim that intercultural communication is a basic aspect of teaching English in the EFL classroom. Interestingly, intercultural communication can be established properly if all students from different cultural backgrounds respect each other. They feel closer to their classmates regardless of their cultural identity. They find it easy to interact with other students from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds. In classroom discussions, the participants did not look at the cultural background of the group participants.

Key words: Intercultural communication (IC), intercultural communication competence (ICC), EFL classroom, higher institution

Introduction

In foreign language classes, student awareness about intercultural communication to interact with people from different cultures is very important (Mirzaei, Forouzandeh, 2013; Shenkilo, 2018; Eisenchlas, Trevaskes, 2007). Mirzaei, Forouzandeh (2013, p. 300) mentioned that in today's interconnected multicultural world, citizens' differential levels of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) can play an important role in the amount of enthusiasm, time, and effort they invest in communication and learning a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL).

In addition to teaching languages, teachers act unintentionally as representatives and messengers of new and foreign cultures. Throughout the learning process, in the classroom, many factors come into play. Different cultural backgrounds, different ways of expressing themselves, and different habits can hinder the learning process. Sensitivity, respect, and neutrality, on both sides, are key values that cannot be ignored (Shenkilo, 2018). Over the past few decades, the development of ICC among language learners has been recognized as an important goal in foreign language education programs throughout the world. Not only is the integration of cultural elements in the language program recognized as facilitating the development of communicative competence in the target language, there is also a growing tendency among language teachers to move away from teaching information about other cultures towards developing knowledge from other cultures and one's own (Bouchard, 2017).

For this purpose, integrating cultural elements in foreign language education programs is also recognized as a way to increase awareness among students of intercultural citizenship, defined by Byram (2008) as the capacity to coexist and communicate (in local, national and international settings) with people and groups outside of ethnic, cultural and/or linguistic identity, abilities that go beyond national identification towards mutual respect, social involvement and reduction of prejudice (Bouchard, 2017).

Review of Literature Culture

Cultures differ in their language, behavior patterns, and values (Bennett, 1998, p. 2). Conventionally, Jandt (2018) explains the term culture used to refer to 1) A community or population large enough to be independent, and large enough to produce a new generation of members without relying on outsiders, and 2) The totality of thought, experience, and patterns and concepts of group behavior, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and how they develop with contact with other cultures.

Walsh (cited in Mulyana, 2012, p. 42) states that the universal man is one who respects all cultures, understands what people in other cultures think, feel, and believe, and appreciate cultural differences. Flexibility and open-mindedness are some of the important traits included by many theorists in their list (Williams, 2005, 358). Lundstedt (as cited in Brein and David, 1971) emphasized the importance of personality factors in sojourn research. Lundstedt argued that closed minds and ethnocentrism can limit the achievement of effective foreign adjustment and that more effective coping mechanisms in adjustment consist of rational attitudes, universal inclinations, open minds, and flexibility. Liu et al. (2015, p. 26) assert that we all share our ideas and feelings with others; however, how we share them with others varies from culture to culture.

Culture functions as well as linguistic background as a set of material and spiritual values of society, comprising a variety of historical, social, and psychological aspects of the ethnic group, its traditions, attitudes, values, institutions, behavior, lifestyle, living conditions – in other words, all dimensions of its existence and consciousness, including its language (Breus as cited in Malyuga et al., 2018, p. 566).

Intercultural Communication

Communication is sharing who we are and what we know (Liu et al, 2015, p. 26). Liu et al. assert that we all share our ideas and feelings with others; however, how we share them with others varies from culture to culture. Gudykunst and Kim (quoted in Mulyana, 2012, 42) assert that intercultural people are people who have acquired and advanced in the process of becoming intercultural, and whose cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics develop outside the psychological boundaries of each person's culture. According to Bennet (1998, 1) intercultural communication focuses on face-to-face (or at least person-to-person) interactions between humans. Bennett added that for this kind of communication to occur, all participants must consider themselves to be perceived by others and in this communication, all participants must see themselves as potentially involved in communication and able to give and receive feedback.

Personal strength and stability are mentioned in various forms as essential traits for successful intercultural communicators (Williams 2005: 359). Ting-Toomey (as cited in Williams 2005: 359) wrote that one of the key factors for successful intercultural communication is the ability to manage psychological aspects. Students' communicative competence in the context of intercultural communication or intercultural communication competence can be defined as their ability to take part in productive intercultural dialogues of meanings and relationships with people from different cultures.

Communicative competence in the context of intercultural communication not only involves communicative competence in linguistic and pragmatic terms of the language used in intercultural encounters, more importantly, it requires the ability to move between different cultural identities and awareness of different sets of cultural scripts or patterns of interactions that are unique to particular cultures (Klimova et al.,

2019). According to Cui (2016, 433) intercultural competence includes one's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness when interacting with people from diverse cultures. Cui, therefore, mentions that intercultural communicative competence is the actual use of competence in the authentic context to communicate successfully across different cultures

Linguistic Aspect of Intercultural Communication

Language is the main sign that refers to cultural identity and, at the same time, acts as an intermediary medium in the process of communication between two cultures. In language teaching, communication between two cultures can also occur to maintain communication. In every situation, language does not exist outside of culture, that is, a set of practical skills and ideas that characterize our socially inherited lifestyle. Due to the growing contact between two different cultures, learners increasingly need various backgrounds to know foreign languages (Rahman, Weda, 2018). Intercultural communication involves communication between representatives of different cultures in which at least one of the participants can speak a non-mother tongue. The world of learned language consists of a series of extra-linguistic facts, namely the socio-cultural structures and units that are the basis and are reflected in linguistic structures and units. It is defined that the linguistic image of the world is a reflection of the socio-cultural image of the world. Without knowing the world of the language being studied, it is impossible to master the language as a means of communication. Therefore, every translation is an interpretation and interpretation of the meaning behind the obvious meaning, a conscious or unconscious attempt to overcome the distance between communicator cultures. The mechanism of mastery of foreign languages is studied by psychologists, ethnologists, and linguists. The principle of EFL, observed in intercultural and bilingual environments, is somewhat different compared to that of homogeneous and monolingual cultural environments. Therefore, practicing communication in an EFL course will allow you to succeed in cross-cultural communication in order to maintain understandable communication, especially with regard to terms that are difficult to find in English. Therefore, it is possible to practice intercultural communication (IC) in English as a foreign language course to achieve language teaching for non-native English learners.

Research Method

Participant

Participants (N = 77) were graduate students from English Education Study Program, State University of Makassar (Males = 16 (20.78%) and females = 61 (79.22%). The participants ranged in age from 21 – 50. The participants enrolled in Educational Psychology and Entrepreneurship courses and voluntarily filled out a questionnaire consisting of Likert-type (5-point variation) measures of the variables. Detailed information on the demographics of participants is illustrated in Table 1 and Chart 1.

Table 1. Demographics of participants in questionnaire

| Demographic Information | | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Female | 61 | 79.22 |
| | Male | 16 | 20.78 |
| Age | 21 - 30 | 71 | 92.20 |
| | 31 - 40 | 5 | 6.49 |
| | 41 - 50 | 1 | 1.29 |
| Ethnicity | Buginese | 42 | 54.55 |
| | Makassarese | 25 | 32.46 |
| | Mandarese | 2 | 2.59 |
| | Massenrempulu | 2 | 2.59 |
| | Javanese | 1 | 1.29 |

| | | |
|------------|---|------|
| Tae'nese | 1 | 1.29 |
| Torajanese | 1 | 1.29 |
| Luwunese | 1 | 1.29 |
| Manadonese | 1 | 1.29 |
| Selayarese | 1 | 1.29 |
| Ambonese | 1 | 1.29 |
| Bataknese | 1 | 1.29 |

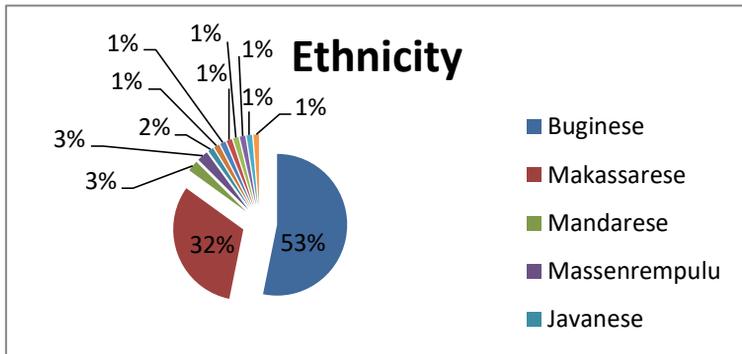


Chart 1. Ethnicity of the Participants

Procedure, Instrument, and Measurement

The test aimed to explore intercultural communication of English students in the Graduate Program, Universitas Negeri Makassar (State University of Makassar). Data about intercultural communication were collected during a class lecture in October 2019. The students came to the class and filled in the questionnaire, which consisted of 24 items. In this research, the participants were asked to rate their perceptions with response to test intercultural communication on a 5-point scale on which 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = uncertain; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree.

Data Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics 23 which showed the mean, standard deviation (SD), sum, and percentage. The mean, SD, and percentage were calculated to determine the extent to which the participants retained intercultural communication practices in EFL classroom at higher education institution in Indonesia. The descriptive statistics are therefore followed by explanations and discussions.

Findings and Discussion

Students' Perception on Intercultural Communication in EFL Classroom in Higher Institution

Table 2 shows the percentages, sum, mean, and standard deviation of students' perception on intercultural communication in the EFL classroom in an higher education institution.

Table 2. Percentages, sum, mean, and standard deviation of students' perception on Intercultural Communication in the EFL Classroom in a Higher Education Institution

| No. | Students' Perception | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Strongly Agree | Sum | Mean | SD |
|-----|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. | Cultural diversity is important in teaching English in the EFL classroom. | 0 | 3.9 | 9.1 | 50.6 | 36.4 | 323.00 | 4.1948 | .76156 |
| 2. | In teaching English in the EFL classroom, intercultural communication is fundamental aspect. | 0 | 3.9 | 16.9 | 61.0 | 18.2 | 303.00 | 3.9351 | .71336 |
| 3. | Awareness of cultural differences needs to be promoted in English classes. | 1.3 | 2.6 | 15.6 | 53.2 | 27.3 | 310.00 | 4.0260 | .81069 |
| 4. | Students in higher education need to respect other students from different culture. | 1.3 | 5.2 | 7.8 | 18.2 | 67.5 | 343.00 | 4.4545 | .93956 |
| 5. | Intercultural communication is best maintained when the students are the same. | 1.3 | 10.4 | 36.4 | 44.2 | 7.8 | 267.00 | 3.4675 | .83641 |
| 6. | Intercultural communication can be well established, if all students from different cultural background respect each other. | 0 | 2.6 | 11.7 | 50.6 | 35.1 | 322.00 | 4.1818 | .73855 |
| 7. | I find it easy to interact with other students from different cultures. | 1.3 | 7.8 | 31.2 | 44.2 | 15.6 | 281.00 | 3.6494 | .88505 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|------|------|------|------|------|--------|--------|---------|
| 8. | I feel difficult to interact with students from other cultures than my own culture. | 7.8 | 36.4 | 35.1 | 16.9 | 3.9 | 210.00 | 2.7273 | .96840 |
| 9. | In classroom discussions, I did not look at the cultural background of the group participants. | 1.3 | 13.0 | 15.6 | 33.8 | 36.4 | 301.00 | 3.9091 | 1.07828 |
| 10. | I don't like to be with students from other cultures. | 51.9 | 39.0 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 1.3 | 126.00 | 1.6364 | .84151 |
| 11. | I feel closer to my classmate regardless of their cultural identity. | 1.3 | 20.8 | 15.6 | 48.1 | 14.3 | 272.00 | 3.5325 | 1.02063 |
| 12. | I enjoy interacting with students from other cultures. | 0 | 1.3 | 3.9 | 53.2 | 41.6 | 335.00 | 4.3506 | .62337 |
| 13. | I am open-minded to students from other cultures. | 0 | 0 | 6.5 | 54.5 | 39.0 | 335.00 | 4.3247 | .59475 |
| 14. | I find it difficult to interact with other students from different cultures. | 19.5 | 44.2 | 24.7 | 6.5 | 5.2 | 180.00 | 2.3377 | 1.03378 |

As per the data shown in Table 2, intercultural communication in EFL classroom in higher education was arranged according to the mean score and standard deviation (SD). The highest response for statement number 1 was agree (Cultural diversity is important in teaching English in the EFL classroom.) with 50.6%. There were 61.0% of the students considered that “In teaching English in the EFL classroom, intercultural communication is fundamental aspect.” An overwhelming majority 80.5% of the students agreed (27.3% of them strongly) that “Awareness of cultural differences needs to be promoted in English classes.” Over 4/5 of the students considered that “Students at higher education need to respect other students from different cultures’ (85.7%), and that “Intercultural communication is best maintained when the students are the same” (52.0%). The highest response for statement number

6 was agree (Intercultural communication can be well established, if all students from different cultural background respect each other.) with 50.6%. The highest response for statement number 7 was agree (I find it easy to interact with other students from different cultures.) with 44.2%. The highest response for statement number 8 was disagree (I feel difficult to interact with students from other cultures than my own culture.) with 36.4%. The highest response for statement number 9 was strongly agree “In classroom discussions, I did not look at the cultural background of the group participants” with 36.4%. An overwhelming majority 90.9% of the students disagree (51.9% of them strongly) that I don’t like to be with students from other cultures. The highest response for statement number 11 was agree (I feel closer to my classmate regardless of their cultural identity.) with 48.1%. The highest response for statement number 12 agree (I enjoy interacting with students from other cultures.) with 53.2%. An overwhelming majority 93.5% of the students agree (39.0% of them strongly) that I am open-minded to students from other cultures. The highest response for statement number 14 was disagree (I find it difficult to interact with other students from different cultures.) with 44.2%.

The finding reveal that the majority of the students consider that cultural diversity is important in teaching English in the EFL classroom. The students also state that students in higher education need to respect other students from different cultures.’ The students also claim that in teaching English in the EFL classroom, intercultural communication is a fundamental aspect. Interestingly, intercultural communication can be established properly if all students from different cultural backgrounds respect each other. The participants feel also closer to their classmates regardless of their cultural identity. The participants find it easy to interact with other students from different cultures. In classroom discussions, the participants did not look at the cultural background of the group participants. The participants also gave supporting comments on the statement “they feel closer to their classmate regardless of their cultural identity.” They also enjoy interacting with students from other cultures. The participants also show their strong responses on “they are open-minded to students from other cultures.” Therefore, the participants show ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ responses to the statement that they “don’t like to be with students from other cultures” with 99.9%. The participants also show ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ responses to the statement “I find it difficult to interact with other students from different cultures” with 63.7%.

Why is it necessary to respect students from different cultures?

Indonesia is one of the multi-cultural countries in the world. The inclusion of intercultural communication in the educational curriculum is vital. This is because the inclusion of intercultural communication in the curriculum from elementary schools to tertiary levels can potentially build mutual understanding and respect. By maintaining mutual respect amongst students from different cultural backgrounds, many important benefits can be reaped. First, obtaining knowledge.

Table 3. Obtaining knowledge and learning from others

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Participant 1 | It is necessary to respect students from different cultures because we can get many friends from many kinds of cultural background, so that we can get much knowledge and widen our horizons. |
| Participant 17 | Because as humans, we need to respect each other regardless culture, religion, ethnic, nationality, etc. It is good to know about the other cultures. |
| Participant 18 | Respect is fundamental thing in maintaining socialization. Besides, respect for people who have a different culture may |

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| | bring us wider knowledge about life and avoid culture shock; the way we act might vary based on the people's background. |
| Participant 28 | Because as Indonesian people, we have known that there are a lot of cultures in Indonesia. Respecting friends means we are ready to share and know each other. |
| Participant 54 | Because we must know other people's culture and habits. |
| Participant 60 | We can be close to anyone and I think it is important to know about everything which a certain ethnic group has. |
| Participant 62 | I think it is necessary to respect students from different cultures because from them we can learn new things, like ideas and values which could be useful for us. |
| Participant 69 | Because we should know each other. |
| Participant 71 | Because we can learn something from people with a different culture. |

As revealed from the excerpts above, each participant stressed the importance of intercultural communication in the EFL classroom. Based on the participants' comments as stated in Table 3, the students interact with other students from different culture because they are enthusiastic to know and learn the other's cultural identity. Gudykunst, 2004; Hall, 1959 as cited in Davis & Cho 2005, p. 4) commented that, among intercultural communication researchers, culture has been viewed as a system of knowledge that allows people to know how to communicate with others from a different culture and how to interpret their behaviors. The same comment has also been made by Kuiper (2017, p. 23), suggesting that being a student in a class on intercultural communication opens more possibilities for transformative learning, not only because of the opportunity to learn about one's own culture and other cultures but also because of the challenges that result from the fundamental concept of identity. Second, maintaining mutual respect can build peace and harmony

Table 4. Building harmony and unity and precursor of peace

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Participant 6 | To be open-minded to different cultures is a way to maintain this nation. Nowadays, culture is a trending topic. As we can see recently, there are many problems that happen in this country, such as the Wamena and Pontianak cases. That is why we believe that respecting students from different cultures is the precursor of peace. |
| Participant 7 | Because it is already listed in our <i>Bhinneka Tunggal Ika</i> , which means different, but still one. So that, the harmony and unity can occur between those from different cultures. |
| Participant 13 | To keep the unity of our country, because our country has many cultures, especially in religion, ethnic group, language, and culture itself. |
| Participant 15 | We need to respect each other, because we are equal and culture is not something that can divide us. We are one unity. |
| Participant 20 | Respect is the key to be united in diversity. No matter what race you are from, what your culture, religion, gender, thoughts, sex orientation, or interests are, we need to respect each other in the name of humanity. By |

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| | respecting others we will create peace. |
| Participant 30 | Because it is needed to keep our unity. We respect other people and they will respect us too. Respect each other means keeping the tranquility between us. |
| Participant 40 | It is necessary to respect students from different cultures because respecting each other makes people live in peace without disunity and dispute. |

In implementing mutual respect both in the classroom setting and in society, we can realize peace and harmony. This attitude places all humans in an equal relationship: there is no superiority or inferiority. Respecting one another in human society is a universal value of the world's religions. MTBRE develops the awareness that peace requires mutual respect among followers of religion, and through this we prepare ourselves to listen to other voices and various religious perspectives; we respect the importance and glory of all individuals and religious groups. Sacrificing the dignity of others or using violent means to maintain self-esteem and dignity is never permitted. Respect causes mutual sharing between individuals and groups (Baidhaw, 2007, p. 15).

Table 5. Diversity

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Participant 20 | Respect is the key to be united in diversity. No matter what your race, culture, religion, gender, thought, sex orientation, or interests, we need to respect each other in the name of humanity. By respecting others we will create peace. |
| Participant 21 | We have to respect students from different cultures because it makes us closer to other students from different cultures. Respect shows that we love diversity; we love everything about our differences. Respect means that you live in intercultural society. |
| Participant 24 | It is necessary to respect students from different culture because diversity is beautiful. If you want other people respect you, you have to respect them first. |
| Participant 31 | Because culture shapes our identity and influences our behavior and cultural diversity makes us accept and even to some extent. |
| Participant 61 | Because we live in diversity. Every student has a different culture. |
| Participant 70 | Because we live in diversity. |

Third, maintaining mutual respect can promote the love of diversity, as stated in Table 5. This is based on the belief that students should be given the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations that expand their intercultural diversity competencies to incorporate intercultural concepts (Zikargae, 2013, p. 126).

Can interacting with students from different cultures be beneficial? Why?

Interacting with people from a different culture can be beneficial. This is because, by maintaining interaction with people from other cultures, we can gain many benefits. Among others: getting new experiences, getting new information, getting new knowledge, maintaining tolerance, and developing cultural awareness.

Table 6. (New) experience

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Participant 5 | Because we can get new experiences and learn many things about the world through interaction with people who come from different cultures. |
| Participant 10 | Yes of course, interacting with people from different cultures will give us benefits, for example we learn a new language, have a new friend and also have a new experience. |
| Participant 14 | Yes, it gives us new experiences by interacting with intercultural students. |
| Participant 20 | If we just interact with the same culture, it will stop us from getting to know new knowledge and experience. I love to interact with people from different cultures because I can learn new things and share perspectives about one another. |
| Participant 37 | Yes, we are able to add to our knowledge and experience through every culture that we meet. |
| Participant 52 | Yes, it can, because as human we need interaction with each other and we do not know whom you may meet in the future. So, it can improve experience, new information, and knowledge. |
| Participant 59 | Yes, because other students can get experience and knowledge. |
| Participant 71 | There are many benefits if we interact with students from a different culture. It is because we can share with each other. For example: sharing knowledge, experience, education, food, fashion, etc. |

As seen from the excerpts above, each participant notes that one of the most important things in maintaining intercultural communication practices in the EFL classroom is getting new experiences.

Table 7. Improving or developing new knowledge

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Participant 1 | Yes, because interacting with students from different culture can improve our knowledge and know about many cultures that we can get from our friends. |
| Participant 2 | Yes, because it can improve our knowledge about other cultures. |
| Participant 3 | Yes, because we can know each other, know other cultures, and can develop our knowledge, like language, culture, habits, etc. |
| Participant 6 | Yes it can, because students can exchange their cultures. Hence, we can learn new things and we can enrich our knowledge about culture itself. |
| Participant 8 | Yes, it can, because we will know another culture through having friends from a different culture. It makes us get more knowledge from them. |
| Participant 12 | Of course, we can get many benefits by interacting with people from a different culture. From them, I believe we can learn something and get knowledge. The important |

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| | one is we can learn how to respect each other. |
| Participant 13 | Based on my experience, I can interact with students from different cultures, and I can learn from them to develop my knowledge. |
| Participant 16 | Yes, it can, because interacting with different culture brings us to increase our knowledge. So, we do not only understand our culture but also many other cultures. So, we will share with others about cross cultural understanding. |
| Participant 17 | Yes, we can, because it will increase our knowledge from other cultures. We will know more about other cultures and we can share our culture. It is really fun. |
| Participant 20 | If we just interact with the same culture, it will stop us from getting to know new knowledge and experience. I love to interact with people from different cultures because I can learn new things and share perspectives about one another. |
| Participant 21 | Yes, because from different culture, we can get more knowledge, we can share all aspects from each culture, and it makes enjoy making friends. |
| Participant 22 | Yes, it can. We can get many benefits with interacting students from different culture because we can get new knowledge from other cultures, their habits, their tradition, and so on. So, our insight or knowledge will get improvement and try to respect each other. |
| Participant 24 | Yes, interacting with students from different culture benefits us, it can increase our knowledge and we can also make friends from many countries. |
| Participant 26 | Yes, because we can get more knowledge by interacting with people who have a different culture. It helps us become better persons by the knowledge that we get. |
| Participant 27 | Yes, interacting means to socialize with their world including their culture. Having this kind of interaction will make us know our cultures. So, we can change knowledge and culture with each other. |
| Participant 30 | Interacting with students form different cultures give benefits because we can learn from them about what is their perception about something, how their characteristics and attitude are. We can also learn to get new friends and new knowledge. |
| Participant 32 | Yes, it is, because interacting with students from different culture can know their culture, and it improves my knowledge about other culture. |
| Participant 33 | Of course yes, interacting with others from different culture will help us to enrich our knowledge and perceptions. It helps us maintain networking that can be useful. People say “extending <i>silaturahmi</i> ” (establishing hospitality) means “enlarging <i>rezeki</i> ” (increasing fortune). |
| Participant 35 | Yes, it can, because it can give us some knowledge to act in everyday life. It can help us to respect each other. |
| Participant 37 | Yes, we are able to add to our knowledge and experience through every culture that we meet. |
| Participant 41 | Yes, because we can gain new information and |

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| | knowledge. We can create new relations with different cultural backgrounds and it can enlarge our social interaction. We can also understand and respect each other, and probably, we can get jobs with other people who are from different culture. |
| Participant 43 | Yes, interacting with students from different cultures can be of benefit to us. It will make us more open-minded to accept the differences and we will be able to enrich our knowledge and perspective. |
| Participant 45 | Yes, because we can get some knowledge which we have never faced before. |
| Participant 46 | Yes, because we can get new knowledge from students that have different culture. |
| Participant 48 | Yes, because we can get new knowledge from them and get new culture. |
| Participant 51 | Because with cultural differences, we can share information, exchange thoughts with something different and our knowledge can increase. |
| Participant 52 | Yes, it can, because as humans we need interaction each other and we do not know whom we may meet in the future. So, it can improve experience, provide new information and knowledge. |
| Participant 67 | Yes of course. If we have friends from different culture, we can get more information and knowledge about their culture. |
| Participant 71 | There are many benefits if we interact with students from different cultures. It is because we can share with each other. For example: sharing knowledge, experience, education, food, fashion, etc. |
| Participant 74 | It is beneficial since it can both improve our knowledge and incres the number of friends we have. |

Table 8. New information

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Participant 28 | Yes, it can. We get a lot of new information from them and we can also learn their way of speaking, thinking, and know other skills that they have. |
| Participant 41 | Yes, because we can gain new information and knowledge. We can create new relations with different cultural backgrounds and it can enlarge our social interaction. We can also understand and respect each other, and probably, we can get job with other people who are from different cultures. |
| Participant 50 | Yes, it can, because we can get more information from other cultures and everyone needs other people. |
| Participant 51 | Because with cultural differences, we can share information, exchange thoughts about something different and our knowledge can increase. |
| Participant 52 | Yes, it can, because as humans we need interaction with each other and we do not know whom we may meet in the future. So, it can improve experience, provide new information and knowledge. |

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| Participant 57 | Yes of course, because it can give information about their culture. |
| Participant 66 | Yes, because we have different culture, so we can get more information about their culture. |
| Participant 67 | Yes of course. If we have friends from different cultures, we can get more information and knowledge about other cultures. |

Table 9. Cultural Awareness

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Participant 4 | The benefits in interacting with students from different culture are helping us to live together and building our cultural awareness. |
| Participant 7 | Yes, it can. One of them is to open our mind and awareness about differences in culture because we may not only look from one perspective but also look from another perspective. |

Table 10. Tolerance

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Participant 54 | Of course, we can share our own culture with each other and we have to maintain tolerance to each other. |
| Participant 55 | Why? Because we can share to each other about our differences. We have to maintain tolerance to each other. |
| Participant 73 | Yet, the benefits are: 1) we know another culture, 2) we know all about tolerance, and 3) we know about “maintaining relationships.” |

One of the good behavior traits obtained from intercultural relations is the development of tolerance. The findings of this study also support Siregar (2016: 355), who asserted that mutual understanding, mutual respect, and awareness of the need for shared ethical-moral and spiritual values by people can lead to harmonious and peaceful life, both local and global. In addition to the comments above, the findings of this study are in line with Asmara (2018), confirming that tolerance in interfaith life for Sasak people stems from an appreciation of the teachings of Islam to maintain religious harmony, Sasak people realize that tolerance needs to be developed to avoid conflict.

Table 11. Open-minded person

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| Participant 18 | Yes it can, it can enhance the way we socialize, know about different cultures, know how to act in our environment and become an open-minded person. |
| Participant 34 | Yes, it can. Interacting with students from different culture will bring us into a wider perspective on every aspect of life. It will also lead us to be a more open-minded person. |
| Participant 43 | Yes, interacting with students from different culture can be of benefit to us. It will make us more open-minded to accept the differences and we can be able to enrich our knowledge and perspectives. |
| Participant 75 | Yes, because we can know more about many cultures and we can also be an open-minded person. |

One of the benefits obtained from interacting with people from different cultures is becoming an open-minded person. In intercultural communications practice, diverse individual competencies are needed: self-concept, open mind, non-judgmental attitude, empathy, self-regulation and interactive involvement (Banos, 2006, p. 16). The same opinion is expressed by Davis and Cho (2005, p. 4) who mention that the performance of culturally competent people involves affective, behavioral, and cognitive abilities, such as openness, empathy, adaptive motivation, perspective taking, behavioral flexibility, and is centered on personal communication. Accordingly, Baidhaw (2007, p. 15) asserts that open-mindedness in education provides new knowledge about how we think and act. Baidhaw therefore adds that as a result of meeting with the world and its diversity, students experience a process of maturity and begin to develop perspective and understanding of reality. Through this new horizon, they begin to rethink how they see themselves, others and the world. They reinvent themselves and new cultures with new open minds. The study therefore reveals that intercultural communication practices in EFL classroom from students of different cultures can promote harmony, tolerance, cultural awareness, obtaining new knowledge and information, open-mindedness, and mutual respect.

Conclusion

The findings of this present study show that cultural diversity is important in EFL classes. One evidence is that they respect other students from different cultures. The students also claimed that intercultural communication is a basic aspect in teaching English in EFL classes. Interestingly, intercultural communication can be well established, if all students from different cultural backgrounds respect each other. They feel closer to their classmates regardless of their cultural identity. They find it easy to interact with other students from various cultures. In class discussions, the participants did not see the cultural and linguistic background of the group participants. They also feel closer to their classmates regardless of their cultural identity. They enjoy being with students from other cultures and they find it easy to interact with students from different cultures and linguistic background. Again, the world of language learning is made up of a series of extra-linguistic facts, namely the socio-cultural structures which underlie it and are reflected in the linguistic structures. For intercultural communication to become a fundamental part of the standard educational practice at higher education, the following policies are necessary: 1) The inclusion of intercultural communication (IC) in the higher education curriculum, and 2) The necessity to maintain mutual respect with people from different cultures in the EFL classroom to obtain knowledge, to build peace and harmony, to get new information, to be open-minded, to have cultural awareness, and to maintain tolerance. The implication of the study is that the inclusion of intercultural communication in the higher education curriculum is important.

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Prof. Dr. Sukardi Weda, S.S., M.Hum., M.Pd., M.Si., M.M., M.Sos.I., M.A.P.
 English Department
 Universitas Negeri Makassar
 Jl. Dg. Tata, Kampus UNM Parangtambung Makassar
 Indonesia
 sukardi.weda@unm.ac.id

Prof. Dr. Haryanto Atmowardoyo, M.Pd.
English Department
Universitas Negeri Makassar
Jl. Dg. Tata, Kampus UNM Parangtambung Makassar
Indonesia
haryanto@unm.ac.id

Prof. Dr. Fathu Rahman, M.Hum.
Faculty of Cultural Sciences,
Universitas Hasanuddin,
Kampus Unhas Tamalanrea KM. 10 Makassar 90245
Indonesia
fathu.rahman@unhas.ac.id

Andi Elsa Fadhilah Sakti, S.S., M.Hum
English Department
Universitas Negeri Makassar
Jl. Dg. Tata, Kampus UNM Parangtambung Makassar
Indonesia
andielsafadhilahs@yahoo.co.id