



Culture Integration in EFL Classrooms: Promoting Intercultural Communicative Competence in Junior High School Students

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-05-19 Accepted: 2026-09-18 Keywords: <i>Culture Integration, Intercultural Communicative Competence, EFL Classrooms</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.12616 Corresponding Author: Sudarmono sudarmonosudarmono@mhs.u nesa.ac.id Postgraduate at State University of Surabaya	<i>The purpose of this study is definitely to investigate how teacher compensates the lack of target culture in achieving target language in English lesson in EFL classroom. This study also aims to find out how English teacher promotes intercultural communicative competence in the EFL classroom when the textbook is being used in the teaching learning process. The researcher want to examine more the way teacher teach cultural content related to communicative competence in the classroom, which the students are not from target culture country. The researcher conducted qualitative research, which focused on explanatory narrative report from teaching learning process. There was only one teacher who is being observed. The data derived from the investigation which could be initiated through classroom observation. In addition, semi-structured interview was conducted to deal with teacher's supporting personal statements about balancing target culture in learning language. Field notes and video-audio recording were completed to figure out the process of teaching learning process in the classroom. Based on data analysis, the researcher can draw some findings about teacher's techniques to add target culture in learning language, teacher compensated lacking or cultural content by seeking another new additional materials which supported to teach target culture. The usage of media was shown in the class to have additional learning about culture formed as song, pictures, and videos. Then, teacher associated the class with English ambience, which is probably able to create students communicative skill. Teacher encouraged students by inquiring some question to speak up.</i>

Nevertheless, teacher never abandoned teaching students the standard textbook, which is already standardized 2013 curriculum. This study will contribute to English teachers that target culture should be attached in the process teaching and learning language in order to get enhancement in studying the language. the researcher expects to government especially education ministry to maximize concept of learning language by inserting cultural content in textbook.

1. Introduction

The teaching and learning English are unlikely maximized because most of students seemingly study English based on the textbook. According to Patel and Jain (2008) English was to be taught as language of comprehension rather than as literary language. Learning language is not only to sharpen skills in the language such as writing, speaking, listening, and reading but also to understand the language thoroughly. Due to the teaching of English, it should have been made more practical and language-oriented (Patel & Jain, 2008). Studying language seems to have nothing if L2 students are not knowledgeable about people and the country which the language is spoken. Besides, students have to conceive the target language and coincide with target culture in teaching language programs. Pulverness and Tomlinson (2003) stated that due to the undeniable growth of English as an international language cultural content as anything other than contextual background was began to be included in language teaching programs.

Cultural content ought to be integrated in the process of teaching language in order to undertake culture with the language. Students do not only master the language but also properly use the language in context. A language is learned and used with a context, drawing from the culture distinctive meanings and functions, which must have been assimilated by language learners if they were to control the language as native speakers control it (Cakir, 2006). Teaching language with target culture prepare students to face over cross cultural communication. Therefore target culture is essential to attach in EFL curriculum in order to gain knowledge language culturally.

In addition, Crichton, Paige, Papademetre, Scarino, and Wood (2004) explained that culture learning as the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. Necessarily students are expected to obtain culture-specific and culture-general knowledge to create an effective communication oppose to other cultures. Culture-specific refers to the particular target language and culture-general refers to the global cultural phenomena.

Theoretical Framework

Target culture in this sense of study is part of cultural focus embedded in learning language that is to reach the goal of learning language thoroughly. Based on Liddicoat et al (2002) the aim of intercultural language teaching and learning is not to displace language as the core focus of language education but to ensure that language is integrated with culture in conceptualizing language learning. Bennet & Allen (2003) proposes culture contrast approach to incorporate target culture. This approach involves the following steps such as to inform students about how their native language is related to basic values, beliefs, thought patterns, and social action in their own cultures, to compare native language-culture patterns to those of the new language-culture particularly concepts and structures, and to assess achievement not just in terms of grammar and vocabulary but also pragmatic dimensions. In order to prepare the learners, teacher should pay attention to the integration of target culture in EFL classroom which may sensitize learners to the target language.

Rodliyah&Muniroh (2012) summarize some other ways to incorporate the target culture in EFL class included (1) Providing more authentic materials involving target culture and social elements, (2) Giving lectures or having discussion on culturally-related linguistic aspects, (3) Using pictures, maps, realities, posters, etc to help students develop a mental image, (4) Comparing and contrasting home and target cultures, (5) Role plays, where students can learn the difference of attitudes/values of different characters associated with the culture, and (6) Design a project where students can have an exchange with people from different culture. Moreover, There are six components, which have to aim for cultural awareness as well as to develop communicative skills. Nunan (1989) mentioned six components are designed for task in the Intercultural classroom namely the components such as goals, input, activities, learner's role, teacher's role, and settings.

2. Method

Both first and second research questions were answered using an observation. In addition, there may have been no much amount of data exploration, a depth interview was also used. The purpose was to ask more detail about what the participants thinking. The participants of study were a teacher and students from junior high school KHM Nur Surabaya. The teacher was the primary subject in this research because it was according to the application of cultural content in teaching process. There was one English teacher who taught two classes of eighth grade of junior high in this school.

Meanwhile, The primary data of the study were from the phenomenon in the classroom which applied cultural content in textbook. To answer number one and two, there were three main of instruments of collecting data such as observation with field notes, interview protocol, and audio video recording. The observation of

study requires sample of cultural teaching in the classroom. This study took four-times meeting because teacher expected to teach deeper one core lesson to get to know every particular cultural integration in the classroom. Moreover, this study required naturalistic process of teaching learning which probably change from one meeting to other meetings. To get deeper information of data result, interview was conducted to answer first and second question and interview session was also to get teacher's opinion or perspectives about cultural content and intercultural communicative competence.

3. Result

Here are the findings to answer research question number one, which is about how teacher compensate the lack of target culture. Through class observation and interview session, there some findings show that teacher's way to add target culture in the classroom.

Referring cultural insight about English traditions.

Teacher always used both languages to promote English as their foreign language. By adapting English as the language in the classroom, students will make acquainted with English. Teacher also did inform students with some knowledge about cultural activities that can be an English speaking country tradition. There are examples from western tradition such as Halloween party and Harvest Moon. Teacher gave a little comprehension about those two kinds of tradition. Several students were attracted to ask a question about them.

In addition, they strived to compare the traditions with their own which there is no existing such a tradition. For instance Halloween party, they contrasted it with what they called "pestasetan" something related to ghost. In fact, Halloween is only a dress code party. Moreover, harvest moon is not like thanksgiving party which they called "syukuran". In the rest of time, teacher explained about the main lesson.

Providing game with English song as cultural product

Teacher always gave an ice breaking activity. It was English game. The game was about to sing a English song together. The song is simple English song which everyone can memorize and sing directly. It is a good way to adapt students with cultural product such as a song in the classroom, the teacher challenged students singing and making a sentence in the past form as punishment. When the song is done, students in the position must have been singing in front of the class featured gestures.

Displaying English videos as sample of cultural activities

Teacher showed two kinds of English video. The first video contained of many expression, which students can use to speak English. Students can imitate some examples of useful expression on the video in some certain cases such as introducing self, giving direction, ordering meals, staying at hotel, and many more.

In the video, two people are having conversation about certain cases in daily life. Students are able to learn how to ask and answer the question in their daily life.

Students were able to impersonate some useful expressions shown in the video, the sample video was also useful because there was a specific expression that probably different from local culture. Students were able to independently compare both cultures. Teacher also assisted students to understand how to use those expressions in the video. Then, teacher showed second video, which about two girls are asking each other about their holiday. Two girls are saying hello and greeting using English expression too. This is one of examples how to greet friend. One friend talked about past activity or past holiday that she enjoyed. They are asking each other using appropriate grammar, which is simple past tense. Students can learn how to use simple past tense in the conversation. Students eventually have a picture about what foreigner talk about.

As a result, students applied the lesson to make conversation about holiday. Teacher also interacted with students by asking some question about their dialogue. Teacher promoted target culture with some knowledge of cultural activities and cultural products such as insight of English-speaking country traditions and English song and videos. The plus, teacher still delivers the lesson using other materials or other examples excluded from the main book. Teacher always tries to promote English though students occasionally answer with their languages. However, teacher also demonstrated how to answer or reply her utterances so that students can imitate and know the answer for such an utterance.

4. Discussion

The discussion includes three main explanations in terms of techniques in incorporating target culture and designing intercultural task in the classroom.

Techniques in incorporating target culture

Teacher's way determines how to compensate the lack of target culture in the classroom. when teacher language, teacher actually can insert cultural knowledge to it. Students simply can recognize cultural influences by understanding cultural knowledge, cultural activities in the class, and forms of linguistics expression (Cakir, 2006). Teacher focused on the teaching learning activities, which is attached target culture by providing students some knowledge about English speaking culture, and forms of language expression. Bennet & Allen (2003) proposes some approaches about culture contrast to incorporate target culture. Firstly, teacher needs to inform students about how their native language related to their own cultures. It teacher's job to inform students about basic values, belief, thought pattern, social action in their own culture with target culture in order to understand the culture of language what they are speaking. Secondly, teacher needs to compare native language-culture patterns to those of the new language-culture particularly concepts and structures. Of course, the language forms and structures are very different from native language-culture. Third, teacher needs to assess achievement not just in

terms of grammar and vocabulary but also pragmatic dimensions. It means teacher needs to achieve the language by doing exercises and producing the language thoroughly. Students need to use the language correctly.

In accordance to techniques to integrate target culture in the classroom, Rodliyah&Muniroh (2012) propose other ways to insert target culture in the target teaching learning process in EFL class. Firstly, provide authentic materials, which involved target culture. Teacher has done teaching with the main textbook, which is already standardized from government in 2013 curriculum. Nevertheless, the textbook provides not enough cultural study. Secondly, give a lecture or discussion on culturally-related linguistics aspects. Teacher also did the same thing that teacher presented a glance of discussion about two cultural activities which foreigners always do annually as their tradition. Thirdly, use a picture, maps, realities, posters, etc to help students develop their mental image. For this time, teacher showed two kind videos to depict some phrases or expressions that foreigners usually use in certain situation. Another video also describe about holiday that foreigners fore usually have in each season.

Next, compare and contrast home and target culture. So far, teacher explained the image of cultural activity and attempted to ask further to students about the same existing culture in Indonesia like in the pictures of two traditions. Then, do role plays, where students can learn the difference of attitudes/values of different characters associated with culture. Teacher has assigned students to make such a conversation based on the video they have seen. Students struggled to make their own story which is similar like in the video. Students performed dialogue which is made before they have to enrolled in front of the class.

Lastly, design project where students can have an exchange with people from different culture. It is the most impossible one because they are still junior high school. Students can not have an exchange with foreigners in term of studying culture each other. They are not ready yet for this stage. They need to explore more before students enter the society. Teacher need to fix their language skill in order to be able to communicate well. Students exchange usually occurs in the level of senior high school in some schools. The schools which government pointed to held an exchange program. From the program, students can exchange and experience directly cultural activities from target culture. They will learn a lot about target culture then they can compare and contrast to their own culture. Unfortunately, the program is not available yet for junior high school, which is too beginning to know target culture from its country. Teacher need to have another strategy to attach target culture without going abroad for exchange students program.

Designing Intercultural Task in the Classroom.

Intercultural class has varied culture that need to united by one target culture. In this case, communication among students is the important thing. Therefore, teacher must be able to promote intercultural communicative competence in

school. To develop communicative skill in intercultural class, Nunan (1989) proposed six components that are designed for proper task in the Intercultural classroom namely the components such as goals, input, activities, learner's role, teacher's role, and settings.

First, goals, teacher set the goal to the class whether the class will aim mainly for education, business, immigration, or tourism. Each goal has different target culture in learning teaching process in the class. Second, inputs, teacher is supposed to be prepared well about teaching materials which lead students to be more comprehensible in learning language in intercultural class. The materials can be formed anything such as written or spoken.

If there is an authentic material available, teacher just direct students based on the material resources. Teacher also expected to teach not as same as resources. At this time, teacher creatively inserted more materials to support target culture formed as videos and pictures. Third, the activities, teacher can create cultural activities to achieve intercultural communicative competence. While teacher used the materials, teacher can innovatively try something new. Teacher can develop materials into class activities. At this time, teacher always communicate with students in order them to get accustomed with the language and teacher always switched languages into bilingual. Students also did role-play to practice communicating in English. Then, learners role, it depends on the task which teacher delegated to them. Students' role is practitioner who do some practice and apply target culture.

Next, teacher's role, teacher supported to aid students' complete intercultural communicative competence. Teacher here is as instructor who instructed students to do more practice in speaking. Teacher is also mediator who mediate students some examples about target culture from media. Teacher is guider who guided students some knowledge about grammar matters. Lastly, setting, it determines how teacher promote the cultural task. Teacher seems to use peer-group for pair work setting. Students feel confident if they are working at least in pair. Teacher applied pair work setting aiming for students who has the same level of communicative competence.

Moreover, Corbett (2003) suggests developing intercultural communicative competence does not mean doing away from the information gap or related activities. Learners can exchange the target culture with their own culture and learner has opportunity how the information about culture exchanged. Teacher did the same thing before she distributed cultural knowledge. Teacher constantly inquire students about the same culture existing in their own. In addition, there were some expressions on the video teaching how to convey the language in certain situation. Teacher was required to explain it before she presented the target culture to communicate. Then students do some communicative tasks such as do conversation and role-play.

In the previous study, some researchers analyze the content culture in teaching learning English. McKay (2003) found that the culture is not appropriate

in teaching and learning in Chilean context. Jawas (2010) examined the culture integration into English language learning found in English textbook for senior high school. Rosyida (2015) analyzed the cultural content that lies behind the textbook of ninth grade entitled think globally, act locally. Therefore, this study aimed firstly to find out how teacher compensated the lack of target culture and secondly to investigate how teacher promoted intercultural communicative competence in the classroom.

5. Conclusion

This study can be concluded that the first research question which how teacher compensate the lack of target culture in the classroom. First, teacher compensated the lack of target culture by adding new materials such as cultural knowledge about English-speaking traditions for example Halloween and harvest party. Secondly, teacher made a kind of ice breaking game using an English song and it had a relationship with cultural product such a song. Thirdly, teacher was showing several videos which were about English activities. In conclusion for second research question, how teacher promotes intercultural communicative competence when textbook is used.

Teacher always guided students with textbook that is standardized from government. Firstly, teacher always adapted class ambience with English speaking classroom. Moreover, there is communicating part in textbook, which students had to communicate the language through spoken and written format. Teacher assigned them to make such a dialogue or sample conversation and role-play. Next, Teacher set the classroom to ask and answer some questions by encouraging students to speak up though it is formed a simple sentence. Teacher sought sources from internet as additional materials then teacher applied it to communication.

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