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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF BIPA TEACHERS

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Abstract

BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing*) or Indonesian Language for Foreign Speaker is a program for foreign speaker to learn Indonesian language in terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This program which is held in domestic and overseas belongs to an effort to improve the function of Indonesian language from national to international. The enthusiasm of foreign people particularly foreign students to learn Indonesian language gets increasing for various purposes, such as having research project, further study, business, or Darma Siswa program and KNB program held by Indonesian government. It means that Indonesian teacher interacts with foreign students who have different cultural background. In this case, Intercultural Competence (IC) in teaching BIPA is required. IC means the ability to communicate effectively within cross cultural situation. There is cultural dimension in foreign language teaching. The aims of this study are to investigate obstacles encountered by Indonesian teachers in teaching BIPA and to explore Intercultural Competence of Indonesian teachers as in teaching BIPA. The data were collected through interview with 5 BIPA teachers, two of them taught BIPA in Poland and America, while the rest taught BIPA at three universities in Surabaya, Indonesia. Since the class is multicultural, they got various obstacles in teaching BIPA such as learning material, teaching strategy, and teaching sources. Meanwhile, BIPA teachers implemented Intercultural Competence in various ways such as varying teaching topic, media, strategy, and so forth.

Keywords: BIPA, intercultural competence, teacher, Indonesian

Introduction

Globalization era is characterized by the increasing interconnectivity, diversity, and global mobility. Globalization brings undeniable borderless inter-country relationship. When all people from different countries interact with each other, then there will be interaction of different cultures and languages. People with good foreign language ability, they may encounter obstacle in interaction if they do not have good cultural competence which is teachable or learnable through education.

Globalization, education, and culture are three terms which are closely related one to the others. Chinnammai (2005) stated that education is undergoing constant changes under the effects of globalization including the roles of students and teachers and educational system. It reflects the effects on culture and language

development. Globalization does not only bring effects to cultural interaction but also to language. Learning a language no longer means acquiring communicative competence, in other words being able to act in a foreign language in linguistically, sociolinguistically, and pragmatically appropriate ways (Council of Europe, 2001).

The teaching and learning process of languages is in great demand recently, including teaching Indonesian to foreign students. It is getting intense, particularly in higher education, because so many foreign learners come to certain Indonesian universities to learn Indonesian language and culture. Palfreyman & Mc Bride (2010) argue that there are complexities in intercultural teaching and learning in higher education. Learners and educators from different cultural background must be interculturally competent. One of the most enriching experiences for language learners is to have the opportunity to engage in an authentic dialogue with a native speaker (teacher) as it allows them to have a first-hand encounter with the verbal and non-verbal features of the language and to come in contact with people who view the world differently (Moloney, 2011). A native speaker is a valuable model for students, of accurate pronunciation, grammar, idiom, and contemporary context usage.

Culture includes the language, customs, values, relationships and behaviors of a society. Students and their native teacher need deeper understanding. They need to be able to explain the invisible cultural values and etiquette which lie hidden in its language. A native speaker is an individual with first-hand experience of the cultural life of the target language, who is able to bring that knowledge to the students through personal narrative and anecdote in a vivid and personally engaging way.

Through structured interaction, a native speaker can develop awareness of the differences and similarities between his life and his students' lives. The teacher may possess a wide range of talents, skills, occupations, experiences and background. His presence in the language class can develop intercultural communication and a greater understanding and knowledge of the target language society. A native speaker can also help to maintain and improve the target language proficiency of the non-native classroom by suggesting new activities and strategies, creating original resources, modelling new structures, testing students individually, providing practice for examinations, arranging cultural incursions and excursions, showing realia items, and providing supportive strategies.

Intercultural competence which stretches in interaction between non-native students and native teacher is vitally important to the effectiveness of a variety areas including in Indonesian language teaching in higher education. Higher education can provide an excellent opportunity for students to explore and practice the development of intercultural competencies. Intercultural competence is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006). Intercultural competence is needed as the basic ability for any interaction. The importance is not only on how to have social skills, but also how to improve the sensitivity and understanding for other values, views, ways of living and thinking, as well as being self-conscious in transferring one's own values and views in a clear but appropriate way. Intercultural competence can help understanding others and achieving educational goals.

In Indonesia, interaction between native speaker and non-native students can be seen in education such as in teaching BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur*

Asing or Indonesian Language for Foreign Speaker). Teaching BIPA involves the interaction between Indonesian native speaker and non-native students from various foreign countries. In teaching BIPA, Indonesian teachers sometimes use Indonesian as the targeted language and use English as the lingua franca. BIPA is taught in some Language Centers of universities in Indonesia, particularly the ones located in big cities such as Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Solo, Malang, and so on. Interaction between native teacher and non-native students in BIPA teaching requires Intercultural Competence of the teacher so that by the end of learning, the non-native students also have Intercultural Competence as the cultures of both are different. For this reason, this research is focused on the Intercultural Competence in the teaching and learning of Indonesian language in higher education.

BIPA

The roles of Indonesia in international cooperation have placed Indonesian language as one of important languages in the world. Indonesia's contributions in accomplishing political conflicts in various areas and its geographical strategic position have attracted foreign people to learn Indonesian language. They learn Indonesian for many purposes including politic, trade, art-culture, tourism, and education.

Many institutions both domestic and overseas have taught Indonesian language to foreign people. There are more or less 45 institutions teaching BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing or Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers), in the forms of university and course institution. Teaching BIPA has been carried out in approximately 36 countries in the world with totally 130 language institutions consisting of university, centre of foreign culture, Indonesian Embassy, and course institution. BIPA teaching can serve as hidden diplomacy in international stage through Indonesian culture. It can be viewed as a strategy of cultural diplomacy through language teaching to foreign speakers. This kind of strategy has been also applied by France, England, Germany, and Japan.

Darmasiswa

"DARMASISWA is a scholarship program offered to all foreign students from countries which have diplomatic relationship with Indonesia to study Bahasa, art and culture. Participants can choose one of selected universities located in different cities in Indonesia. This program is organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)."

The DARMASISWA program was started in 1974 as part of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) initiative, admitting only students from ASEAN. However, in 1976 this program was extended to include students from other countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and USA. In early 90's, this program was extended further to include all countries which have diplomatic relationship with Indonesia. Until to date, the number of countries participating in this program is more than 80 countries.

The main purpose of the DARMASISWA program is to promote and increase the interest in the language and culture of Indonesia among the youth of other countries. It has also been designed to provide stronger cultural links and understanding among participating countries. Darmasiswa is offered to students from every country which has diplomacy relation with Indonesia.

Kemitraan Negara Berkembang (KNB)

The Developing Countries Partnership Program on Scholarship or Beasiswa KNB (Kemitraan Negara Berkembang) is provided for the Master Degree Program at one of 14 prominent Universities in Indonesia for 3 years period. They are in one year program of Darmasiswa which provided them to learn *Bahasa Indonesia*, Arts (music, dance, and traditional industry/handicraft), Cuisines, and Tourism in selected universities in Indonesia.

Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program (FLTA)

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program (FLTA) is sponsored by the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). As part of the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, the Fulbright FLTA Program is designed to develop Americans' knowledge of foreign cultures and languages by supporting teaching assistantships in over 30 languages at hundreds of U.S. institutions of higher education. The program offers educators from over 50 countries the opportunity to develop their professional skills and gain first-hand knowledge of the U.S., its culture and its people.

Intercultural Competence

The term Intercultural Competence (IC) has various definitions. Bennett and Bennett (2004:149) defined Intercultural Competence as the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. Fantini & Tarmizi (2006) gave broader definitions on Intercultural Competences as abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, in other terms, abilities to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. Intercultural competencies are those knowledge, skills and attitudes that comprise a person's ability to get along with, work and learn with people from diverse cultures. Becoming interculturally competent or being able to effectively manage the diversity around needs practice.

UNESCO (2013) has universal concept on Intercultural Competences. They refer to having adequate relevant knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about the sorts of issues arising when members of different culture interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourages establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures. One way to divide intercultural competences into separate skills is to distinguish between: *savoirs* (knowledge of the culture), *savoirs* comprendre (skills of interpreting/relating), *savoirs* etre (attitudes of curiosity/openness, and *savoirs*'engager (critical cultural awareness).

Methodology

This descriptive study aimed at investigating obstacles encountered by Indonesian teachers in teaching BIPA and to explore Intercultural Competence of Indonesian teachers as in teaching BIPA. The data were collected through interview to 5 BIPA teachers from different institutions. Three of them teach BIPA in Indonesia, while the rest two have ever taught BIPA in America and Poland.

Findings and Discussion

Overview of BIPA Class

All five BIPA teachers had multicultural class. They had to teach BIPA to students from various countries with different cultural backgrounds. The detail is as follows:

- a. The first respondent taught BIPA to students from Ethiopia, Papua Guinea, Slovakia, Timor Leste, Ukraine, Malagasy, Palestine, Rwanda, Sierra Leon, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.
- b. The second respondent taught BIPA to students from Africa, Nigeria, Holland, Pakistan, Korea, and Myanmar.
- c. The third respondent taught BIPA to students from Poland, Denmark, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Russia, Laos, and Japan.
- d. The fourth respondent taught BIPA in America. Her students were from Japan, Indo-Singapore, Indo-France, Indo-England, Indo-Japan, and Indo-Lebanon.
- e. The fifth respondent taught BIPA in Poland. Her students were from German and Poland.

Obstacles encountered by BIPA teachers

The result of in-depth interview reported that there were some obstacles encountered by BIPA teachers:

- a. Linguistics items related to suffix and prefix. All five BIPA teachers argued that the most difficult material of Indonesian language for foreign students are suffix, prefix, and iffix.
Iffix: Getar → gemetar
Guruh → gemuruh
Gigi → gerigi
- b. No consistent pattern in Indonesian language
Indonesian language has inconsistency, such as: tangis → menangis, but it will be false to apply in: tidur → menidur
- c. Language Barrier
Explaining Indonesian to foreign students who do not have good English ability will be very difficult since the medium of instruction in BIPA class is usually English
- d. Cultural barrier
Students from Asia such as Pakistan and Myanmar, tend to respect teacher. When the teacher is entering the class, they will stand up and will sit down after the teacher sit down. They do not want to sit face-to-face with the teacher. The behavior of keeping their own culture in the multicultural classroom conditions will create difficulty in learning Indonesian language
- e. Stereotype of each students
Students from Asia like to see Indonesia and behave nicely, but students from Europe tend to have frontal attitude.
- f. Gap among foreign students in BIPA class
Students from Europe usually make their own group. This also occurs to students from Asia (Vietnam, Myanmar, etc), they also isolate themselves
- g. Limited listening material of Indonesian language
There are many books for learning Indonesian, but the listening materials inside are very limited
- h. Limited online sources for Indonesian language

Compare to the sources for learning English, the ones for learning Indonesian are very limited. Since the current learning style is searching through internet, then online materials are greatly necessary.

Intercultural Competence of BIPA Teachers

1. Integrating Indonesian culture in teaching Indonesian Language through some discussion topics as follows:
 - a. Daily life and routines, living conditions, food and drink, etc
 - b. Indonesian youth culture
 - c. Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions
 - d. Literature
 - e. Education, professional life
 - f. History, geography, political system
 - g. Other cultural expressions (aesthetic sense: music, drama, art, cinema, literature, film)
 - h. Beliefs, myths, and values
 - i. Ethnic groups and social differences
 - j. International relations (political, economic, cultural) with the country is the student and with other countries)
 - k. Sociological sense (organization, family tree, interpersonal relation, customs, material condition)
2. Designing various classroom interaction including:
 - a. Individual task
 - b. Group discussion
 - c. Class discussion
3. Asking foreign students to make cultural reflection by comparing Indonesian culture with their own culture
4. Instructing BIPA students to give their opinion on Indonesian culture
5. Having outdoor activities such as cooking class at the house of BIPA teachers, visiting Indonesian restaurant, going to Indonesian tourism objects, joining speech contest and dangdut song for foreign students
6. Avoiding some reluctant topics such religion and gender
7. Reducing the intensity of using English in teaching Indonesian
8. Creating language variety of Indonesian language to describe the differences between formal and informal Indonesian language
9. Making similarity between Indonesian language and English Language as well as the language of the foreign student countries
10. Presenting glossary containing words frequently used and asked
11. Using gesture and facial expression in explaining difficult things that cannot be understood easily
12. Building emotional touch between BIPA teacher and foreign students by asking them to tell personal experience in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The increasing number of foreign students joining BIPA class showed that the international position of Indonesian language is getting higher. Various reasons underpinned their motivation in learning Indonesian language such as education, research project, student exchange program including KNB and Darma Siswa, economic, and tourism. Considering the high interaction and communication between foreign students and native teachers in BIPA class, intercultural competence must be owned by BIPA teachers.

The results of in-depth interview to BIPA teachers both in Indonesia and overseas demonstrated that they apply intercultural competence in different levels and situations. This competence depends on the experience and improvisation of BIPA teachers. The creativities in presenting and using the learning media, learning materials, and emotional touch are required considering that BIPA class belongs to multicultural class with various cultural background. BIPA teachers integrated culture material in language learning through various ways: film, music, & game. They also related the materials with food and beverage, tradition, history, geography, political system, myth, tribe, family tree, & tourism objects. The activity of teaching BIPA can be indoor and outdoor. BIPA teachers also mixed between Indonesian & English. However, BIPA teachers in overseas used English dominantly as a medium of instruction.

The implementation of intercultural competence carried out by BIPA teachers is expected to provide knowledge and attitude about Indonesian language and culture to foreign students. They are eventually not only able to speak Indonesian language well but also able to use it in Indonesian context and culture. The result of research on Intercultural Competence of BIPA teachers will be better and comprehensive if the research data are gained from classroom observation and in-depth interview with foreign BIPA students.

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