Effectiveness of ICC Students International Learning Program

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Article Info	Abstract
	This study investigates the intercultural relationship development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students participating in an International Learning Program. Amid travel restrictions, a limited number of students engaged in a cross-border experience in Malaysia and Singapore. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research examines the stages of intercultural relationship development and associated challenges. Twenty eighth-grade students from East Java, Indonesia, comprising an equal distribution of male and female participants, were selected for the study. Through analysis, three distinctive stages emerged in the process of intercultural competence (ICC) development: "trial," involving the exploration of new customs and habits; "enmeshment," focusing on individual character growth in new contexts; and "renegotiation," emphasizing dialogue and reflection on cultural experiences' impacts. Drawing on existing literature, the study proposes strategies for ICC development, including self-awareness, cultural awareness, motivation enhancement, and cultural knowledge acquisition. Additionally, ICC improvement techniques, such as cultural assimilation, comparison methods, and reformulation, were identified as valuable tools for English language instruction. *This is an open access article under the license*

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1. INTRODUCTION

International mobility has been severely disrupted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has essentially affected the entire world for more than two years. Throughout the world, educational institutions entirely or partially cease their in-person operations and switch to emergency remote education. Only a small number of study abroad programs were able to continue to run under challenging circumstances, as students were not permitted to travel due to institutional or global travel restrictions. After more than two years, the pandemic, which alternated with an endemic phase, has gradually subsided. Studying abroad is frequently regarded as the "gold standard for preparing students to enter a globalized society" (Wei et al., 2020) since it helps

students get ready for a more linked world. Student exchanges, international learning programs, international study banding, etc are just a few of the participation experiences that study abroad programs expose students to. Unsurprisingly, studying abroad enjoys a distinct level of reputation in the realm of education (Lei et al., 2023). The Chinese national government recently argued that studying abroad is "the most important way for Chinese youngsters to learn about the world" and will help them "embrace the world with greater openness and confidence" (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2022). Governments and educational institutions all across the world are creating new policy objectives to internationalize student learning by

encouraging travel. Such as the International Learning Program (ILP). All educational programs that take place outside of the student's country of origin are referred to as International Learning Programs or study abroad. Shorter and more intensive study abroad programs that emphasize the development of cross-cultural awareness and abilities together with other personal and professional competencies have become increasingly popular in recent years (Iskhakova and Bradly, 2021). These program are becoming more widely acknowledged as a crucial method for enhancing students' Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) and preparing them for future professional participation on an international scale.

Some experts (see Fantini, 2020) claimed that the expansion of Intercultural Communication toward EFL students has been acknowledged mutually of the conclusive goals in learning English that seek to produce them with a lot of information regarding cultural diversity and facilitate their memory of their own cultures and respect for others. According to Mosed, et al., (2021) the concepts in intercultural communication are briefly characterized by communication as the sharing of information between people on different levels of awareness and control. In another explanation, it is said that intercultural communication is done by people from different cultural communication (Issa, et al., 2015). Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2012) stressed the importance of English education in preparing students with International Communicative Competence (ICC) and its application using suitable approaches to explain cultural variations and enact harmonious and fruitful interconnections. Since learning English is one of the objectives of the language learning curriculum, teaching culture should even come first to produce such conditions, especially for the students' intercultural capacity (Cubukcu, 2013). However, if systematic cultural knowledge is not taught in schools, pupils' comprehension of the core components of the target culture may not be complete. English must mediate all lines of cross-cultural thinking because it is an international language of communication today. Thus, offering English and culture to students who will study abroad will encourage them to pay attention to culture

in the classroom and not dismiss it. In this study, students carried out International Learning Program activities in Singapore and Malaysia for a week. This research's main goal is to assess the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) of EFL students at one of Indonesia's lower secondary school. To avoid discord, miscommunication, and even conflicts in communication, EFL students should be sensitive and interculturally competent (Tambunan et al., 2021). The primary objective of teaching English has changed from boosting language learners' linguistic proficiency to doing so while simultaneously integrating their communicative proficiency with its cultural aspects, or intercultural communicative competence (ICC). As a result, the state of English language education today suggests that increasing language learners' ICC has emerged as one of the primary objectives for preparing students for intercultural communication while also developing their language proficiency (Sahin, 2020).

The article's considerable scope and significance lie in its specification of the development of ICC for EFL students of lower secondary school. The essay places a special emphasis on cross-cultural results; our review also identifies the ICC's implications for ILP and a research agenda for subsequent ICC studies. This study is based on several studies published in international education, management, business, psychology, language, and social journals with a particular interest in ICC and ILP research. This article also exposes gaps in our knowledge of this type of learning and offers a deeper grasp of the theoretical underpinnings, scale, breadth, core themes, and methodology of ICC research. The report also details the essential traits of ICC programs that we found in the literature as a distinct addition. This previous study was conducted by Velasco, (2017) about incorporating intercultural communication activities in English language Classes. The similarity of this research is about intercultural communication using English as a foreign language for Indonesian. Then, the differences of this research are the place of setting and the participants. The next previous research was from Khairatunnisa, et al (2022) about exploring development stages of intercultural friendship among EFL learners. The similarities

of the research are about Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in EFL students. The difference are in the respondents and goals of the research. From the explanation above, the researchers are interested to conduct the research to assess the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) of EFL students at one of Indonesia's lower secondary school. The key term of this research is Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). Then, the stage of ICC means how the participants face the different situations of their relationship, especially language and culture. The other one is challenges, which give the information about participants' challenges in the stage of ICC. The next section of this article is metodology that explans respondents, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, etc. The findings and discussion of our research comes next. The fourth is conclusion, and the last part is references.

2. METHOD

The researchers employed descriptive qualitative method to learn the stages of intercultural relationship and the problems that come. According to Creswell (2018), a qualitative method is used to analyze information of individual or group based on social phenomena. Thus, the researchers get the finding from deep understanding of research questions. Mardalis, (2003) explains that descriptive method covers recording, describing, analyzing, and interpreting the empirical data. The reason for choosing qualitative method is the researchers described the stages in Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) based on their explanation and experience. This strategy is commonly used to comprehend people's perceptions. The qualitative approach aids to the discovery of fresh ideas and individual perspectives by using analysis to delve deeper understanding.

20 representatives from EFL students of lower secondary school in East Java, Indonesia who enrolled in the International Learning Program goes to Malaysia and Singapore for a week participated in this study, all of them are students in grade 8. Besides, there were male students (n=10) and female students (n=10). In qualitative research, the sample size used tends to be smaller to facilitate the collection of accurate and in-depth information (Dworkin, 2012). The researcher uses a criteria sampling method where the researcher determines the criteria first and then selects participants who meet the predetermined criteria (Ary et al., 2010). In this study, researchers looked for participants who had never had experience in conducting International Learning Program activities or Comparative Studies before, their knowledge and practice of learning about ICC was limited to the scope of the school, this aim was to find out the results of students' ICC development more naturally. All of them spoke Indonesian as their mother tongue and learned English as their foreign language. Their age was between 14 to 15 years old.

Researchers used questionnaires and in-depth interviews as research instruments. Questionnaires were administered via paper forms, while interviews were conducted face-to-face. After the questionnaire activities were carried out, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. The researcher uses interviews because it offers the researcher an organized list of questions, with the intention that all participants can answer the questions in the same order. Semi-structured interviews are usually followed by further why or how questions (Adams, 2015). By applying semi-structured interviews, researchers will be able to engage in in-depth conversations with participants to collect detailed information from participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The interview questions were adapted from previous studies in the literature review. All participants were asked the same questions with several follow-up questions.

The data collection procedure was carried out in several stages. First, researchers contact and inform each participant about the research objectives. After that, the researcher made face-to-face appointments with each participant to carry out questionnaire and interview activities. During the interview, the researcher recorded the interview to facilitate the data transcription process. Then, the results are grouped into several points or themes.

Intercultural Communicative Competence has some stages in it. Khatimah & Kusuma, (2019) there are three stages of development of Intercultural Communicative Competence; trial, enmeshment, and renegotiation. The experimental phase is a new meeting of intercultural relations to understand cultural differences and roles in relationships. The enmeshment stage is transferring cultural identity to provide information about one's own culture and building different cultural relationships. Then, the renegotiation stage is a process of mutual support and understanding of cultural identity. Researchers analyzed research data through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used because the researcher analyzes the data based on the discussion themes at each stage of ICC development that have been described in previous studies. By using thematic analysis, researchers can link the analysis of the frequency of one theme with other themes, add to the meaning of the study and provide accuracy (Alhojailan, 2012). It also allows researchers to summarize, highlight key features, and interpret or make sense of all data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The researcher first recorded the interview process and transcribed the interview data. Then, the researcher re-read the transcription to verify the accuracy of the data. And finally, similar to Mali and Salsbury (2021), the researcher groups similar ideas from each question or statement in the research instrument and develops them to answer the research question.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview guideline were adapted from research by Khairatunnisa, et al (2022). These instruments were considered suitable and could be used in this research on ICC. Researcher use these interview guidelines to find the answer from participant because it completed the research questions in this study.

Table 1. List of Interview (adapted from Khairatunnisa, et al, 2022)

No	Statement / Questions
1	I'm looking for the information on the new place that I'm going to occupy
2	I study the cultures of the place where I will live
3	The community is very welcoming of our arrival
4	The community is very supportive of our program
5	We follow all community activities
6	We share the information about culture in each country/region
7	I follow all activities very well
8	I study the culture and the language of the place well and correctly
9	We do activities and work well together and also respect other's opinion
10	We solve the problems that occur in the field well during the activity

There are three stages of the theories in development of Intercultural Communicative Competence: trial, enmeshment, and renegotiation which can be seen in the findings of the development stages in International communication.

1. Trial (Accepting the new habit)

The first stage was a trial run, all participants recognized a new place they had to live in. In this activity they came to other countries, namely Malaysia and Singapore. Even though the Malay and Indonesian languages are the same, they still want to learn and also want to get to know the culture of their neighboring countries. The following are samples of data taken to be analyzed based on questionnaires and interviews.

Researcher : I'm looking for information on the new place that I'm going to occupy.

Interviewee : Almost all participants of the International Learning Program (ILP) find out in advance about the detailed information about the country we are going to visit (how it is, the distance, what is there, what rules apply there, what language, culture, and currency are used there). We got this information from social media, asking teacher and parents.

Researcher : I study the cultures of the place where I will live.

Interviewee : All participants learned about the culture of the place where we will live because Malaysia and Singapore consist of many races, such as Malays, Chinese, and Indians. In addition, we also learn the rules of the country, what is allowed and not allowed to be done.

Researcher : The community is very welcoming of our arrival.

Interviewee : Our presence was welcomed, people in Malaysia and Singapore like to greet and polite, we all got to know each other the first time we met and exchanged social media, the arrival of ILP participants at schools in Malaysia was also greeted warmly and pleasantly, participants were presented with many cultural displays (24-season drum beats, pencak silat, dances), and we all told each other about the special foods of their respective countries.

2. Enmeshment (Sensitive Issues)

The second is enmeshment, every country has rules and standard in their locality. As a guest in new places, they learn about the rules of indigenous. All participants admit to develop the program and they say that the program is beneficial and form such a program they understand new things from new circumstances.

Researcher : We share information about culture in each country or region.

Interviewee : We exchanged information about culture to broaden our horizons and knowledge, as well as to familiarize ourselves. We are aware that it turns out that culture varies and that foreign people are cool.

Researcher : I study the culture and the language of the place well and correctly.

Interviewee : All ILP students studied the culture there as well as the Malay language, which was not much different from Indonesian.

Researcher : We solve the problems that occur in the field well during the activity.

Interviewee : Some of us are able to solve problems that arise with good time management, being on time, having a sense of ownership and responsibility for personal belongings, not being lazy, and staying enthusiastic. While some of us cannot solve problems with time management, especially when shopping, a sense of ownership of goods means that many items are lost or left behind, lazy, etc.

3. Renegotiation (Support system)

At the end is renegotiation, this is perturbed with different views or ideologies of the participants as they come from different cultural and social background. Those difference could not forced to be accepted by a certain individual or goup. By this it is clear that negotiation or even renegotiation is necessary. If the first negotiation decline, it should be followed by the second negotiaton which is termed as renegociation. A rule was approved in one society or community but not in another so all should be well adjusted.

Researcher : The community is very supportive of our program.

Interviewee : Overseas hosts are very supportive of ILP activities, they facilitate the arrival of ILP participants, provide material that we have never received while in Indonesia, and provide lots of food and souvenirs. Overseas hosts tell ILP participants that they are all relatives of the same family, and they said they wanted to visit Indonesia.

Researcher : We follow all community activities.

Iterviewee : We took part in all series of activities abroad well.

Researcher : I follow all activities very well.

Interviewee: We took part in the entire series of International Learning Program activities from the first day to the last.

Researcher : We do activities and work well together, and we also respect others opinions.

Interviewee: We carried out activities and collaborated in various activities, respected each other's opinions, and helped each other. We believe that we have to build good social relationships so that the activity can run smoothly until the end.

4. DISCUSSION

Based the findings above, it can be concluded that in its implementation there are three steps for ICC program students in developing their English language skills. namely trial (accepting new habits), enmeshent (sensitive issues), and renegotiation (support system). These strategies suggested by Han (2023) can also be

utilized and outlined by teachers in programs to cultivate ICC: know oneself, increase cultural awareness, increase motivation, and acquire cultural knowledge. Similarly, Reid (2015) shares ICC improvement techniques in English classes such as comparison methods, cultural assimilation, cultural capsules, culture islands, reformulation, predictions, and so on. They can be used in language skills courses while providing background in teacher training programs.

Therefore, to create intercultural awareness through assignments or activities such as learning/teaching foreign languages is indispensable for the development of ICC. That's because mindfulness is the link between the ICC subcategories. It could be suggested that culture-specific knowledge and information could be highlighted or studied explicitly in ELT courses to promote the ICC knowledge dimension. This is recommended because although language learners are exposed to topics of literature, science, society and culture implicitly through learning a foreign language (English) and through speaking, writing, listening and reading exercises, explicit instruction in cultural knowledge can help to increase ICC. To achieve this goal, different cultural samples can be studied more explicitly to influence students' attitudes towards cultural diversity. This study was designed to investigate whether the ELT program influences students' ICC development during their training. The overall findings from the ICC revealed that almost all samples had high ICC levels, which means that the ELT program played a role in increasing the participants' ICC levels. Therefore, there is a primary duty for teachers to support the development of all ICC dimensions.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and results, the researchers concluded that there are three stages of the theory of building international friendship: trial, enmeshment, and renegotiation. The first is an experiment. The majority of participants admitted that they had to try new adaptations in locations they had just visited. Things learned in a new place include religion, culture, traditions, customs and also deep adaptation to the local population. Things that ICC students do include exchanging social media accounts, culture such

as pencak silat and dance, and eating from their respective regions. The second is enmeshment, this stage focuses on each individual's personal character. Every student has their own way of enjoying learning in a new place. Especially for new traits that they are starting to recognize that have never been obtained before. So that the strengthening of student character can take place well and increase significantly. The last step is renegotiation, in this step, students give suggestions or talk about the culture or habits they just got and how they affect other people, both positive and negative. Like respecting each other's opinions and exchanging stories and experiences they have.

As for further studies, it can be recommended that since the sample studied in the present research shared the same mother tongue, and learned only one foreign language (English), another sample learning more than one foreign language or bilinguals can be studied in order to investigate their ICC. It can also be suggested that the effect of other variables apart from the program effect, proficiency, and the like may be analyzed. For example, the effect of the Internet in which ELF has a widespread use; that is, being globally connected via the Internet by means of the mutual language (English) may be explored in order to find out if it is effective in the improvement of the cultural components of communicative competence.

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