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Intercultural Learning in Pandemic Era

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Abstract--This study investigated the students' intercultural learning in online classes during the pandemic era. The purpose of this study was to find out the reflection of intercultural learning in the EFL language of sixth-semester students of the English Study Program at Pasir Pengaraian University. This research was descriptive qualitative. The sample of this study was 30 students. The instruments of collecting data were questionnaires and interviews. This study shows that the students' intercultural learning was reasonable. In the teaching and learning process, there was no misunderstanding about the nature or actions of students from different cultural and language backgrounds in teaching and learning activities. Indeed, the process of teaching and teaching runs well. Each student could communicate well and make a good relationship with other people from different cultures. In short, students could develop a broader understanding of their language and cultural differences in the teaching and learning process during the pandemic era.

Keywords--daring class, intercultural learning, language learning, online classes, pandemic era.

Introduction

Recently, educators have the unique challenging in the pandemic era, especially in the teaching and learning process. In this case, an online or daring class will be a practice environment in the teaching and learning process (Busse & Krause, 2016; Benson, 2015; Busse & Krause, 2015; Abd Rahman & Ramli, 2013; Hasler, 2011; Rappel, 2011). Automatically, this condition changes education's paradigm, especially involving the culture in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the educators should consider the cultural phenomenon in daring

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class. In this chase, culture in education is a standard agreement between the classroom students on the values, norms, rules, role expectations, and meanings that guide the students' behavior and communication (Kaikkonen, 1997; Winoto, 2020). In a multicultural context, each existing culture has a different perspective and rules (Paras et al., 2019; Gómez-Parra, 2020; Bartel-radic, 2020; Cloonan et al., 2017; Valek & Tarasova, 2014). It means that the students who come from different cultures, whether they want it or not, like it or not, must understand and appreciate all forms of differences such as costume, language, and culture. This condition will establish the different communication and relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds (Selvi, 2022; Anggriani et al., 2022).

Due to the different understanding of language and culture in the teaching and learning process, intercultural learning is essential to solving this problem. Intercultural learning is a process where the learner's picture of culture grows more comprehensive, with the help of new information about foreign culture and language, increasing at the same time the consciousness of the unique features of one's own culture and language (Bocanegra-Valle, 2015; Borghetti et al., 2015; Mesker et al., 2018). Furthermore, intercultural learning is a process of widening a learner's cultural scope (Bartel-Radic & Binet, 2020; Migliorini et al., 2015). In addition, Lourenço (2018), argues that intercultural learning is a dynamic process with a continuum expanding from learners' awareness and understanding of other cultures to acceptance and respect for cultural differences and ultimately extending to learners' appreciation and valuing of other cultures (O'Brien et al., 2019; Busse & Krause, 2016).

However, intercultural learning Intercultural learning offers the ability to deal across cultures, which is increasingly important, as the world gets smaller (Filpisan et al., 2012; Gómez-Parra, 2020; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2018; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015). Intercultural learning programs in the classroom allow students to seize opportunities that diversity offers and learn how to interact in a global, diverse and challenging world (Busse & Krause, 2016; Kokotsaki et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2014; Meier, 2007; Moloney & Harbon, 2010). Indeed, intercultural learning helps us understand others see the world from their perspective and be sensitive to their needs. Furthermore, Intercultural learning programs in the classroom allow students to seize opportunities that diversity offers and learn how to interact in a global, diverse and challenging world (Chao, 2013; Haerazi & Irawan, 2020; Cloonan et al., 2017; Hasler, 2011; Nadeem et al., 2018; Zafar et al., 2013).

Therefore, investigating intercultural learning in the pandemic era, especially in teaching English as a foreign language, has the appropriate attention. It was the students' awareness of the online teaching and learning process. The previous study has shown that online internet learning blurs between language, cultures, and norms (Benson, 2015; Winoto, 2020). In addition, Shadiev et al. (2020), argue that involving two or more cultures in online learning has the fundamental problem in understanding the different contexts of trainers and learners. Considering the condition of cultural understanding in one classroom, needed to understand the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Filpisan et al., 2012; Fozdar & Volet, 2012; King et al., 2013).

Deeply, getting successful intercultural communication can not be achieved only through native-like fluency and the cultural knowledge of countries where English is the dominant language without intercultural awareness and negotiation skills (Bartel-Radic & Binet, 2020; Bennett, 2009; Jon, 2009; Mesker et al., 2018; Messelink et al., 2015). In intercultural learning, students must also care for intercultural awareness because, based on preliminary observations, some students experience misunderstanding when they learn from language and cultural background differences in the same classroom; namely, they lack intercultural awareness, which affects the learning process. Martin et al. (2003), define intercultural awareness as the awareness of experiencing otherness and the ability to analyze the experience acting upon the insights into self and others which this analysis can bring. In other words, intercultural awareness is very important in intercultural learning. If the students lack intercultural awareness, intercultural learning in their class will not be maximal. Because of this regard, argue that intercultural learning is a process of widening a learner's cultural scope (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011; Benson & Lor, 1999).

Furthermore, the other studies discuss the most important in learning a foreign language in the intercultural classroom: intercultural awareness (Filpisan et al., 2012; Nordgren & Johansson, 2015). Intercultural awareness in terms of experiencing otherness and analyzing that experience also aligns with principles of intercultural language learning. The learners should have a good intercultural awareness because it is about cognitive knowledge in understanding and recognizing the other cultures without neglecting their own cultural identity. The principles of Intercultural language teaching and learning proposed by Mesker et al. (2018); Moloney & Harbon (2010); Shadiev et al. (2020), such as:

- Active construction; learners need to create their cultural knowledge as part of the process of developing their perspective about the culture they are learning and their own culture.
- Making connections; students are encouraged to make their connections between new things they encounter about culture, language, and knowledge in the classroom with their own culture, language, and knowledge.
- Social interaction; students have the opportunity to experience differences during communication, including differences in perceptions as well as differences of opinion in discussion.
- Reflection; students have the opportunity to experience new knowledge of their own understanding with others and can reflect on different experiences.
- Responsibility; students have a responsibility to communicate successfully with all peoples of different languages and cultures by respecting those languages and cultures.

Linked the intercultural learning in the online class, the students of the English Department, Pasir Pengaraian University, have been conducting online learning since the 2020 year. The students learn and know each other by using zoom or daring class. In this case, the students who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are united in a learning class, and there will be a combination of cultures from one culture to another, which will influence each other in terms of language, culture, and learning. This situation is a challenge

faced by students learning English because some students come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and what they are learning is a foreign language so eventually, some students find it difficult to understand the lesson (Khawar et al., 2021; Tavitiyaman et al., 2021).

Students from different cultural backgrounds learn and establish communication in one classroom, causing these students to experience various kinds of intercultural communication, which is not easy for some students due to the lack of awareness of some students with cultural differences that occur misunderstandings, misperceptions of foreign cultures arise. Students like this need to study even more challenging to adapt and understand the processes that occur in a class. Based on this phenomenon, it is necessary to investigate the students' intercultural learning during pandemic class (Velázquez, 2020; Manupati et al., 2021).

Method

This research was descriptive qualitative research. This research aimed to describe intercultural learning in language learning in the sixth semester of the English study program at the Pasir Pengaraian University. Qualitative descriptive research is a method in researching the status of a group of humans to create an object, the picture or painting, descriptive in systematic, factual accurate regarding the facts or phenomena are investigated (Sevilla et al., 1993). Qualitative descriptive research aims to get information about existing situations and conditions (Mardalis, 1999). In this research, the researcher used probability sampling. According to Sugiyono (2013), probability sampling is a sampling technique where samples are the same as the population (Wong, 2021; Widana et al., 2020).

There were some steps in collecting data. Firstly, the researcher gave the questionnaire and interview to the sixth-semester students of the English Study Program at Pasir Pengaraian University. Secondly, the researcher interviewed the students. Thirdly, the data were analyzed by using the Likert scale. The interview consisted of five questions to strengthen the data that has been taken from the questionnaire. In this case, to answer the research questions, the data from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed descriptively in the form of percentages. In addition, the data analysis is used to determine the percentage of students' intercultural learning. Finally, the researcher analyzed the data and information using theoretical review and systematically described the facts (Kokorina et al., 2021; Atmowardoyo & Sakkir, 2021).

Findings and Discussion

Findings

In this part, the researcher described the intercultural learning in language learning in the sixth semester of the English study program at Pasir Pengaraian University. Intercultural language learning in the sixth semester of the student's the English Study Program University of Pasir Pengaraianis was quite good because the relationship between students and lecturer was good. Almost all of

the students understood more about English and are aware of the cultural differences in the classroom. Students were also able to communicate and interact with other students from different cultures because they had much time and opportunity to explore two or more cultures. It was inseparable from the guidance of the lecturer. The lecturer could bridge two or more different cultures in the class during the learning process. Then students could find the language or cultural differences and interpret students' own culture and the meaning behind a cultural story of the target language. Furthermore, the students' intercultural learning in teaching and learning process during daring class can be seen in the following Table 1 below.

Table 1
Students' active construction in the teaching and learning process

No	Active Construction Statements	Percentages
1	Student active engagement in interpreting the meaning when interacting with others	88,00%
2	Student active creating meaning in interaction with others when the learning process	84,00%
3	Students continuously reflect on one's themselves and others in communication when the learning process	84,67%
4	Student continuously meaning-making in variable contexts in the learning process	87,33%
5	Students continuously develop as thinking, feeling, changing intercultural beings	86,67%

The findings on the principle of active construction, students were exploring language and culture through active engagement as mentioned in the first statement that active student engagement in interpreting meaning when interacting with others and the second statement that students active create meaning in interaction with others when the learning process. The third statement shows that students continuously reflect on themselves and others in communication during the learning process. On the fourth and fifth statements, the students continuously meaning-making in variable contexts in the learning process and continuously develop as thinking, feeling, changing intercultural beings (Handayani et al., 2019; Briones et al., 2020).

Active construction was the principle that shows learning occurs in language learning. The data above showed an active construction in the sixth-semester students of the English study program at Pasir Pengaraian University. Because from the questionnaire statements filled out by students showed that students were active in the learning process and continue to develop as beings who think, feel, change between cultures. It means that students were constantly trying to be able to explore the culturally conditioned nature of human behavior.

Table 2
Students' activities in making a connection in class

No	Active Construction Statements	Percentages
1	Student active engagement in interpreting the meaning when interacting with others	88,00%
2	Student active creating meaning in interaction with others when the learning process	84,00%
3	Students continuously reflect on one's themselves and others in communication when the learning process	84,67%
4	Student continuously meaning-making in variable contexts in the learning process	87,33%
5	Students continuously develop as thinking, feeling, changing intercultural beings	86,67%

All statements showed that students have to bridge their understanding to the new knowledge during the learning process on the principle of making connections. The student was able to engage the previous lesson with already known, which means that the lecturer showed how bridges are made during the learning process. Students were required to engage beyond their intracultural positions and interpret meanings across linguistic and cultural boundaries, so the lecturer explained to the students that they understood what they bring from home or their local community.

Making the connection is the principle that language and culture are not acquired or experienced separately. The data above showed the direction of making the connection in sixth-semester students of the English study program at the Pasir Pengaraian University. Students could connect something new with what is already known. Students engaged a new language and culture as the new experiences. The connection between students or the new experiences could produce meaning about language and culture. The students could feel the equation and difference between one's language and culture with the others.

Table 3
Students' social interaction in the class

No	Active Construction Statements	Percentages
1	Students continuously develop one's own understanding of the relationship between one's framework of language and the culture of others relationships with their friends when the learning process	74,00%
2	Students engage in a continuous dialogue in negotiating meaning across variable perspectives	86,67%
3	Students continuously learn and build upon the Experience	88,00%
4	Students are continuously in dialogue with diverse ways of communicating in each experience of language and is always, therefore a language user, regardless of other goals that may attend the act of language use in a pedagogical context.	84,00%
5	Students understand the conditions to be able to respond to	80,67%

 understanding, challenge ideas, and renegotiate

The principle of social interaction was about interaction or learning activities in the classroom. All of the statements in the direction of social interaction were about the discussion that happened in the classroom. In the learning process, the students had group discussions or pairs. Students discussed the topic with each group to get the result of the discussion. It means that there was good interaction in the class even though the other group presented the topic of the discussion. The data above showed the principle of social interaction in sixth-semester students of the English study program at the University of Pasir Pengaraian. There were interactions and discussions about language or culture in the learning process. It could be seen from the students' agreement from the questionnaire. They had a discussions group that made students have to dialogue between the one with the others.

Table 4
Students' reflection in the class

No	Active Construction Statements	Percentages
1	Students understand why that reaction is the reaction one Experiences	76,67%
2	Students exploring the attitudes and assumptions that one brings to the act of communication and which one encounters in the communication of others	85,33%
3	As a way of understanding, students investigated what and why one perceives between languages and cultures	83,33%
4	The student becoming aware of how to think, know and learn about language	84,67%
5	Student knowing, understanding, and their relationships, as well as concepts such as diversity, identity, experiences, and one's own intercultural thoughts and feelings	82,00%

The principle of reflection was about the interpretation of students. Findings of the principle of reflection had shown that the students understand others' cultures. Although many students come from different cultural backgrounds do not inhibit students in the learning process, precisely students understand and can find the differences of language or differences of culture from their language and culture. The data above showed the principle of reflection in sixth-semester students of the English study program at the Pasir Pengaraian University. Students think to understand about language and culture that happened. Students not only know someone's reaction to something but also understand why the reaction occurs, and even sometimes students feel what others feel that it gave the attitude and assumptions that bring communication with others so that it could be involved with the language and culture of others.

Table 5
Students' reflection in the class

No	Active Construction Statements	Percentages
1	Students understand why that reaction is the reaction one Experiences	88,00%
2	Students exploring the attitudes and assumptions that one brings to the act of communication and which one encounters in the communication of others	90,67%
3	As a way of understanding, students investigated what and why one perceives between languages and cultures	85,33%
4	The student becoming aware of how to think, know and learn about language	86,67%
5	Student knowing, understanding, and their relationships, as well as concepts such as diversity, identity, experiences, and one's own intercultural thoughts and feelings	86,00%

The principle of responsibility is about students' attitude to their community in daily activities. From the direction of responsibility, students' activities become the determinant of whether students have a responsibility or not. Students' activities not just in the classroom but also outside, like at home and in society. It was about students' way of interacting with others in the entire language and trying to understand others' language and culture better and better understand students' own language culture. The data above showed the principle of responsibility in sixth-semester students of the English study program at the University of PasirPengaraian. Students understood what others said and what they meant by others in a fair and respect for others. Students were responsible for developing intercultural sensitivity and intercultural understanding.

Discussions

The result shows that the intercultural learning reflection was good in the English Department at Pasir Pengaraian University. The condition could be seen in the students' daring class activity, such as actively speaking up, expressing their opinion, asking, and giving information based on their prior knowledge. There were opportunities for students to be able to create meaning of others' language or culture and one owns culture when interacting with others. In this case, the students should be encouraged to develop personal ways of responding to linguistic and cultural differences (Miftakh, 2017; Umran, 2014; Kokotsaki et al., 2014; Nordgren & Johansson, 2015). Furthermore, intercultural learning is also arranged by students' relationships during the teaching and learning process. It means that intercultural learning allows the students to connect the new culture and learn with their local or home community (Coyle, 2015; Miftakh, 2017). Furthermore, the students engaged a new language and culture as the new experiences, especially in the teaching and learning process.

Besides, intercultural learning builds the students' engagement in understanding the new culture and their own culture, and intercultural learning also develops the students' social interaction (Bartel-Radic, 2006; Reid, 2013; Vasbø, 2013). In this research, the students have group discussions or pairs to discuss the topic

with each group to get the result of the discussion. In this case, the different cultures and languages did not influence the teaching and learning process. Linked with this result, [Echcharfy \(2019\)](#) argues that intercultural learning can help the students' awareness of different cultures in the teaching and learning process.

In addition, intercultural learning also serves their reflection in the class. In this case, intercultural learning develops a good interpretation of other cultures in daring class. Indeed, intercultural learning elaborates and develops the students' interpretation of the teaching and learning process ([Fozdar & Volet, 2012](#); [Borghetti et al., 2015](#)). In this case, the lecturer encourages the students to be active in discussing other languages or cultures, making them understand differences in language or culture and their own culture. It meant that students could find the language or cultural differences and interpret students' own culture and the meaning behind a cultural story of the target language.

However, intercultural learning increases the students' responsibility in the teaching and learning process. It means that responsibility was a principle that recognizes that understanding depends on the learner's attitudes, dispositions, and values, developed over time; in communication, this was evident in accepting responsibility for one's way of interacting with others within and across languages and for striving continuously to understand better self and others in the ongoing development of intercultural sensitivity ([Chao, 2013](#); [Gómez-Parra, 2020](#); [Gómez-Rodríguez, 2018](#); [Haas, 2019](#); [Ilie, 2019](#)). In this case, the students were responsible for developing intercultural sensitivity and understanding. It could be said that the questionnaire and interview result shows that almost all of the students are aware of the cultural differences in the classroom. Students were able to communicate with other students in the same class without any misunderstanding because each student understands and realizes that there is a difference between the language and culture.

Conclusion

In this research, intercultural learning in the pandemic era at sixth-semester students at Pasir Pengaraian University was not influenced by the pandemic era. Mostly, the highest index percentage comes from the students' responsibility with a frequency of 87.33%. In other words, most of the students of the sixth semester of the English study program are primarily aware of and understand cultural differences. The second was the principle of active construction, with a frequency of 86.13%. Almost all of the students were active in the learning process. The third was making a connection with a frequency of 84.40%. The students can connect one culture to the other culture. Then, the principle of social interaction with frequency is 82.67%. It means that there was a good interaction between the student in different cultures. The last principle of reflection with frequency is 82.40%. Students understood and could find the differences in language or culture differences from their language and culture. In short, the intercultural learning in language learning at the sixth semester of the English study Program was aware and understood intercultural, so there is no misunderstanding or misperception in language learning.

Indeed, students could better understand their language and cultural differences. Generally, students' intercultural learning becomes more developed from the previous because the students' learning process provides more opportunities to add the new information to increase the awareness and understanding of students to the existing language and cultural differences. As an initial recognition of students that they experienced, other students laughed because of pronunciation and intonation, which were considered funny because their own culture and language influenced them. They often laughed because expressions in English did not match their language and culture. After studying English a lot with lecturers of the English Study Program at Pasir Pengaraian University, there are no longer any misunderstandings in understanding the nature or actions of students who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the classroom. In short, the daring class would not appear the gap and cultural understanding in the teaching and learning process.

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