

## THE PROPOSED ELEMENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC) FOR INDONESIAN EFL ENGLISH TEACHERS

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Received: 28 April 2020

Accepted: 19 October 2020

### Abstract

The development of intercultural communicative competence (henceforth ICC) has inevitably made one be able to mingle and communicate effectively and appropriately utilizing the target language, for example English, with other people who have multiple backgrounds of culture, language, and nation. It is due to ICC is seen as a complex competence in this twenty-first-century life. However, in the educational context, this competence is rarely noticed seriously by the Indonesian EFL or English teachers. It is based upon the previous research conducted by the writer in 2018. Therefore, this paper is to present a comprehensive understanding of ICC and recommend a number of competencies related to ICC that should be mastered by the Indonesian EFL or English teachers. Such competencies are linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, intercultural competence, and intercultural awareness which are all able to assist the Indonesian EFL or English teachers in developing their intercultural competence and their student's ICC as well.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Indonesian EFL teachers, English teachers, Intercultural Competence (IC), English Education.

### INTRODUCTION

The enhancement of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in relation to EFL students should be taken into consideration since it has been noticed as the main aim in English language education and learning. This development of ICC can attempt to prepare and provide the EFL students with a lot of knowledge about cultural differences so that they are able to live, mingle, and be aware of their own culture as well as respect to others' cultures (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006, Fantini, 2000; Idris, 2019; Tran & Sheepo, 2016). The term intercultural communicative competence or in short, intercultural competence (hereafter IC) can be defined based on an individual's context (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). In the perspective of a professional domain, it is seen as one who has the ability to be competent that should be able to know not only how to interact effectively and properly with diverse people in a particular situation but also how to

respect and give a positive attitude towards the people who have multiple identities (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Similarly, Chen and Starosta (1996), Lazer, Huber-Kriegle, Lussier, Matei and Peck (2007) argue that intercultural communicative competence is the ability to talk in numerous intercultural conditions which are identified as the understanding of cross-cultural situation efficaciously and to relate it in numerous contexts which are identified as cultural situation too appropriately conducted by the language teachers.

On the other side, in the view of educational context, Huber and Reynolds (2014) point out that intercultural competence is the compilation of attitude, skill, and knowledge as well as the skill of intercultural activities. The activities have made people be always aware of and respect other cultures in a good manner so that the people who are involved in that intercultural encounters or activities can create a good atmosphere when they conduct the intercultural interaction with others. Added to this, Byram (1997) states that individuals who possess the ability to communicate with other people from different cultures, languages, and countries in a foreign language can be called or labeled as an intercultural speaker. Furthermore, Byram (1997) adds three competencies namely linguistics, sociolinguistics, and discourse competence that must be always inserted in a communication to avoid misunderstanding between interlocutors. In other words, it can be meant that becoming an intercultural speaker, one needs to have the capability of intercultural competence along with its elements because it has an essential role as one of the key competencies in this discursive era to live with different people in this world (Sudhoff, 2010; UNESCO, 2006).

Since the intercultural communicative competence is also behold as the most important key competence in the educational context, it is then inevitable that the role of EFL teachers become pivotal too. In the Indonesian context, Madya (2013) argues that Indonesian students are naturally mingled and included in a situation of the process of intercultural talks. This happens because of the condition of Indonesia that has a multiculturalism society (Idris, 2020). Meaning that Indonesian students can be categorized as intercultural students who have achieved and improved their intercultural competence unconsciously. The misunderstanding and miscommunication sometimes appear among the Indonesian students. It is due to the limited understanding of intercultural knowledge owned by them. Hence, the contribution of the EFL or English teachers should be considered as an integral part of the process of learning and teaching in the EFL classroom so that they can minimize those unpredictable and unwanted activities that can create misunderstanding and miscommunication among interlocutors. However, not many EFL or English teachers notice this situation accordingly. This is based on the writer's research conducted in 2018. Therefore, this paper presents the comprehensive insight pertinent to intercultural communicative competence and proposes some elements of ICC that must be possessed first by the EFL or English teachers in order for them to be able to help their students to obtain and develop their ICC properly.

## DISCUSSION

### **What is intercultural communicative competence (ICC)?**

The citizens today, who live in this 21st-century life must behold, feel, and learn of other people from cultures rather than their own cultures (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Furthermore, Chen and Starosta (1996) emphasize that there are five essential parts of the several important trends of the late twentieth century that have been making this world-wide into a "global village". They are in the forms of technology development, globalization of the economy, widespread population migrations, the development of multiculturalism, and de-emphasis on the nations-state. Those five trends are based on the United States context, yet the three formers can be categorized as common issues which can be related to any other countries such as Indonesia (Idris, 2019).

The essential parts of the trends indicate that people are being connected rapidly and easily towards one another. In addition to this, they also give a strong foundation for global society. The world has become interconnected and interdependent as well as the society themselves have become heterogeneous. These developments, therefore, urge people to have intercultural communicative competence (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Besides, Boulding (1988) as cited in Chen and Starosta (1996) adds that intercultural communicative competence has functioned to provide people to be aware of their diverse identities and be able to continue to have a good multicultural coexistence in the global civic culture. It means that this intercultural communicative competence has changed people from being monocultural to multicultural people. As stated by Belay (1993) that this change can be obtained by demonstrating tolerance for differences and respecting others' cultures through communication or talk.

The definition of intercultural communicative competence that relates to foreign language teaching has been coined by Byram (1997) who defines this competence as someone who has the capability to interact with other people from other countries and cultures in a foreign language. Furthermore, Byram (1997) states that people who are involved in such intercultural interaction in a foreign language, they can do a negotiation related to the interaction conducted by them so that the satisfactory between interlocutors can be obtained, and they can act as a linker between people who have their original cultures. Also, they can share their knowledge pertinent to the ability to use the language appropriately and have a basis for gaining a new language as well as an understanding of others effectively. Moreover, Byram (1997) suggests a comprehensive model of intercultural communicative competence in which it has four dimensions or elements namely linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and intercultural competence as well as intercultural awareness which is suggested by Fantini (2000) and that of those competencies should be owned by individuals, and EFL teachers or English teachers are no exception. The following description of ICC competencies will be explained further as follows.

### **The competencies of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) that Indonesian EFL teachers need to have**

As mentioned previously that the EFL or English teachers need to consider the important part of having intercultural communicative competence proposed by Byram (1997) and Fantini (2000), in this session, the competencies of ICC will be described as the following.

The term *linguistic competence* as the first description can be meant as the ability in applying the knowledge regarding the patterns of language standard to make or interpret written as well as a spoken language. This concept has been refined by Byram (1997) from van Ek's (1986) definition who states that linguistic competence is the capability to make and find meaning the utterances meaningfully typed from the patterns of language that concern and bear the traditional meaning. This definition, according to Byram (1997) is still based on a 'native' speaker model, it is, therefore, he refines such definition in the context of an intercultural situation that may refer to a relationship between an intercultural speaker and the native speaker. In addition to this, there is a piece of confronting information about the concept of linguistic competence which is pointed out by Chomsky (1957) who argues that linguistic competence is considered important in accordance with idealization and that speakers know the patterns of their language. In this case, Tienson (1983) disagrees and says that even such concept has contributed to the understanding of language and other psychological phenomena, this concept, based on his opinion, is still less readily accepted than it should have due to some false things said by Chomsky related to linguistic competence. From this notion, it is clear that although the definition of linguistic ability is behold as an important part of the dimension both in writing and speaking in regard to the use of understanding of the patterns of a standard grammar use in the situation of multiculturalism, this ability becomes less accepted in the era 1980s, yet it is still considered essential in teaching and learning process. Hence, this competence in accordance to the role of EFL or English teachers, they must master it at first so that they are able to cope the problem

faced by their students in the classroom as well as they can assist their students in acquiring such competence effectively and properly both in the forms of speaking and writing.

The second which becomes a part of intercultural communicative competence that is *sociolinguistic competence* has been identified as an important dimension or element of communicative competence. Meaning that this competence includes pragmatic learning and the understanding of sociolinguistics related to the usage of the language linguistically and socially as well as appropriately (Mede & Dikilitas, 2015). Looking back in the 1960s about the term 'competence', Chomsky (1957) has different terms related to it that he calls as a 'performance' which means an actual utilization of language in a concrete condition. This definition, however, is then criticized by Campbell and Wales (1970) who state that Chomsky's competence does not include the linguistic capability regarding the use of formal talks that are grammatically not true, yet suitable in relation to the situation within the utterances. Added to this, Canale and Swain (1980) divide the communicative competence into four parts. They are (1) grammatical competence that can be also called as linguistic competence which has a meaning of the acquisition of phonological, syntactic, morphological, and semantic rules; (2) sociolinguistic competence that may refer to the understanding of the features of pragmatic in a variety of speech acts such as socio-cultural conventions, cultural values, and norms in social situations; the third part (3) is discourse competence which means to the ways of combining the grammatical forms and meaning to gain the whole written text; and lastly (4), it is the strategic competence that may refer to the mastery of non-verbal and verbal communication to break down the difficult communication because of the inadequate competence and to improve the effective interaction. Since the sociolinguistic competence is also a part of ICC, Byram (1997) stresses that this ability is seen as the competence to the language meanings that are produced by a communicator both native or not which are taken for accepting by the interlocutor and also that are made as well as negotiated explicitly with the interlocutor. Based on these insights, the EFL or English teachers, besides from its pivotal role in helping their students to live in multicultural situations in the future, need to master this sociolinguistic competence too to solve the obstacles and difficulties obtained by their students.

Thirdly, *discourse competence* is also taken into consideration as an important dimension or element to be had by the EFL or English teachers. This competence, according to Byram (1997), is the strategy of ability in using, discovering, and negotiating for the production and interpretation of both monologues as well as dialogue in the form of intercultural texts for particular purposes. Furthermore, the discourse competence may include (1) much knowledge of and abilities to navigate the sentences of topic/focus, cause/effect, given/new; (2) competence to create structure and control the discourse related to thematic origination, coherence, and cohesion, logical ordering, style and register, rhetorical effectiveness; (3) text design such as the design convention in the community pertaining to how information is structured (e.g., descriptive text, narrative text, and exposition text), how stories, and anecdotes as well as jokes are told, and how written texts are laid out and sequenced (Council of Europe, 2001). Llobera (1996) points out that in the teaching and learning process, a dynamic procedural ability is in action during that situation in the foreign language teaching and learning classroom. Moreover, Llobera (1996) comments on some important things that relate to such a situation namely status, social roles, distance, face and politeness, rheme and theme, given and new information, and genre as well as turn-taking, and also repairing. Those of which are included in the process of the reaching and learning process. Thus, from the mentioned perspectives, the discourse competence is explained, in short, as the competence to understand, make, create, using the strategy to discover, perhaps negotiate, and cultivate the language forms which are longer than usual construct sentences for instances series of events, talks, messages, communications, posters, and many more with correct and proper cohesion, coherence as well as the good organization of rhetoric to compile the ideas. In this sense, the EFL or English teachers have a responsibility

to navigate their students once the students face some problems related to the discourse competence so that they can conduct what the tasks are delivered by their teachers in simple ways in any form of intercultural texts.

The *intercultural competence* as the fourth competence becomes a very essential part to be the next discussion since it is a complex competence in relation to the educational context (Byram, 1997). He gives a comprehensive definition related to intercultural competence which means that people have the capability to communicate using their language with diverse people from different countries as well as cultures from their own. Furthermore, the individuals can make up a communication based on their knowledge about intercultural activities, and their interest in others through showing a good attitude that makes them be open-minded people. Also, their skill of interpreting, discovering, and conducting translation towards other documents may be called another example of intercultural competence too. Here, Byram (1997) argues that there is a link with the teaching of foreign literature in translation, and others. Specifically, he emphasizes that language teaching may include these kinds of engagements with otherness that can be as the goal of and ensure the method that makes the intercultural competence has a value. In this part, Byram (1997) proposes elements of intercultural competence (IC) namely attitude, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness.

The first element, attitude (*savoir etre*), is the sense of curiosity, eagerness, an openness that can suspend the refusal to believe that something is true towards other cultures and belief towards one's own. The objective for EFL or English teachers is that the engagement of (1) equality (not to seek out the profit from others' things), (2) the interest to figure out other views related to phenomenon both from one's own or others' cultures, (3) the willingness to question about the values and presupposition in cultural activities, (4) the readiness to experience and engage with different cultures, (5) conventions of non-verbal and verbal communication, becomes the central part to be attained.

The second element is knowledge (*savoirs*). It relates to the understanding of social groups, their regular activities in one's own towards others' interlocutors' countries, and the process of their individual and/or social talks. To EFL or English teachers regarding this knowledge, the objective is that they should understand the types and cause as well as the process of 'misunderstanding' conducted by the interlocutors of different cultural origin so it can be minimized. Besides, the EFL or English teachers need to know the knowledge of social institutions in one's own and others' interlocutors' countries such as in the forms of learning the education system, and religious institutions, for example. In other words, this intercultural knowledge that should be mastered by the EFL or English teachers is meant as the acquisition of the same period as well as historical institutions and an association between one's own and other interlocutors' countries, their detailed plans in obtaining the relation with other interlocutors from dissimilar country. The third element namely the skills which comprise two skills. The first is the skill of interaction and discovery (*savoir apprehender/faire*). It tells the competence to gain new understanding of a culture and its practice as well as the competence to operate the knowledge, behaviors, and skills under real interaction and communication. Furthermore, this intercultural skill has a pivotal place in the model of Byram's intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The next skill is the skill of relating and interpreting (*savoir comprendre*). This intercultural skill talks about the competence to interpret a sort of document and/or events from other interlocutors who have different cultures and then try to describe them and relate them to documents and/or events from one's own. In this point of view, the EFL or English teachers should utilize their knowledge to explain such sources of 'misunderstanding' if they find it and try to help the other interlocutors solving different perspectives. In addition to this, Byram (1997) states that critical cultural awareness (*savoirs' engager*) is also an important part of his model of ICC. It is the capability to critically evaluate the insights, practices, and the results and/or products in one's own cultures and others and countries based on obvious criteria.

In regard to explaining about what intercultural competence is, Fantini (2000) says that IC is often described with a number of different traits such in the forms of respect, empathy, flexibility, motivation, openness, curiosity, patience, interest, a sense of humor, tolerance for ambiguity, and willingness to suspend judgment towards others. Also, IC is seen as the developmental process and there are at least five elements in it. The five elements which are proposed by Fantini (2000) are awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and language proficiency which is used in the host tongue. Fantini (2000) states that another essential element of IC development is 'awareness' as a part of her model of ICC. It is because intercultural awareness can influence other elements, attitude (affect), knowledge (cognition), and skill (behavior). To be more specific, she explains that a number of interculturalists see awareness (of others and self) as the key element related to the effectiveness and appropriateness interactions. For this reason, she argues that awareness is the most powerful element of her model namely A+ASK quartet. It can be seen through Figure 1.

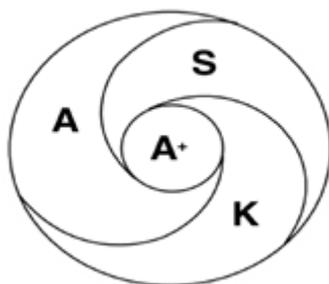


Figure 1. Fantini's (2000) pinwheel model of IC

The above figure illustrates that intercultural awareness becomes central to intercultural competence enhancement proposed by Fantini (2000). And the first three elements promote as well as enhance awareness that is to foster via introspection and reflection while the awareness itself, it can influence and enhance to stimulate the development of the other three elements (Fantini, 2009). Pertaining to the awareness which is in and of the "self" and it always relates to someone or something else, it is, hence, called as the "self"-awareness that refers to all awareness (Fantini, 2000). Furthermore, she says that awareness may involve exploring, experiencing, and experimenting. In other words, to the EFL or English teachers towards this intercultural awareness, they should comprehend this competence since it has a positive development that can lead their deeper cognition, affect, and behavior. It is also important to relate to cross-cultural understanding so that they can minimize misunderstanding and perhaps obstacles faced by their students in the process of teaching and learning in the EFL classroom. As the last element coined by Fantini (2000), the language proficiency is also a fundamental element in her model of IC. Yet, this competence is not noticed seriously in the model of intercultural competence. In this sense, Fantini (2000) emphasizes that this proficiency must be considered fundamental regarding the enhancement of intercultural competence even if it is not equal to it. She further gives an example of it that can enhance all the other aspects of IC both quantitatively and qualitatively. It can be seen through the proficiency in a second language acquisition which causes one's perspective, perception, expressions, conceptualizes behavior, and interaction with other people in the process of one's first tongue. Added to this, it can also provide an alternative communication way appropriately towards the second language used. In short, based on these two theories both from Byram (1997) and Fantini (2000), the urgency of having the competencies of ICC is a must that should be owned by the Indonesian EFL teachers. Once they have the competencies, they will easily handle the students who have different cultures from their own. For instance, in the context of international or national schools, the Indonesian EFL teachers, of course, will meet a number of students who have different backgrounds of cultures, values,

languages, and nations. Thus, if the Indonesian EFL teachers do not have the competencies of ICC, they will face difficulties in teaching due to the students' raising hand using a left hand.

## CONCLUSION

To summarize, the incremental attention of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) or in short intercultural competence (IC) cannot be neglected since this competence has a fundamental influence on individuals' attitudes, skills, and knowledge. As seen from the writer's research related to ICC in 2018 in the educational context, this competence should be owned by the EFL or English teachers who are considered able to aid their students in learning and teaching process in the EFL classroom. This competence which is seen as an integral part of this twenty-first-century life should be well-acknowledged thoroughly and comprehensively. It cannot be ignored respectively. This competence has also an important place for the EFL or English teachers related to their language development to assist their students so that they can live and mingle with other people with numerous identities as well as other elements such as cultures, languages, and nations. Henceforth, this present study focuses on the elements of intercultural communicative competence namely linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and intermural competence in which this intercultural competence (IC) comprises five dimensions namely attitude; knowledge; a skill of interaction and discovery as well as skill of relating and interpreting; and cultural awareness.

Moreover, intercultural awareness is also considered a very important element of IC since it has a significant influence towards other elements, attitude (or affect), knowledge (or cognition), skill (behavior) as well as target language proficiency as another additional element of her model of IC. Related to the model of IC, the writer more concerns about one element namely intercultural awareness that should be had by the EFL or English teachers. In short, once the EFL or English teachers have those kinds of competencies, it can be said that they are able to cope the misunderstanding and/or obstacles in their life so that they are ready to mingle with other different people who have a varied background of cultures, languages, values, norms, and/or nations. Besides, they can also help their students when the students face some problems related to the understanding or interpreting documents or events which are not from their own cultures. In other words, the students will be very easy to live in any intercultural activities both inside or outside the classroom and they can also be very easy to not judge (negative judgment) to other people directly when they confront different perspectives or views with them. In this sense, they can minimize or control their ego and see that awareness towards others insight is very important.

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