

EFL Coursebooks: A Path to Reach Intercultural Communicative Competence

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Abstract: The globalisation of English and its rapid use among communities of speakers around the world has led the localisation of the language and the development of many varieties of English. The idea of communicative competence (CC) is being challenged through globalisation and needs to transform into intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in which EFL learners require a competence that combines both linguistic and socio-cultural skills to suit the context of the communication situation. In light of the necessity to equip EFL learners with ICC, EFL coursebooks can be used as source of exposure to the target or international cultures. This paper focuses on how EFL coursebooks can be utilized in promoting the learners' ICC by using Byram's framework as a bench mark.

Keywords: *intercultural communicative competence, EFL coursebook, intercultural communication*

Abstrak : Globalisasi bahasa Inggris dan penggunaannya yang cepat di antara komunitas penutur di seluruh dunia telah menyebabkan lokalisasi bahasa dan perkembangan banyak ragam bahasa Inggris. Ide kompetensi komunikatif ditantang melalui globalisasi dan perlu diubah menjadi kompetensi komunikatif antar budaya di mana pemelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing memerlukan kompetensi yang menggabungkan keterampilan linguistik dan sosial budaya agar sesuai dengan konteks situasi komunikasi. Mengingat kebutuhan untuk membekali pemelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing dengan kompetensi komunikatif antar budaya, buku pelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing dapat digunakan sebagai sumber paparan budaya target atau budaya internasional. Makalah ini berfokus pada bagaimana buku pelajaran EFL dapat digunakan dalam mempromosikan kompetensi komunikatif antar budaya dengan menggunakan kerangka Byram sebagai tolak ukur.

Kata-kata kunci: *kompetensi komunikatif antar budaya, buku pelajaran EFL, komunikasi antar budaya*

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Globalisation and the new technology bring people from different cultural and linguistic background closer together and English is as a means of communication. The data show around 1.27 billion people are now using English around the world and English has an official role in more than 100 countries and territories (Duffin, 2020). Gradol (2006) observes that “an inexorable trend in the use of global English is that fewer interactions now involve a native-speaker.” The majority of international travels are from non-English speaking countries to non-English speaking countries requiring the use of international language, which is in most cases English. The globalisation of English and its rapid use among communities of speakers around the world has led the localisation of the language and the development of many varieties of English. Many communities of speakers around the world use English, adopt it to decode and express their cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2013). This phenomenon has attracted a significant degree of scholarly attention, leading to various proposals for the ‘competencies’ that are now required for successful intercultural communication.

In the area of foreign language teaching, scholars have realised that the main goal in teaching foreign language should shift away from its focus on the development of native-speaker competence towards more realistic competencies to facilitate communication between speakers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. As a result, English Language Teaching (ELT) should be across national and ethnic boundaries and be looked at in a transnational and global context (Risanger, 2007). Therefore, the idea of communicative competence (CC) is being challenged through globalisation and needs to transform into intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in which EFL learners require a competence that combines both linguistic and socio-cultural skills to suit the context of the communication situation.

The importance of developing intercultural dimension in language teaching has been notified by several countries. Regulations or policies have been issued related to the goal of teaching and learning a foreign language. The Common European Framework (CEF), a document issued by the Council of Europe with the aim “to improve the quality of communication among Europeans of different languages and cultural backgrounds” (CEF, 2002, xi), states

that one of the main aims of foreign language teaching today is “to promote mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication” and to develop learners’ ability “to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries”. In the Indonesian context, the emergence of the 2013 curriculum is the reaction to the fact that Indonesia is following the respective years of the global world and its problematic issues. For this reason, as the major goal of the curriculum aims to prepare Indonesian learners to have the ability to live as individuals and citizens who are faithful, productive, creative, innovative, and effective and able to contribute to the life of society, nation, state, and world civilization, the English part must support the major goal of the curriculum. After learning English, the learners are expected to be able to communicate with others in different contexts of communication. It can be inferred that to reach this goal the learners must be equipped with intercultural communicative competence. The ability to communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences by engaging in open, appropriate, and effective interactions across cultures, will finally lead the acquisition of global competence (OECD, 2018).

In light of the necessity to equip EFL learners with ICC to cope with the variety and complex social contexts, teaching materials must be designed to include cultural and intercultural elements as well as relevant pedagogical strategies. Among these materials, coursebooks appoint favoured use among the teachers, especially in Indonesia regarding their practicality and effectivity in serving the basis for language input in the classroom (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). Consequently, coursebooks determine a lot towards the acquisition of learner’ ICC. This paper is intended to discuss on what ICC means and how EFL coursebook can be utilized to develop learners’ ICC.

Defining Intercultural Communicative Competence

It is seen that the concept of ICC is variously defined by different scholars (e.g., Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000; Sinicrope et al., 2007), resulting in the confusion in addressing the same issue. In this discussion, ICC can be understood as the ability which enables one to effectively and appropriately interact in a

language other than one's native language with others from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It consists of language competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence) and intercultural competence (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness) that help one to be able to successfully integrate in a multicultural society (adapted from Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000; Sinicrope et al., 2007). From different views on ICC, it is seen that various models of ICC have been proposed to address many aspects of ICC, e.g., model of ICC (Byram, 1997); IC model (Fantini, 2000); pyramid model of IC (Deardorff, 2006).

Among those various models, Byram's (1997) model of ICC is one of the most comprehensive frameworks to develop as well as evaluate learners' ICC in different contexts. Byram (1997) views intercultural communicative competence as a combination of two major competencies: communicative competence and intercultural competence. Communicative competence is represented by linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competences. Meanwhile, to clarify the concept of IC, six dimensions, which are called *savoirs*, are proposed and some educational objectives regarding each of them are defined. The first component, *savoirs* (knowledge) concerns knowledge of one's own national identity and culture and also those of others. It includes, but is not limited to historical, geographical, political, and social knowledge. Among the objectives for this dimension is also to know about the levels of formality in different social interactions. The second component, *savoir etre* (attitudes) which is fundamental to IC is about curiosity and openness, and willingness to devalue one's own presuppositions and valuing other perspectives. The objectives also include a willingness to take opportunities in order to engage with otherness, which is different from seeking out the exotic. The relationship between the first two components is not one of cause and effect as more knowledge does not necessarily result in positive attitudes. The third component, *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating) is the ability to compare and contrast cultural issues in one's own culture and a foreign culture. It is also about the ability to identify ethnocentric perspectives, and areas of misunderstanding in interactions. The fourth and the fifth components are respectively *savoir apprendre* (skills of discovery) and

savoir faire (skills of interaction). The main objective in the last two components is not only to acquire new knowledge about cultures from various sources, but also to operate one's knowledge in real-time communication. An intercultural speaker knows how to draw on his/her attitudes and skills in order to ensure understanding and avoid dysfunction. The last component, *savoirs' engager* (critical cultural awareness), is about the ability to critically evaluate cultural practices, products, and perspectives. This evaluation needs to be based on explicit ideological criteria.

What must be indicated is that in the context of intercultural communication Byram's communicative competence and intercultural competence are mutually related, in that communicative competence is not complete without the *savoirs*. Moreover, the degree to which the *savoirs* themselves are developed conditions the quality of the learner's communicative competence. For instance, knowledge also embraces elements of language, *savoir etre* may determine linguistic success while *savoir apprendre/faire* may also serve the purpose of language learning.

The Significance of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural communication as a phenomenon is really universal and it takes place everywhere. Migrations, the rapid development of science and technology, the widening world markets and the globalization of the world economy all demand people who are capable of intercultural communication as well as professional expertise. Above all, intercultural communicative competence is the key to successful intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication sometimes breaks down in real-life conversations, not because of the non-native speaker's errors in syntax, or their inaccurate pronunciation in the target language, but because of their pragmatic incompetence, which leads to pragmatic failure. In other words, they may be unable to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context. In intercultural communication, some English learners may know the literal meaning of an utterance, but may fail to understand its contextual meaning, or fail to accurately understand the speaker's intended force. It may also happen that in intercultural communication being unaware

of each other's respective social and cultural tradition, the interlocutors may participate in the communication with their own cultural values and use their own cultural systems to interpret the new situations they experience.

To cope with such context, competency and willingness to understand what the other communicates embracing empathy, respect, tolerance, sensitivity or flexibility, not the disposition to impose one's values and norms onto the other, are required. In Byram's (1997) view, a person who has developed ICC is able to build relationships while speaking in the foreign language, communicates effectively, taking into consideration his own and the other person's viewpoint and needs, mediates interactions between people of different backgrounds, and strives to continue developing communicative skills.

Intercultural Communicative Competence in ELT

One of the predominant goals in FL education is to help FL learners communicate effectively within the cultural context of the target language or other appropriate contexts (Kramsch, 1991). However, culture differences may inhibit communication. When communicating with speakers of other language varieties, EFL learners requires a competence that combines both linguistic and socio-cultural skills to suit the context of communication situation. Therefore, the main goal of ELT should be shifted away from its focus on the development of native-speaker competence towards more realistic competencies to facilitate communication between speakers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

To accommodate this requirement, ELT needs to facilitate the learners by providing the learners with context of communication. In terms of the development of ICC, Damen (1987, p.5) emphasises that FL classrooms create a specialized setting for fostering the given skill; and, for some FL learners it is the only place where the target or international culture can be experienced. Similarly, Byram (1991, p. 113) outlines that "the inclusion in intercultural communicative competence of critical cultural awareness as an educational aim of FL teaching is crucial". This standpoint is also reiterated by Alptekin and Alptekin (1990, p. 21) in that "a language and its culture are two inextricable related entities, and as such should be taught together". Teaching culture can be considered as a basic and vital component of the learners'

acquisition of ICC. On the one hand, language is used to convey cultural feelings, values and interact with people; on the other side, culture is rooted in the language. Therefore, language teaching always means the teaching of both language and culture and a language can not be learnt without its culture since it is the essential context for language usage (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Stern, 1992). Further, Tseng (2002) states that language learning success depends on cultural knowledge acquisition: language learners acquire cultural background knowledge to communicate and enhance their knowledge.

Inserting culture into ELT offers resources for the learners to experience the world from another's viewpoint (Kirkgoz & Aggam, 2011). This idea is in line with Byram, Nichols, and Stevens (2001) who also observe that the insertion of cultural aspects in ELT can prepare the learners for better and well-informed national and international life. It can thus enhance their acceptance and understanding between cultures. Thereby, it enables them to communicate in various communicative contexts appropriately and effectively (Kirkgoz & Aggam, 2011; Mahmood, Asghar, & Hussain, 2012).

What culture should be taught? As ICC should be developed among EIL learners by equipping them with linguistic, cultural behaviour, awareness of differences, and strategies for coping with such differences which will enable them to communicate effectively with others (Hyde 1998), ELT should be across national and ethnic boundaries and be looked at in a transnational and global context (Risanger, 2007). It means that learners should be exposed to various cultures. Learners can be exposed to the cultures which Cortazi and Jin (1999) refer to: *source culture*, *target culture* and *international target culture*. By using the framework of English as a global language, the integration of both source and international target culture in ELT should be enhanced for a better intercultural communicative competence in which learners will encounter real-life cross-cultural communications.

The teaching of culture will not be limited to the transmission of information about the people of the target or international culture and their general attitudes, as traditional thought in FL education suggests. Instead, drawing on Byram's model, ELT should be concerned with following goals: to help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures; to help them acquire

interest in and curiosity about ‘otherness’, and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people’s perspectives; to help learners to understand how intercultural interaction takes place; how social identities are part of all interaction; how their perceptions of other people and others people’s perceptions of them influence the success of communication; and how they can find out for themselves more about the people with whom they are communicating. Therefore, an appropriate pedagogic model and instructional materials are urgently needed to accommodate the case of English as a means of intercultural communication. This model should take into account some criteria. Firstly, successful bilinguals with intercultural insights and knowledge should serve as pedagogic models in English as an International Language (EIL) rather than the monolingual native speaker (Alptekin, 2002). Secondly, the ELT pedagogy should be one of global appropriacy and local appropriation, in that it should prepare learners ‘to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures’ (Kramsch and Sullivan 1996: 211). In terms of instructional materials and activities, they should involve both local and international contexts that are familiar and relevant to learners’ lives. In addition, instructional materials and activities should have suitable discourse samples pertaining to native and non-native speaker interactions, as well as non-native and non-native speaker interactions. Discourse displaying exclusive native speaker use should be kept to a minimum, as it is chiefly irrelevant for many learners in terms of potential use in authentic settings (Widdowson 1998).

Utilizing Coursebooks as A Means of Developing Learner’s ICC

Coursebook continues to be an integral part of language teaching and learning in the classroom setting and and it is the most favored used especilly in Indonesia context due to its practicality. As coursebook can be resource of materials, it is believed that coursebook can give influence on learner’s language development. Regarding to ICC, coursebooks are the representation of culture which can be a source of exposure to language and culture for learners (Hall, 1997), and a vehicle to reach the ICC as well. FL coursebook “present the country in a nutshell” (Risager, 1991, p.191), they

can have a great impact on FL learners’ intercultural knowledge and skills, as well as on their attitudes towards the target culture.

A limited range of studies has been conducted on how learning materials especially EFL coursebooks develop the learners’ ICC by utilizing Byram’s framework as a benchmark. Kiss (2017) investigated on how locally produced coursebook series, which claimed were designed based on an in-depth analysis of the learners’ and intercultural communication need, developed Chinese university students’ ICC. He found out that the coursebooks did not meaningfully develop the learners’ ICC due to lack of tasks that directed the learners to notice the culture. He highlighted that as texts (reading text, poems and jokes) were not ideologically neutral, they were culturally rich and had potential to be used in developing the ICC as long as they were supplemented with tasks that give the learners opportunities to discover, compare and construct the meaning of the culture.

In the same vein, Arslan (2018), who explored an EFL self-study coursebook for university-level learners in Turkey whose language skill was not in an advance level, found out that most of the activities offered in the coursebook only directed the learners to reach the knowledge level which she claimed to be the first level of ICC. Based on this finding, she inferred that the level of ICC was parallel with the language skill level.

Seemed to prove what Arslan had concluded, Feeney and Gajaseneni (2020) examined the effectiveness of the reading short stories to develop grade 7 Thai students whose language skill were in B1 level. The short stories used in the study were written by well-known native English speaker authors and thematically multicultural. The result showed a positive gain in the overall development of ICC, with the most progress in the interpreting and identifying dimension. The most important thing that should be highlighted from this study is that the role of pre-reading and post-reading discussions that aided in increasing the students’ confidence to compare and contrast. This is in the same vein as what had been stated by Kiss (2017) that texts are culturally rich and have potential to be used in achieving ICC as long as they are supplemented with activities that direct the learners to actively engage to recognize, interpret, compare and contrast between the learners’ culture and the target or international culture.

The unavailability of the target or international culture made the EFL coursebook for high school examined by Rosidi and Purwati (2017) failed to promote the learners' ICC. The coursebook which was written by Indonesian authors and published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia much concerns on local wisdom or culture and put aside the intercultural competence. Most of the learning tasks offered in the coursebook were directed to promote communicative competence. While reflecting from Byram's ICC model both communicative competence and intercultural competence should be mutually related. From those empirical researches, it can be drawn up that to be able to facilitate the learners in promoting ICC, a coursebook should provide culturally rich materials representing both the source and target or international culture.

However, simply telling the learners where the culture comes from or whose culture reflected by picture will not guide them to develop the knowledge, skill and attitude dimensions. Any teaching and learning approaches which simply aim to transfer facts of a target culture limit the potential of learning and the construction of cultural knowledge and understanding (Liddicoat, 2002; Kiss, 2017). Whereas, from the constructivist perspective learning is defined as the result of mental construction and the process in which learners build new ideas or concepts based on their prior knowledge and experience. Therefore, to better construct the learner's accomplishment and understanding, a task-oriented approach to cultural teaching is strongly suggested. The cultural information in EFL coursebook should be wrapped in a package with learning task and activities that give opportunities for the learners to explore, interpret, compare and contrast between their culture and the target or international culture (Chai & Lv, 2019; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1994). In addition, to assure whether the coursebook provides learning activities leading the learners to achieve certain ICC dimension, Byram's ICC model as framework can used as a benchmark of analysis.

CONCLUSION

Intercultural communicative competence is one of the most vital skills for people in the 21st century to survive in the multicultural communication context and to prepare the learners it should be the aim of foreign language instruction. Coursebook as one of

part in language teaching is one of the media that can be used. It is source of exposure to various cultures. The learning tasks offered by the coursebook will facilitate the learners to acquire the intercultural communicative competence.

The implication is that sometimes coursebook does not provide enough learning tasks facilitating learners to reach the ICC dimension. Hence, teacher's role is needed in redesigning or planning the classroom activities leading to ICC acquisition. Due to that, it is suggested for further study to dig more information about teacher's perception or knowledge regarding the ICC.

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