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Intercultural Communication Competence Approach in Inclusive Writing BIPA Learning in Surabaya Higher Education

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Abstrak

Kata Kunci:
BIPA;
Inklusivitas;
Keterampilan
menulis;
Intercultural
Kompetensi
Komunikasi;
Pembelajaran
bahasa.

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi inklusivitas BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing) dalam pendidikan tinggi, dengan fokus pada kelas dan keterampilan menulis melalui perspektif *Intercultural Communication Competence* (ICC). Penelitian ini bertujuan menyoroti pentingnya mengakui dan menghargai keberagaman dalam kelas pembelajaran BIPA untuk menciptakan suasana kelas yang mendukung bagi mahasiswa internasional. Penelitian ini menggambarkan berbagai strategi pengajaran yang dapat diterapkan selama kelas menulis, seperti penulisan kolaboratif, *peer review*, dan kelompok kategorisasi tema yang relevan, untuk mempelajari gaya belajar dan budaya yang berbeda. Metodologi penelitian dalam riset ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan melakukan wawancara semi-terstruktur kepada empat dosen yang mengajar kelas menulis. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis dengan menggunakan metode tematik analisis. Temuan penelitian ini adalah pengetahuan dan keterampilan antarbudaya, sikap, dan kesadaran budaya kritis dari perspektif dosen BIPA dalam kelas menulis menggunakan ICC memainkan peran penting. Rekomendasi dari penelitian ini adalah dosen perlu mengintegrasikan ICC ke dalam praktik pengajaran mereka untuk setiap keterampilan bahasa karena dapat mempromosikan lingkungan pendidikan yang lebih inklusif. Namun, penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk memastikan efektivitas ICC pada keterampilan bahasa lainnya.

Abstract

Keywords:
BIPA;
Inclusivity;
Writing skills;
Intercultural
Communication
Competence;
Language learning.

This study explores the BIPA (Indonesian language for non-native speakers) inclusivity in higher education, focusing on writing classes and skills through the perspective of *Intercultural Communication Competence* (ICC). The study aims to highlight the importance of acknowledging and valuing diversity in the BIPA learning class to create a supportive classroom climate for international students. The research depicts various teaching strategies that can be implemented during writing class, such as collaborative writing, peer review, and relevant themes categorisation groups, to learn different learning styles and cultures. Research methodology employs qualitative method by conducting semi-structured interviews to four lecturers who teach writing classes. The data was analysed by thematic analysis. The findings of this study are intercultural knowledge and skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness from BIPA lecturer perspectives in the writing class using ICC play pivotal roles. The recommendation from this research is that lecturers need to integrate ICC into their teaching practices for every language skill because it can promote a more inclusive educational environment. However,

further research is required to ensure the effectiveness of ICC in other language skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusion has become the most popular word these days in education because educators have been trying to make sure students are equitable treatment for all students within the classroom environment, this also includes foreign language teaching and learning. In foreign teaching and learning, there traditionally emphasises four essential skills, namely writing, reading, speaking, and listening. However, recent scholars (Degtiarova et al., 2023; Pawlak, 2021; Rivers, 2018) believe that teaching grammar is also equally vital since it supports students' language proficiency and comprehension.

Grammar can be taught in every language skill, including writing classes. Writing classes can assist international students in order to erase ambiguous meanings and have the capacity to create an infinite set of sentences and a substantial enabling skill (Ferris, 2016). Nevertheless, because of this reason, many foreign language teachers tend to focus on skill proficiency without considering the inclusiveness of their teaching approach. Meanwhile, inclusivity is also crucial for this context as interaction and collaboration among students are important points to support successful foreign language teaching and learning (Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2020).

This research context focuses on BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing*) or Indonesian for non-native speakers, as the specific context for exploring inclusivity in language learning. Teaching a language to international people can be a soft diplomacy for a country, which is required to be inclusive as students are from diverse nations and have extremely different backgrounds or cultures (Hill, 2016; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). This means that BIPA classroom activities require respect diversity and inclusion. Moreover, the growth of the communicative approach utilising Bahasa Indonesia or Indonesian topic has been rising due to many reasons, such as academic, business, daily life, or travels (Isnaini et al., 2021). However, numerous BIPA teachers (Nisa et al., 2022; Nurlina & Israhayu, 2014; Nurramdhani et al., 2024) prefer to focus on developing materials or learning media instead of facilitating BIPA learning to be more inclusive for their students. Therefore, the objective of this study is to evaluate strategies to make BIPA more inclusive by using Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) from teachers' perspectives, particularly in writing classes.

The significance of this study builds cultural awareness by integrating ICC into BIPA classes, provides insights that can be applied in other language learning contexts, and develops writing abilities through intercultural perspectives, which can assist in communicating with diverse contexts. In doing so, we not only enhance writing skills but also promote a more holistic understanding of communication that exceeds linguistic boundaries, preparing students to engage with diverse audiences and values in their future endeavours. This is where the role of ICC in writing becomes central, as it offers both the theoretical foundation and the practical framework for integrating cultural understanding into the process of language learning.

ICC has emerged as a crucial concept in language learning, particularly in writing, where cultural understanding significantly influences communication effectiveness. ICC refers to the ability of individuals to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from other cultural backgrounds. According to Byram (2020), ICC consists of several components: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. These elements equip language learners to navigate complex intercultural interactions by understanding cultural differences, interpreting cultural cues, and adapting communication strategies to diverse audiences. As a mode of expression, writing provides a unique platform to internalise and operationalize ICC, as it requires writers to consider cultural nuances when structuring ideas and delivering messages.

ICC bridges cultural gaps in writing, allowing writers to address their target audience's expectations, norms, and values. Writing is a linguistic skill and a socio-cultural activity where language and culture intersect (Hyland, 2015). Writers must have cultural sensitivity and adaptability to tailor their text according to the cultural context of their readers. For instance, understanding politeness conventions, cultural symbols, or theoretical structures is essential for producing writing that resonates across cultural boundaries. This is especially true in contexts such as writing essays, reports, or creative texts, where the representation of cultural identity and values plays a significant role in how the text is perceived. Thus, ICC becomes a linguistic competence and a critical tool for effective cross-cultural communication through writing.

However, integrating ICC into writing involves its own set of challenges and opportunities. A key challenge is the disparity between the cultural framework of the writer and the audience. Writers often struggle to convey their messages effectively when their cultural assumptions conflict with those of their readers. Similarly, linguistic barriers, such as limited vocabulary or difficulty understanding cultural idioms, can hinder the application of ICC in writing (Kim & Penry Williams, 2021). Another challenge lies in the structural

differences in writing conventions across cultures, which can lead to misinterpretation or loss of meaning. On the other hand, writing also offers opportunities for cultural exploration and expression. This enables writers to reflect on their cultural values and contrast them with those of others, fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Moreover, task-based writing exercises, such as cross-cultural reflective essays or culturally themed creative writing, provide a platform for learners to practice and enhance their ICC skills.

From a pedagogical perspective, writing activities can be designed to promote ICC among language learners actively. Integrating culturally rich materials, such as texts that depict cultural practices or highlight intercultural conflicts, can help students develop a nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. For example, learners can be tasked with writing assignments that compare cultural traditions or analyse culturally specific issues. Reflective writing can deepen their awareness by encouraging them to examine their cultural biases and assumptions (Sudirman, 2024). Educators also play a pivotal role as facilitators, guiding students to approach their writing from an intercultural perspective by offering feedback that emphasizes cultural sensitivity. This approach improves linguistic accuracy and builds the learners' capacity to communicate effectively in multicultural contexts.

Integrating ICC into writing learning is essential for equipping students to navigate cultural diversity through written communication (Idris & Widyantoro, 2019). One effective approach is using cross-cultural texts as teaching materials, which expose students to different cultural norms, practices, and perspectives. Reflective writing exercises can also be employed, encouraging students to compare and contrast their own cultural values with those of others. This not only fosters critical cultural awareness but also enhances their ability to articulate ideas in ways that are sensitive to cultural differences. Furthermore, cross-cultural writing assignments, such as composing letters, essays, or articles targeted at a multicultural audience, provide students with practical opportunities to apply ICC in real-world contexts, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and adapt their communication styles accordingly.

The role of educators in developing ICC through writing is essential. Teachers act as facilitators who guide students in identifying cultural nuances and understanding the social dynamics that influence written communication. Teachers help students refine their writing to reflect cultural sensitivity by providing structured feedback and creating a supportive environment. Moreover, fostering empathy through writing activities is integral to this process. Through careful mentoring, teachers encourage students to consider

diverse perspectives and engage with different cultural contexts. This approach enhances linguistic proficiency and equips students with the intercultural awareness and adaptability necessary for effective communication in a globalized world.

According to the 1945 Constitution (UUD) chapter 28H number 2, everyone has the right to get easier access to education, including opportunities and treatments to achieve equality during the learning process, so it becomes a priority direction for Indonesian development. This mandate is included for BIPA learners, even though they are international people. BIPA is a learning program created years ago by the Indonesian government to address the needs of foreign speakers with a growing interest in learning the Indonesian language and culture. Many scholars (Rohimah, 2018; Septiana et al., 2023; H. I. Suyitno, 2022; I. Suyitno et al., 2019) believe that over the years, the BIPA program has developed both informal and formal institutions and students have various learning goals, for example, academic, business, or daily conversation purposes. In other words, taking BIPA classes for some students is a vital decision since it is the only way to accelerate their language acquisition, which will be useful for their academic and professional lives (Septiana et al., 2023). Thus, a BIPA class has a high value for international students.

Since BIPA students are from various nations, it is essential to emphasise inclusivity during the learning process. In this research context, students are mostly from China, Japan, South Korea, India, Madagascar, Yaman, Turkey, Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Inclusion in BIPA means a principled approach to focus on exploring learning barriers and identifying ways to erase them for the students' benefits (Wei, 2024; Шамгонова, 2024). It can be reached in many ways, one of them is by opting for proper methods, approaches, learning activities or media, but Wei (2024) argues that translanguaging pedagogy is a solution for inclusion and social justice in foreign language learning. However, applying translanguaging can have small positive correlations since this is hard to connect language, attitudes, and practices (Spyridonos et al., 2024). Hence, this study chose ICC to support inclusion in BIPA.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs qualitative methodology in order to analyse the connection between inclusivity in BIPA learning, particularly in writing class and ICC. Research in ICC aims to identify the influence of variables during the process of the ICC (Arasaratnam et al., 2010). Arasaratnam et al. (2010) have five key standards of intercultural competence in the class: empathy, motivation, global attitude, experience, and interaction

involvement. This method is utilised to obtain information regarding the writing classes using ICC at the BIPA department in one of the state universities in Surabaya.

For data collection, this research opted for a purposive sampling technique to invite participants with specific criteria (Bakalbasioglu, 2020). The researchers conducted interviews with four BIPA writing lecturers to question their approach, methods, and learning media that they applied in their writing classes because in this research context, which is categorised as phenomenology research, can minimally involve three people (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The criteria of interviewees are BIPA writing class lecturers in higher education, have a degree in language teaching, and teach multicultural students for at least four years. This is because the length of experiences can build stories and evaluations to improve their teaching skills and knowledge from literature or discussions with other experts (Bakalbasioglu, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Moreover, in order to gain a deep understanding, this research is involving a small number of participants. Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that qualitative research should have at least six respondents in the interviews. Nevertheless, the exact number of participants does not matter as the aim of qualitative research is to acquire a profound understanding of a certain phenomenon regardless the number of participants (Dworkin, 2024).

In this context, BIPA teachers may experience or observe significant transformation in terms of inclusivity after implementing ICC or not. For this reason, purposive sampling is more convenient. In addition, we have a good relationship with the respondents as we worked together in the same institution. By selecting respondents whom we know personally and professionally, biases may arise which might affect the objectivity of this study (Ahmed, 2024). To tackle this issue, we asked open-ended questions in interviews, such as *“How do you define intercultural competence in the context of your writing classes?”*, *“In what ways do you think a global attitude enhances students’ writing skills and intercultural understanding?”*, and many more. Therefore, participants are able to express themselves freely and the interviewer cannot impose their answers (Podsakoff et al., 2024).

The interviews are semi-structured because this study performs a phenomenological analysis and the data from interviews are described and interpreted phenomena from respondents’ experiences or perspectives in terms of ICC in their writing meetings (Bob & Liz, 2010). Semi-structured interviews allow interviewers to dig into information deeply, so it is able to minimise uncertainties. Furthermore, each participant is interviewed for no longer than 60 minutes; all interviews are approximately 30—45 minutes as this is the ideal duration to keep the interviewees focused on the

discussion (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Another member has prepared and checked a set of open-ended questions for the interviews. Each question is adjusted and elaborated based on the situation while interviewing participants to gather information.

After that, the data will be analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the categorisation and link of aspects from the primary data to gain final interpretation and the meaning of the case (Bob & Liz, 2010; Creswell & Poth, 2016). In other words, good explanations and stories from BIPA teachers are required here to get the meaning of the data and the relationship between different parts from their experiences in teaching writing classes and implementing ICC. To do so, the data analysis should follow some procedures, which are coding the interview transcripts and categorising the themes to analyse the meaning, so it can be seen the patterns of the former interviews (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Although the explanation is a word-based analysis and limits the richness of the summary data (Guest et al., 2012). To minimise this, the theoretical basis should be strengthened using various resources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section will convey the interview results and discuss them based on Byram's framework. It is divided into three parts: intercultural knowledge and skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness from BIPA lecturer perspectives in the writing class using ICC.

Intercultural knowledge and skills

BIPA lecturers understand intercultural implementation well in their classes because their students come from various nations and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, most of them graduated with Indonesian language education or international education majors, so they have learned how to treat diversity in the class. For example, Lecturer B said that,

I have applied estafet writing to make my students engage and interact with each other. I am also fully aware that this can build inclusivity in my class.

Estafet writing is an active learning technique for writing, which is continued again one after the other and effectively aids students to learn from each other (Muliadi et al., 2023). However, this cannot be implemented to every level because some words would be abstract and not be connected or concrete senses with the latter sentences from former writers (Betti, 2022). Thus, Lecturer A preferred to communicate interactively with students. He said,

I preferred to assist students who are slow learners through interactive communication. Then, I measure their abilities by answering some questions, filling in the blank text, or constructing sentences individually.

While in-person assistance may be helpful for students, teamwork skills and inclusion in their classes need to be questioned because there is no social interaction

among students. Meanwhile, creating a more diverse and inclusive classroom environment can improve their social abilities through collaboration (Jacquart et al., 2019; Ruggs & Hebl, 2012). In other words, the teaching methods that lecturers use are able to make or fail either accessible or not for diverse students.

Another alternative to enriching students' intercultural knowledge and skills is learning media utilisation. This occurs in Lecturer C's writing class. She said,

I teach two different classes. One is from diverse nations and backgrounds, whereas the other is from the same country. In both, I usually use different learning media to attract them and take a direct teaching approach. So they will experience fun learning. I even try to make them feel like they are not studying.

Involving learning media in ICC can assist students in compellingly comprehending the materials since this improves their receptive and active skills simultaneously (Chau et al., 2024). Nevertheless, learning media is not the only option to apply ICC because the lesson plan and learning approaches play crucial roles simultaneously in shaping intercultural knowledge and skills in the diverse language class (DeWitt & Chan, 2019; Hoff, 2020; Yonata, 2022). As a result, lecturers are required to innovatively collaborate with other tools, so that ICC goals can be reached.

Attitudes

Building attitudes is challenging since BIPA students have their prior perceptions, behaviours, and understanding before starting the lesson (Isnaini et al., 2021; McCOLL, 2005; Rivers, 2018; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). Attitudes in ICC are constructed in three parts—cognitive (beliefs and stereotypes), affective (positive and negative feelings), and behavioral orientations (willingness to communicate) (Xuan & Yihong, 2017). Because of this, BIPA lecturers need to set the scene by telling their students about certain circumstances in Indonesia, particularly local cultures (Hoff, 2020). This is linked to Lecturer C, who applied tolerance and empathy as disclaimers and cognitive information before explaining the materials.

Tolerance and empathy should be taught in the first meeting as a disclaimer that past and current situations are totally different. This is given to countries that have had terrible experiences in the past. I usually provide additional explanations like that to my students in BIPA 4.

According to this explanation, it can minimise stereotypes because this is closely related to the language attitudes of cultural groups (Xuan & Yihong, 2017), so tolerance and empathy advocate curiosity and openness during the learning process. In other words, ICC understanding is necessary for BIPA lecturers.

Likewise, Lecturer B added that respect and basic knowledge or skills about empathy are necessary for ICC implementation to shape students' language attitudes.

Respect, knowledge, and skills are crucial because, with knowledge and skills, we can value every diversity that exists around us. As an example of empathy in my writing class, I usually do peer teaching. I suggest outstanding students assist mediocre students so that they can work together to master a certain writing topic. As a result, they grow and support each other.

Respecting each other is pivotal for BIPA students in ICC application. This aims to ensure they are able to implement that ability (behavioural orientation) as a tool in an intercultural environment class (Lee et al., 2023; Xuan & Yihong, 2017). Nonetheless, not all lecturers comprehend the concept of attitudes in ICC. Consequently, in implementing it, they tend to focus on the domains of affection, cognition, and behaviour of their students through students' interests and preferences (Bella et al., 2021). In other words, without respect and basic knowledge or skills of diversity in intercultural contexts, students are unable to achieve language attitudes in the class.

This argument is connected to Lecturer D, who said,

Empathy and respect for cultural understanding should be explained to support inclusive and fun learning.

Cultivating empathy and respect is challenging, particularly for adults, but it can be commenced by teachers as a role model in the class (Zhang, 2022). Zhang (2022) also believes this will help students become more confident and comfortable during the learning process. Hence, attitudes in ICC do not mean building students' attitudes from zero but trying to enhance students' perceptions in order to avoid stereotypes of a certain culture from their classmates or the language that they learn.

Critical cultural awareness

Critical cultural awareness is mainly aimed to be a crucial point in foreign language teaching and learning because it can link students' awareness regarding classroom lessons and real-world situations (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). This means that students are able to improve their language proficiency and survive outside the class. At the same time, Lecturer A stated,

In my writing class, I usually talk to my students one by one, share personal stories, or even make jokes with them to introduce the Indonesian language and culture. I believe these ways can assist them in socialising well inside and outside the class. Likewise, I create inclusive learning through this process by treating them equally through collaboration, such as team projects between international students and home students.

This statement is supported by Lecturer C, who said,

I tend to tell them that every nation has different cultures, and I always remind my students to respect its values and the story behind them. So, in the first meeting, I usually inform BIPA 4 and BIPA 2 students that Indonesia has various cultures. I believe my students have understood this, and it can support inclusive learning simultaneously.

Providing information about local cultures and involving them with home students, for instance, is an effective alternative to building critical cultural awareness for BIPA

students. This occurs because language connects to the social and situational contexts, so this requires certain competencies, namely linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, sociocultural competence, etc. (Fenner, 2017). Therefore, lecturers have to combine these skills in their BIPA learning process so their students are able to implement their language proficiency.

Nevertheless, in terms of shaping critical cultural awareness, lecturers need to be careful as this is a skill to critically evaluate based on students' criteria, perspectives, and practices (Nugent & Catalano, 2015; Yonata, 2022). Additionally, critical cultural awareness commences when international students engage with tasks that encourage them in thoughtful and rational evaluation of perspectives and practices of cultures (Byram, 2020). This means that talking to them in person or providing information, like what Lecturers A and C have done, is not the only way to cultivate critical cultural awareness. Nugent and Catalano (2015) also suggested providing proof of rigorous inquiry and thoughtful reasoning about its belief to improve it, which is BIPA teaching and learning. This is because they may have different cultural backgrounds to Indonesia.

As a suggestion, Lecturer B has another alternative to build critical cultural awareness of BIPA students.

In the first meeting, I usually observe my BIPA students and after several meetings, I encourage them to engage and interact with home students. My learning design requires them to talk to each other outside the class about ill and traditional medicines, for example. So, I request they opt for random home students around the faculty who can provide a few minutes to discuss with international students in Indonesian.

Meanwhile, Lecturer D tried to pair international students with home students.

I paired my BIPA students with my home (undergraduate) students so they could learn and share about their cultures. Sometimes, home students can assist BIPA students in speaking practice or checking their writing homework.

These approaches are able to aid BIPA students in capturing the real world of Indonesian lives and hone their language proficiency as well as cultural understanding. In terms of critical cultural awareness of ICC, this is essential to facilitate international students living with the actual conditions so that they can implement their intercultural knowledge and skills (Bella et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023; Nugent & Catalano, 2015)

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the discussion figures out that integrating ICC in BIPA writing instruction enhances students' linguistic abilities and cultivates cultural awareness, empathy, and respect for diverse perspectives. Through a variety of instructional strategies, including interactive communication, learning media, and estafet writing, BIPA lecturers

successfully foster ICC in writing classes, as the discussion demonstrates. Although these methods increase student involvement and promote diversity, they must be modified to accommodate different degrees of intercultural understanding and proficiency. Furthermore, dispelling misconceptions and promoting peer support depends heavily on cultivating positive attitudes like tolerance, empathy, and respect.

Connecting classroom activities to real-world situations, such as exchanges between domestic and international students, also fosters critical cultural awareness. Through group projects and introspective exercises, students get a greater comprehension of social settings and cultural variety. Overall, lecturers' flexibility and dedication to fostering an inclusive, respectful learning environment are critical to the ICC implementation's success.

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