INDONESIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION LEARNING COMPETENCES AND EXPERIENCES

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The study attempts to analyze intercultural communication competence of Indonesian as a foreign Language (BIPA) students in dealing with multicultural learning experience in one university in Indonesia. This qualitative study also looks at what constitutes learning from the international students. Data are collected from focus group discussion and in depth interview. The objective of the study is to get a comprehensive information about the students' intercultural competence and gain a comparative look at the essence of learning based on the cross-cultural perspectives of the students from six different nations. In addition, Intercultural competence model of Chen and Starosta (2005) is used as a tool of analysis. It is expected that this study will be significant to the field of intercultural communication and education in Indonesia in a way that it offers another insight in both designing and applying learning materials based on the cross-cultural perspectives of the international students.

Keywords: BIPA, Indonesian as a Foreign Language, Intercultural Communication Competency, International Students, Learning Experience, Multicultural Environment

INTRODUCTION

The advance movement of globalization or also known as a global connection of economy, social, culture, politics and education has forced Indonesia to actively involved in preparing and constructing international relations in all of those aspects. One of the ways to face the globalization is to prepare the human resource by developing mental and intellectual competency (Purwoko, 2012). Education in this sense, has a supportive role in achieving both of the competencies. In the last five years, Indonesian education has laid foundations for international level of education by supporting students mobility to study abroad and to invite international students to study in Indonesia.

Asia nowadays, has been a "best seller" destination for international students mobility. the region provides many opportunities to engage in rich cultural, linguistic, academic, geographical and social experiences (Marginson & McBurnie, 2004). In the context of Indonesia, the importance of student mobility has been emphasized by the Vice-Minister of National Education Indonesia during the press conference of SEAMEO RIHED in Jakarta, March 2010. He stated that "Enhancing student mobility will allow a university student's credit points and grades obtained at other universities in the South-East Asian region to transfer to a home university. It is beneficial for Indonesian university students if they can study in many countries, with recognized credit transfer" (Hendarman, 2013).

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In supporting the target, the Indonesian government has designed various study schemes and to encourage international students to study in Indonesia. The Ministry of National Education offers the so-called "Beasiswa Darmasiswa Republik Indonesia" (Darmasiswa Scholarships) for international students to learn the Indonesian language and culture. The program has been considered as a successful one and the program conducive to encourage more than 85 countries all across the globe (Hendarman, 2013). In line with the ministry program, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand under the umbrella of SEAMEO RIHED (SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development) have conducted a project on promoting student mobility in South East Asia involving universities in ASEAN to provide an international dimension to the universities (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2012). Both of the programs plus other international programs offered by universities in Indonesia have increased the number of international students in the country by approximately 12.000 (and counting) through the past five years (Sera, 2013).

The vast wave of international student mobility to Indonesia would result in an intercultural dimension of learning and socializing for both of the students and the learning institutions in Indonesia. Whether they like it or not, International students need to be ready to face a multicultural environment and possibly a totally new culture when they study in Indonesia.

International students enter into a university culture that never asks them to question how they are learning and the nature of the most important things they are learning. Teaching staff and designated institutions may aware that international students face adjustment problems and academic success is achieved after overcoming and adapting to different cultural and language issues. The students not only facing the new cultural environment but also need to adapt with a multicultural classroom setting where they have to interact with students of other nationalities. the most challenging things they need to face and the most prominent skill sets they acquire do not merely come out of the classroom, or a book, or out of a teacher's mouth – it may be in the cross-cultural competence and experience itself (Jones, 2008). It can be said that cross cultural communication has an important role in managing interpersonal relationship within a multicultural environment.

Based on the rationale above, the study investigates the cross-cultural competence of the international students and examines what the students believe about learning in a multicultural environment. What it means by international students here are the students of Indonesian as a Foreign language program BIPA who come from different countries and study in Indonesia. It is expected that this study will be significant to the field of intercultural communication and education in Indonesia in a way that it offers another insight in both designing and applying learning materials from a intercultural perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study will be given shape by three main conceptions. First is the conception of intercultural communication. According to Samovar and Porter (1991:10)

intercultural communication occurs whenever a message is produced by a member of one culture for consumption by a member of another culture, a message must be understood. Due to the cultural differences nature in these kinds of contacts, misunderstandings and disagreements are often occur. To reduce this risk, it is important to comprehend intercultural communication. The main benefit of intercultural communication is to improve understanding of the culturally mediated communication. As suggested by Teng (2009) intercultural communication is not only necessary but also a requirement of success in a pluraristic environment and intercultural communication skills are indispensable.

According to DeVito (in Teng 2009), in studying the intercultural communication we need pay attention to the following aspects, among others: 1) people of different culture communicate differently, 2) see how the behaviour of each culture as a system that may be arbitrary, 3) how to think about cultural differences that may be have no link. These are the foundation of conducting an observation towards the international students during their study in Indonesia.

The second conception is intercultural competence. The conception suggested by Chen and Starosta (2005) will serve as the guidelines for the author in conducting the study. The basic assumption of intercultural competence is an active awareness of the individual as a person who is culturally complex and the influence of culture alone in thought and action. The competence is an ability to look at a way and behavior in an open and different perspective.

Chen and Starosta (in Josephine, 2012) created a model of intercultural communication competence which consists of three main dimensions, namely affective or Intercultural Sensitivity, Cognitive or Intercultural Awareness and Behavioral or Intercultural Adroitness. They also added that intercultural communication competence is a fundamental concept that consists of the ability of a person's cognitive, affective, and behavior in a communication process involving different cultures. Classically, the model of intercultural communication competence can be described in the following table
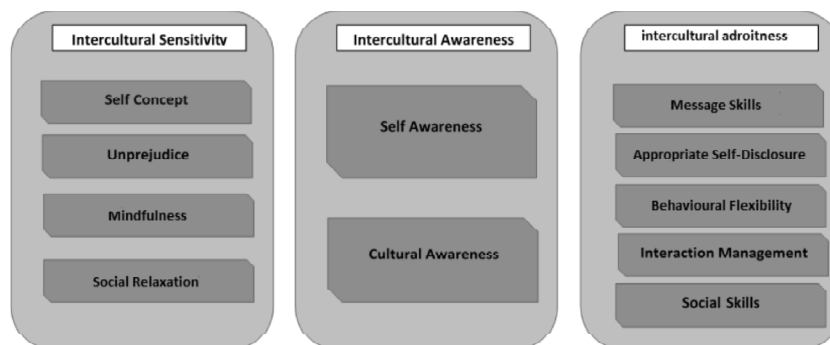

Figure 1: Intercultural communication competence model

The third concept that shape this study is the concept of learning. Generally defined, Learning is the act of acquiring new, or modifying and reinforcing, existing knowledge, behaviors, skills, values, or preferences and may involve synthesizing different types of information. One of the basic human skills is the ability to learn new things in various environments. The study of learning has been generally assumed to the area of cognitive and behavioral sciences, with experts ranging from Vgotsky to Bandura, Pavlov to Skinner.

One of the studies that gives additional insight to the current study is a comparative study conducted by Jones (2008). He tried to look at the meaning of learning from the cross-cultural perspectives of doctoral Students from five Asian nations: Thailand, China, Korea, India, and Japan studying at a USA university. His study shows that the study participants indicated that their definition of learning is not the same as transferring knowledge or attending school, but is more aligned with experiencing life more fully, particularly the experience gained from bounding cultural borders and interacting with people from diverse points of view and in varied contexts that sometimes place them in less secure and unfamiliar positions (Jones, 2008). In the current study, the intercultural perspective toward a learning process will be enrich by observing and acquiring information about what the International students assume about learning in Asia environment (Indonesia) with a multicultural classroom setting.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collections

The study attempts to analyze intercultural competence of international students in coping with multicultural learning experience. In this study, the author adopt qualitative approach. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. This type of approach may be needed because the topic has never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people, or existing theories do not apply with the particular sample or group under study (Creswell, 2003). This qualitative study also looks at what constitutes learning from the international students.

In collecting the data, the author interviewed and conducted a focus group discussion with six students from six different countries who enrolled in bahasa Indonesia class (BIPA) at upper intermediate level. The interview was conducted using bahasa Indonesia as the medium of communication since not all of the participants able to speak in English. The questions of the focus group interview were intentionally left simple in order for the participants to explore ideas both as a group and as an individual. The objective of the study is to get a comprehensive information about the students' intercultural competence and gain a comparative look at the essence of learning based on the cross-cultural perspectives of the international students.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at a major university in West Java Indonesia and nationally known as Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The participants of the study are students from Darmasiswa and AIMS (Asean International Mobility Students) who took bahasa Indonesia lesson in Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI). The study used six participants representing six different countries - China ,Japan, Malaysia, Germany ,The Netherlands, and Vietnam. Each participant has been studying in the university for at least one semester and was an Indonesian Language student as upper intermediate level and gathered in one same class. Moreover, confidentiality of the participant identities will be guaranteed.

Research Procedure

The first step of collecting data will be conducted by having a focus group discussion and followed by personal interviews. All participants were personally known by the authors since they were our students and one of the authors has been their language instructor for more than a semester. The focus group discussion took place in the classroom. The authors set aside a time for the discussion during class times, usually before the class ends. The focus group session lasted about 45 minutes each session (four sessions during 2015 even semester). The follow-up individual interviews were conducted at the university, in a library, university parks, during field trips or in a coffee shop. The interview sessions took time from 30 to 60 minutes. The focus group dialog and all interviews were recorded and transcribed.

As the second step, the researcher will make notes, analyze and categorize the transcripts. In addition, further interviews or known as member checks (Creswell, 2003) might be occured to affirm the gathered responses and all of the interview results will be kept anonymous.

According to Patton (in Moelong, 2007), a data analysis technique is a categorizing process of sequence data, organize them into a pattern or categories. He distinguishes the interpretation that gives meaning significantly to the analysis, explained the pattern description and looking for a relationship between dimensions description. All of the interview data will be transcribed, categorized and interpreted using a data analysis technique as proposed Miles and Huberman (1994), and they suggested that the data analysis in qualitative approach is interactively and continuously conducted over time until the data is already saturated.

The Data analysis begins by examining all the data available from various sources inclusive of focus group discussions, interviews and documentation study. Then the authors reduced the data by classifying things that are fundamental and focusing on things that are important and related in order to be easily categorized according the participants' frame of thinking. Both of the focus group discussions and interviews data will be related to Chen and Starosta (2005) model of Intercultural communication competence to reveal the participants' competence. Finally, all of the data will be presented in a condensed form of narrative description.

In a rather simpler way, the research methodology will be described in the following table.

TABLE 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Questions	Participants	Data collection	Analysis method	Research site and duration
what constitutes learning from international BIPA students' point of view?	Six students from six different countries (China, Japan, Germany, Holland, Malaysia, Vietnam)	Transcripts of students' focus group discussions and data from the interviews	Focus group discussions, interviews, and member checks	Indonesia University of Education
How does the intercultural competence applied by Indonesian as a foreign Language (BIPA) students?			The Textual analysis will be connected to Chen and Starosta (2005) model of Intercultural communication competence	The data collecting will be conducted during the even semester of 2015.
			The interview data will be transcribed, categorized and interpreted using a qualitative data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994)	The discussions took place in the classroom for about 45 minutes before the class ends. and the interviews were hold outside class times for about 30-60 minutes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the figure above, Chen and Starosta (2005) describes that in order to gain a better understanding on one's intercultural competence, there are three key points that need to be analyzed, namely; Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Awareness, and Intercultural Adroitness. in related to the students performance and interviews results, All of the factors will be explanatorily analyze in the following descriptions.

Learning in the Eyes of the International Students

The discussion around this this theme was conducted in a friendly manner and relaxing atmosphere during the last 30-45 minutes of their class. The results of the discussion are not intended to be generalized as a representative of their country. It is thought that it is still justiviabe information in sense of providing insights about comparative and global educational issues and what might be coming in handly in establishing learning environments.

The participants were asked questions about learning and how they define and interpret it. The questions were broken down into four subtopics as described in the following table:

TABLE 2: SUBTOPICS IN INTERPRETING LEARNING

Definitions of Learning
Definition in their own interpretation
Learning bahasa Indonesia
Cultural difficulties
Current Schools' and Teachers' role to learning

Each of the students shared their thoughts toward the topic, then the authors classified their answers into several themes. The explanations of the focus group discussion about learning theme are described below.

Learning Definition : a new experience, a never ending process, and a spiritual path

The participants' most common theme in defining learning is related to *process* and *experience*. They all believe that learning is not an instant thing and it is a never ending process. Whether they like it or not, learning means experiencing new things and they have to deal with it. Failing in coping with the new experience means that the learning process is hampered. The participants' sense of experience is associated with various personal and cultural signifiers associated with experience of being a human being.

The Chinese student puts it distinctly *"learning is a fundamental process and is very important for us to gain more knowledge, it's difficult to separate it from*

life." The statement indicates that the student internalize learning as an indispensable and unseparable asset. Furthermore she said that it is socially emphasized by her family and chinese society that learning should be adhered as a reflection of her identity.

Similarly, the german student said that learning is about finding her trueself and finding what she wants to be. It all comes from the process of learning and experiencing new things. She added that self-exploration is the key to her maturation and learning. The Japanese participant also defined learning as an aspect of consciousness, "(learning is) the process to develop the choice, choices of life. So in other words, the more I learn, the more I will get choice."

The Malaysian student supports the idea by stating that learning is related more to act and reflect, she said *"you only learn through experience, you only learn through doing."* She also added a spiritual dimension to learning, which is not surprising given the cultural influence of Islam in Malaysia, *"learning is a part of my spiritual life, it is what makes us motivated and enable us to put the knowledge for good uses"*

Learning bahasa Indonesia : a Future Investment

The second topic of discussion was about the participants experience and motivation in learning a new language such as bahasa Indonesia. In term of motivation, most of the participants think that bahasa Indonesia will be important for their career. For example, the Japanese and Vietnamese participants take bahasa Indonesia because they want to work in a field related to Indonesia such as tourims and international relations. The Japanese student wants to work in a Japanese company in Indonesia. It is based on the fact that the relationship between Japan and Indonesia is very close. This relation is strengthen by a BBC polling data (2013) that describes that more than 82% Indonesian people consider Japanese influence as positive matter.In fact, it makes Indonesia the most pro-Japanese nation in the world. No less than 12.000 Japanese expatriates working and studying In Indonesia. Whereas in Japan there are approximately 24,000 Indonesian nationals studying, working and training (Santosa, 2013) . The Vietnamese student stated a similar reason, she wants to work as tour guide for Indonesian tourists who visit Vietnam.

Whereas one participant from the Netherlands learns bahasa Indonesia because of the historical value. He learns it because he want to embrace his ancestors culture. His great grandfather is from Indonesia and some of his relatives are also Indonesians. The other participant from Malaysia learn bahasa Indonesia due to a geographical reason. She learns it because Malaysia and Indonesia are very close neighbor and that is why she belief that by learning bahasa Indonesia it will strengthen the relationship between the two countries and it will help her communicate better with her Indonesian friends back in her country.

What did they feel when learning bahasa Indonesia?. For the Malaysian participant it was an interesting experience to see that actually there are big differences between the two neighboring countries and by learning bahasa Indonesia it can minimize misunderstandings between bahasa Melayu and Indonesia. For other students, they think that learning bahasa Indonesia is easier than learning English or other languages. The reason of that are because there were no time tense or gender in the language. However they have major difficulties in constructing suffixes and understanding the colloquial Indonesian or as the Dutch student said : "learning Indonesian is easy, but it is hard to speak fluently and interact with the locals".

Cultural Difficulties : a land of a Thousand Smiles

When the participants learn bahasa Indonesia, one of the difficulties is understanding the social cultural context in society Indonesian due to the cultural difference. There some difficulties stated by the participants in the discussions. The Malaysian student did not have any major difficulties but still she had problem with the local language because most of people in Bandung speak their local tongue (Sundanese language). For European students (Germany and The Netherlands) they face difficulties in adapting with collectivism culture of learning where everyone seems enjoying learning in a group rather than learning individually. Also they had difficulties in interpreting the meaning of smiles in Indonesia, the German participant said: " *at first I was confused why is it difficult for Indonesians to say the word 'sorry', but now I think I know that smiling is one of the ways of saying sorry"*. The other participants also have some difficulties regarding concept of values such as concept of cleanliness, concept of touch, and concept of relations.

Another cultural difficulty experienced by the student was regarding the language itself. The Chinese student stated that it is difficult to apply the language with the locals and what she learned in the classroom was different from what she got on the streets. From the discussions, the authors explained to all of the participant that most of Indonesians speak colloquially and the difference between formal and informal Indonesian is totally different. One of the benefits of Indonesian language learning in Indonesia settings is the provision of day-to-day communication context. The context of the classroom can immediately be linked to the social context (Basuki, 1999). Furthermore, the participants may learn Indonesian colloquial from their Indonesian friends under guidance of their teachers do they will not only understand the colloquial language and its social contexts but also know how to use the language appropriately to avoid any misunderstandings.

Current Schools' and Teachers' role to learning : A Shrine

In this part the participants were asked about how they see how far the school and their teachers take parts in accommodating and aiding the learning process. Based

on the discussion. All of the participants agreed that the school administration and the teachers are helpful and one thing that is important was that in teaching bahasa Indonesia, all of the teachers always add cultural values and cultural notes to help the students in learning the language and understanding the social cultural background beneath the language all at once. Even the Japanese students said that the current school was like a snack for child, which means that the school and the teachers have an addictive effect to the students to keep learning. in Line with this, the Dutch student added that to learn the language he can get it from the streets but to understand about and how to use the language, the school has successfully created a perfect "shrine for learning".

Thereby, a school and its teachers should create not only a suitable learning program but also a friendly atmosphere that supports the students' eagerness of learning a language and culture. Cultural values need to be introduced in the learning process. A school should become a place for discussing, socializing and having fun. This is in line with what was said by Jonassen (in Jones, 2008). He identifies three of the most salient features of contemporary theories of learning, namely: 1) learning is about consciously creating meaningful activity and not just gaining knowledge; 2) interpersonal interaction, culture, and the social milieu are integral components of the creation of meaning; 3) and knowledge exists in dialogues, social interactions, relationships, tools and artifacts – their production and use – and all the previous notions, models, trials, and versions of the meaning-making process.

International Students' Intercultural Sensitivity

Cross-cultural sensitivity is a term that related to one's ability in sending and receiving a positive emotional response during an interaction with multi-cultural individuals in order to gain recognition or respect from the individual. Chen and Starosta (in Maria, 2012) emphasized four dimensions that influence the cross-cultural sensitivity and they are self-concept, openness, unprejudiced and social relaxation.

Adaptive and Interdependent Self Concept in a Multicultural Environment

Self-concept, strictly defined, is the totality of our beliefs, preferences, opinions and attitudes organized in a systematic manner, towards our personal existence. Simply put, it is how we think of ourselves and how we should think, behave and act out our various life roles (Sincero, 2012). someone with a positive self-concept is more easily accepted and trusted by the other culturally diverse parties than the one who has a low positive self concept (Kim, 2004).

In the study the authors found a number of self-concept needed when we communicate in a multicultural context. The first self-concept, individuals who live in a multicultural milieu such as an international language class should have an adaptive and open a self-concept. "I think it is a normal thing that everywhere

you go, you should try to adjust with a new environment, "said the German student. Similarly the Malaysian student stated that when a person learning in a multicultural classroom she or he required to have an open self concept and a willingness to learn"

Due to the cultures in Indonesia and the cultural background of the students (four out of six are Asian), the European students expressed that they have to learn and adapt with the interdependent concept of Asian culture. The Dutch student said: *"patience and a more open thinking are the keys to adapt, I was very individual and straightforward learner, but now I am okay with working out the relationship more"*. This is in line with the fact that Asian cultures favor an interdependent view of the self, which means that interpersonal relationships are more important than one's individual accomplishments, and individuals experience a sense of oneness with the group (Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012).

The findings about the BIPA students' self concept in the classroom are categorized in following table:

TABLE 3: THE STUDENTS SELF CONCEPT

No	Self Concept	Description
1	Adaptive and Open	when a person learning in a multicultural classroom she or he required to have an open self concept and a willingness to learn
2	Interdependent	interpersonal relationships are more important than one's individual accomplishments, and individuals experience a sense of oneness with the group
3	Cultural differences are not the source of problems	Culture is not the cause. It is concerning personal thing, problems happened not because of the culture but because of the individual

Prejudiced to Unprejudiced

Lexically, unprejudiced means that a person do not have or show a dislike or distrust based on fixed or preconceived ideas. In the study, the authors found that all of the students had prejudices toward Indonesia and their classmates as described in the following table:

TABLE 4: THE STUDENTS PREJUDICES

No.	Participant's Nationalities	Prejudices	
		To Indonesia	To other Classmates
1	China	Islam Radicalism	Europeans are not friendly
2	Germany	Safety in Indonesia	Asians are not punctual
3	Japan	Criminality in Indonesia	No prejudices
4	Malaysia	Indonesian People dislikes Malaysians	No prejudices
5	The Netherlands	The Dutch colonial historical hatred by Indonesian people	Asians are not punctual and difficult to work with
6	Vietnam	Criminality in Indonesia	Students from developed country do not respect students from developing countries

Based on the table above it can be said that generalizing on cultural characteristics beyond their own culture is a necessity in a multicultural organization. People tend to judge a person, object, or problems based on Their current knowledge from the target which, however, often lead to limited appraisals or biases, especially when important information are missing from the target culture (Josephine, 2012).

However, based on further discussions, all of the prejudices are caused by lack of information about the country and the classmates. After working together for one semester, the prejudices had dwindled from the participants mind. They finally realized that what they have experienced are different from what they feared before. By the help of the school and teachers, the students are accommodated with counseling sessions about culture and arranged team building activities in the learning process to raise the cultural awareness among the international students.

The Role of Mindfulness in Strengthening the Intercultural Competence

Another important aspect of cultural sensitivity is an open mind attitude towards culture differences or also known as mindfulness. Sadri (2011) defines mindfulness as a state of mind in which a person is open to new information, is continually creating new categories, and is open to new perspectives. The state of mind will help an individual to receive cultural aspects of ambiguity and will not discouraged him/her when working with people of different cultural backgrounds.

> "In my opinion, it is more interesting to work with people with different cultural backgrounds. People with similar backgrounds have a tendency to think that they know each other and won't learn anything new or gain various insights about dealing with certain matters" (Japanese Participant).

The open minded manner also expressed by the other students. the cultural differences are considered as a definite thing in human life. Regarding this, The Vietnamese student stated: *"Everyone has a different background and have different ways of working and solving things, and we are actually have the capabilities to understand and harmonize ourselves to the differences "*. All of the students admitted that they already prepared their mind to be open to cultural differences prior to their arrival in Indonesia by learning from books or from what they have been taught by their Indonesian studies teachers back home.

An open minded attitude toward cultural differences will encourage people to continue to learn other cultures. in this regard, Gudykunst (in Kim, 2004) believes that people who wish to openly integrated new and old ideas, and adapt their belief system tend to be able to communicate more effectively in a cross-cultural interaction. From the extracts above, it was indicated that all of the students have an open minded attitude towards learning in a new environment with a multicultural members in it.

Social Relaxation as a Part of Intercultural Sensitivity

Social relaxation in this study is defined as an ability to minimize the anxieties when interacting with others with different cultural backgrounds (Kim, 2004). In other words, social relaxations gives an individual who stays in a multicultural setting comfort and free of anxieties when communicate cross-culturally with his/her counterparts.

This state is experienced by all of the students especially because they have a common objective that is to learn bahasa Indonesia. For example, the student from German said that it is more comfortable when working together with her multicultural classmates:

> "I just prefer to work with people from different backgrounds, so that I can learn something new from them and more specially, since not all of the students able to speak English fluently, it creates a wonderful opportunity for everyone to start interact using bahasa Indonesia and get better with it. That is the main reason why we all here Isn't it? to learn bahasa Indonesia". (German student)

By accepting and understanding that people have different values will make people more comfortable in communicating cross-culturally. Respect the values will not threat one's values. Regarding this, the Chinese student express her thoughts: " Although Indonesia is a Muslim majority country, I am not worry because they are very respectful to others values and I happy to learn with my classmates, differences make me more tolerable and open to new things".

The students' social relaxation indeed help them in coping with the learning process and communicating with other. This social relaxation is in rhythm with Chen and Starosta (2004) who suggests that the intercultural communication sensitivity can help improving the ability of individuals to respect differences, develop global cultural identity and to live side by side with people from different cultures.

International students' Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural awareness consists of two main aspects: self-awareness and cultural awareness. Awareness of one's own cultural background (self-awareness) and awareness of other cultures (cultural awareness) are very important understand the similarities and differences between cultures in a social interaction. (Josephine, 2012).

Awareness of students' own culture is related to the capability to identify their cultural background that will encourage individuals to avoid the act of ethnocentrism or judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture. While awareness of other cultures can be described as an ability to identify and respect diversities and other cultures while communicating in a multicultural environment. In the following table, the authors will categorize international students' intercultural awareness based on the interviews conducted in 2014/2015 learning period.

TABLE 5: THE STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

Students' Self-Awareness	Never judge and disrespect other cultures
	There are no better culture, all cultures have their respective advantages and disadvantages
	It is a necessity to be proud with our own culture. However cultures and values cannot be compared, every culture has its own uniqueness.
Students' awareness of others cultures	It is a normal thing to be different, each culture has their own way in managing their life.
	It is important to Learn the local language and colloquial expressions. It can minimize the cultural anxieties
	" When in Rome, do as the Romans do "
	Cultural awareness need to be supported by positive acts in form of socializing with the multicultural environment

The table above reflects that by having an awareness both from own and to other cultures will contribute positively in engaging cross-cultural communication. In relating to the learning bahasa Indonesia, The learner, in the process, does not only learn a foreign language but also develops as a person and as a member of a larger community. Incorporating intercultural awareness in the foreign language class can and should promote developing awareness of the learner's own identity and thus personal growth. The personal growth is a product of enabling students to reconcile their own beliefs with ideas from the culture of the "other" that may be very new and challenging (Porto in Kourova & Modianos, 2013). Furthermore, all participants have been travelling abroad to numerous countries before and the experience gives them additional preparation in interacting with a new culture and new people.

(c) International Students' Intercultural Adroitness

According to Chen and Starosta (2004) Intercultural adroitness is a behavioral based competence which includes message skills, knowledge of appropriate self-disclosure, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, and social skills. Based on the perspective, the authors conducted interviews to the students concerning their communication behavior in the bahasa Indonesia class and the details are in the following descriptions.

Bahasa Indonesia and "Listen before you talk" as the Message Skills

Message skills in this sense can be define as a specialized knowledge related to mastering other languages as well as the general ability to utilize message appropriately while communicating to others (Kim, 2004). Language skills and understanding of the language are very important to maintain relations in a multicultural environment such as the language classroom. Not all students able to speak English so they use bahasa Indonesia as the medium of communication. Regarding this the Dutch student said :

> In my opinion, a group of people of different cultures that working together, must use a same language that can be understood by everyone. I know that some of my classmates

could not speak English fluently. So I am more than happy to use bahasa Indonesia. moreover, we are here to learn bahasa Indonesia, and by not depending on English, I believe it will be beneficial for our learning and communicating here.

Fortunately, all of the students were enrolled in a same level of language proficiency. Thus, bahasa Indonesia can be understood by everyone, but for some difficult language expressions sometimes they use gesture or show visual images from the Internet to explain the meaning of those difficult expressions.

The second skill that arose in the interviews is the ability to communicate messages to the other party. The students tend to be discreet in terms of expressing their thoughts due to the multicultural nature in the classroom. For instance, the Vietnamese student said that she tend to wait and think first before saying something, especially regarding sensitive matters such as faith or politics. Similarly, the German student describe her opinion about this : *" I always try to convey my opinion but I always consider the circumstances before I speak my mind. We need to be wise when we communicate with others, so I prefer listening first and if I want to say something, I will find a suitable or appropriate expression to say it "*. In other words, the students' "Listen and then talk" skill become a valuable trait in avoiding conflicts because in a discussion, culture is not the main source of problems. It is the negative individual behavior and lack cultural awareness that can stimulate those problems.

Behavior Flexibility

The participants admit that they consciously tried to adapt with the culture by acting according to the common custom in Indonesia and to the learning atmosphere in the classroom. According to the interviews, here are some of the adapted actions performed by the participants during their study at the school (UPI/ Indonesia University of Education):

TABLE 6: THE STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR FLEXIBILITY

Concept of Custom	Actions	Performed by
Body Language	Using right hands to do things such as raising hands, giving or taking something, showing directions, etc.	All students
Courtesy	Using bahasa Indonesia citation when addressing others. for example: *Bapak* (Sir) *Ibu* (Ma'am) Or even use the local tongue expressions: *Akang* (Brother) and *Teteh* (sister)	All students and students from the Netherlands and Japan in using the local tongue
Attitudes toward elders	(1) Kissing the elders' right hand and (2) bowing when shaking hands with elder people	Students from Japan, the Netherlands for action (1) and all students for action number (2)
Classroom custom	Taking off shoes before entering the class, wearing proper attire and on Friday wearing *Batik* (Indonesian national clothes)	All students
Concepts of Food	Exploring traditional culinary	All students

Along with the students experience during their stay in Indonesia and by the teachers guidance, their behavioral flexibility branched out and able to blend with the local community.

Appropriate self-disclosure: Being Discreet

Another aspect in the intercultural adroitness is the appropriate self-disclosure. It is an ability to express yourself sensibly in order to reduce uncertainty or discomfort in a new culture or within a multicultural group. In this aspect, a discreet self-presentation is the key to avoid any conflicts. *"We need to be discreet in communicating with people with different culture because we would not know what could offend them. What I usually do is stay calm, listen and then act as neutral as possible"* (Japanese student)

> Another student added an input about this, self-refrain is also needed to avoid conflict within the group or with the local people. *" I usually predict what others will do especially in a moment when conflict is potentially turned up. In that case I prefer to govern myself and be patience, even if I am upset about something, because I know I am not living in my country anymore where people just say whatever on their minds"* (German student)

The other students similarly do the same thing, some of them even consult to their friends (with a similar cultural background) or to their teacher before saying or doing something, for example when they have to go to a party held by their local friends the students usually ask what to wear and what to bring to the party. All of the effort are considered beneficial for the students in maintaining their relationship among others and in reducing any discomforts during their stay in Indonesia. This is in line with what stated by Gudykunst that an effective intercultural communication depends on the ability to manage uncertainties and anxieties. An anxiety usually related to an uncomfortable state while uncertainty related to the inability to predict the behavior of others (cited in Josephine, 2012).

Interaction Management: Respect, Weigh Words, and a Local Touch

Interaction management is the ability to engage in interaction comfortably by having a good management of the conversation particularly at the beginning and at the end of the conversation. In managing the interaction, the BIPA students used various strategies and even they often share their strategies among others when it comes to engage communication with the local people. In terms of the interaction management among the students, each of them has their own way and one common way that they have is respecting others. It has become the students' grasp through their life as students in Indonesia. In addition, some other strategies shared by the students during the interviews are briefly described in the following table.

TABLE 7: THE STUDENTS INTERACTION MANAGEMENT

Interaction Management Strategies	Actions	Performed by
Weigh Words	Use bahasa Indonesia formally and choose the words carefully at first, and then to break the ice use some colloquial expressions.	All students
Revolving in the mind	trying to convey opinions with due regard to the situational circumstances	Vietnamese, Chinese and Malaysian student.
Sundanese language and Islamic expressions as a local touch	Use some of the Sundanese (local language) and Islamic expressions when addressing and greetings the local people, e. g **Islamic**: *Assalamualaikum* (greetings/ peace be upon you), I*nshaAllah* (God Willing) **Sundanese**: Hatur nuhun (thank you), Punten (excuse me), and kumaha damang (how are you?)	Japanese, Dutch and Malaysian Student
A Memento	Give souvenirs from their home country when engaging with people that the students consider as helpful and/or important figure.	All Students

Social Skills

A social skill is the ability to manage interpersonal relationship outside their academic activities as a student. In this case, all students shared the same experience that they develop their interpersonal relations by making a lot of local friends outside campus. Some of them are also actively involved in the university students' association based on their interests. By having friends outside campus the students were able to adapt well and felt comfortable. " it is like having another family, I love it, this is my second hometown" (Japanese Student). Based on the authors observation, it is true that the students enjoyed their social life with their foster family or local friends. It can be seen from the large number of local friends and their activities updated on the students social media (Instagram and Facebook).

Finally, the BIPA students intercultural communication competence (Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Awareness and Intercultural Adroitness) are briefly described in the table 8.

CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, Learning is a process of live and learning in a multicultural milieu should be supported by the intercultural competence. Based on the discussion above, all of the students are highly competent in sense of their intercultural communication. They There were no cultural conflicts or problem that they could not solve.

TABLE 8: BIPA STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Aspects of Intercultural Competence	Description
Intercultural Sensitivity	The students have a high level of intercultural sensitivity as described by their mindfulness, adaptive self-concept and social relaxation.Most students have cultural anxieties during their first day of studying. This is when a school need to take a part in assisting them to deal with their anxieties. The students had prejudiced toward different cultures. However their impressions changed along with the social interaction and learning experience that they went through.
Intercultural Awareness	There are no better culture, all cultures have their respective advantages and disadvantages. the cultural anxieties can be minimized by learning the local language and colloquial expressions.Incorporating intercultural awareness in the foreign language class can and should promote developing awareness of the learner's own identity and his or her personal mental growth
Intercultural Adroitness	Generally the students are competent in terms of intercultural adroitness. All of the Students are able to communicate in bahasa Indonesia (in an appropriate way) and it helps them blending with the community and with their own classmates. Being discreet, culturally flexible and actively engaging with the local community are the key to avoid conflicts and reduce anxieties among the students.

It is time for BIPA institutions in Indonesia to support and see across their students' intercultural competence by designing cross-cultural materials and providing scheduled discussions or team building exercises regarding intercultural communication. By combining the students intercultural competence and the teachers supports, the students can reduce their anxiety and able to experience more than just learning the Indonesian language but also socially involved as a part of the Indonesian community and thus they can be the future agents of social diplomacy in promoting the language and rich culture of Indonesia.

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