INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore students perspective related intercultural communicative competence in English teaching includes term and implementation. This centres on the perceptions and expectations of students from Islamic Higher Education regarding this competence. By exploring the intersection of language, culture, and education, the research aims to provide insights into how students enrolled in Islamic universities conceptualize intercultural communicative competence as part of their English language education. A qualitative approach used in this study. The participants of this study were 364 students from three Islamic universities. Descriptive analysis used to uncover their attitudes, beliefs, and anticipated outcomes related to intercultural communication in an academic setting. The revealed that 76% of participants were not familiar with the term of intercultural communicative competence. This study also showed that authentic learning exposure were still limited in English teaching.

Keywords: Language Planning and Policy

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is a crucial aspect of English teaching and learning in today's interconnected world (Duisembekova, 2021). As the global community becomes increasingly diverse and interconnected, the ability to effectively communicate and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds is essential. In this context, the significance of ICC cannot be overstated, especially within the context of Islamic universities.

Islamic universities serve as centres of learning and cultural diversity, attracting students and faculty from various parts of the world (Aryati and Suroso, 2022). These institutions play a pivotal role in the dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of Islamic values, making effective intercultural communication an imperative skill for both students and educators.

Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that one of the goals of national education is to develop the potential of students to have balanced intelligence, skills and personality. This is also supported by the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 353 of 2004 concerning Guidelines for Preparing the Curriculum for Islamic Higher Education which states that Islamic Religious Higher Education aims to prepare graduates who are faithful, pious, have noble morals, have an integrated understanding of science and religion, nation and have the ability. good academics. From this goal, it can be seen that the government, including the Ministry of Religion, is formulating policies to provide education that can increase the global competitiveness of Indonesian society, one of which is by teaching English (Isadaud et.al, 2021).

When someone learns a certain language, of course he will learn the culture of the native speakers. This implies that learning a particular language without understanding its culture has the potential to create missed communication (Saifuddin, 2018). Understanding the culture of the language being studied is proven to play an important role in determining the success of conveying a message and establishing smooth communication between the speaker and the interlocutor. However, in practice, the implementation of English at Islamic Religious Universities integrates limited English language learning with religious values, but does not yet integrate English language learning with inter-cultural understanding. Focusing only on religious identity and forgetting about intercultural understanding without efforts to bridge the two will certainly lead to suboptimal teaching, which can result in graduates of Islamic Religious Universities being less prepared to face the challenges of world cross-cultural communication.

Based on pre-research activities from observing the syllabus and English teaching modules at three Islamic Religious Universities, there is a scarcity in the integration of intercultural values, where the integration and emphasis on Islamic values is not balanced with increasing understanding of the language culture of speakers across the global spectrum. This can be seen in the English learning module where the majority of the material is adapted material which is presented only on Islamic themes. The integration of Islamic values is limited to the formal legal syllabus, but is not implemented with operational and instructional sentences in its implementation. Materials, media and

evaluations are also not prepared in a way that is close to the real context which of course involves a lot of information exchange between global cultures. Another fact is that based on the existing syllabus, the practice of verbal and written communication is only limited to being done with classmates, without efforts to carry out authentic communication with native speakers which would allow for cultural interaction. This situation cannot support students development on their intercultural communicative competence since the learning environment is not supported by authentic resources which is very crucial to create actual communication situations (Danansooriya, 2022).

Apart from the facts in the field regarding English language teaching regarding the lack of intercultural integration in learning, current research has not touched on the collaboration of Islamic values and intercultural values. Similar research that can be found regarding the development of English teaching models includes research by Permatasari (2019) which integrates English language learning based on an Islamic approach. This research found that the integration of Islamic values in English learning shows that students are able to carry out learning in class by applying Islamic cultural values in everyday life. The concept of integrating intercultural values in language learning was researched by Yulianti (2019) who conducted literature research entitled Integrating Intercultural Communication Competencies into Foreign Languages Learning in the Industrial Revolution Era 4.0. This research concludes that the integration of intercultural values and technological literacy is very important in foreign language learning. Other research related to intercultural values was conducted by Gadakchyan (2020) who integrated intercultural values into English language learning for foreign speakers. This research shows that students feel intercultural values help them in achieving professional skills in a global context.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that there are still limitations in research that integrates Islamic values and intercultural values simultaneously in English language learning at Islamic Religious Universities. Although the research mentioned has involved the integration of Islamic values or intercultural values in English language learning, there has been no research that specifically combines the two. The study aims to investigate students' perceptions and expectations regarding the existence of ICC in English language education within Islamic universities. By understanding how students perceive the role of ICC in their educational journey, educators and administrators can

make informed decisions to improve the curriculum, teaching methods, and support systems. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore the challenges and opportunities specific to these institutions, considering the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students and the integration of Islamic values into the educational process. Such insights will not only contribute to the academic discourse on ICC but also guide the development of tailored strategies and interventions to foster effective intercultural communication skills among students in Islamic universities.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is an evolving field of study within the realm of language education, gaining increasing importance in the context of English teaching and learning in Islamic universities. This review of literature seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of key concepts, theories, and empirical studies relevant to ICC, with a particular focus on students' perceptions and expectations within the unique setting of Islamic universities.

Intercultural Communicative Competence refers to the ability to effectively communicate and interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. ICC, emphasizing skills such as cultural awareness, intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills, and critical cultural awareness. ICC encompasses not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and the ability to navigate cultural differences in communication (Byram, 2021).

ICC has become a fundamental component of language education, particularly in the teaching of English as a global lingua franca. Language learners, must not only acquire grammatical and communicative competence but also develop intercultural competence to effectively use the language in a globalized world. This has led to a paradigm shift in language pedagogy towards a more holistic approach that integrates cultural elements into language learning (Pandarangga and Kapoe: 2021)

Islamic universities, characterized by their diverse student body hailing from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, present a unique environment for the study of ICC. Ahmed and Al-Mahrooqi (2019) emphasize the importance of considering the specific cultural and religious dimensions in ICC development within Islamic institutions.

The integration of Islamic values and ethics into intercultural communication is a key aspect of ICC in this context.

Understanding students' perceptions and expectations regarding ICC is essential for effective curriculum design and pedagogy. Studies by Arif and Jusuf (2022) and Iswandari and Ardi (2022) underscore the importance of involving students in the process of ICC development, as their perspectives can shed light on the effectiveness of educational strategies and the relevance of ICC in their academic and personal lives. Research has also identified challenges that students may face in developing ICC. These include language proficiency barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and the need for greater exposure to diverse cultural contexts. Conversely, Islamic universities provide a unique platform for ICC development due to their multicultural environment and the potential to integrate Islamic principles into intercultural communication (Creswell, 2011). The synthesis of existing literature underscores the critical role of ICC in English teaching and learning within Islamic universities. It highlights the necessity for tailored curricular interventions and pedagogical approaches that address the specific needs and expectations of students in this context. Integrating ICC into the educational framework aligns with the broader goal of preparing graduates to engage in global discourse while upholding Islamic values and principles.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively explore Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in English teaching and learning within Islamic universities. The research design involves a cross-sectional survey and in-depth interviews to capture students' perceptions and expectations. The study targeted a diverse sample of undergraduate students enrolled in English language programs from three Islamic universities. The total participants are 364 students. A structured questionnaire was developed based on existing ICC frameworks and validated instruments (e.g., Byram, 2021). The survey included Likert-scale items to measure students' self-perceived ICC levels, the importance they attribute to ICC in their education, and their satisfaction with current ICC-related provisions. Open-ended questions also included in the questionnaire to capture qualitative insights on specific experiences and suggestions for improvement. Semi-structured interviews was conducted with a subset of survey participants to gain

deeper insights into their perceptions and expectations regarding ICC. Quantitative data collected through the survey was analyzed to summarize participants' self-assessed ICC levels and the importance they attribute to ICC. Qualitative data from the open-ended survey questions and interviews were analyzed to support and provide context to the findings. Data triangulation was applied by comparing and contrasting findings from the survey and interviews to enhance the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research delves into the perceptions and expectations of students regarding Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the context of English teaching and learning within Islamic universities. Combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how students perceive ICC and its significance in their academic journey.

Table 1. Students Perceptions about Intercultural Communicative Competence

No	Questions	Response				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I know about the term Intercultural Communicative Competence	9%	76%	5%	7%	3%
2	My lecture mentioned the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence	10%	78%	4%	6%	2%
3	My English lesson integrates the intercultural communicative competence	1%	82%	9%	6%	2%
4	I know the importance of having intercultural communicative competence	2%	78%	5%	8%	7%
5	I am familiar with intercultural communicative competence before	2%	83%	7%	7%	1%
6	I want to have intercultural communicative competence	3%	5%	3%	84 %	5%
7	I want my lecture expose me more about intercultural communicative competence before	1%	1%	3%	85 %	10%
8	I want my English lesson integrates	3%	7%	4%	79 %	7%

	intercultural communicative competence before				
9	I want to know the importance of having intercultural communicative competence	2%	2%	5%	90 %	1%
10	I want to be able to communicate in any cultural context	1%	1%	1%	95 %	2%
11	I want to be confident in talking with foreigners from various cultural background	2%	2%	3%	87 %	5%
12	I believe that having intercultural communicative competence can increase cultural understanding	1%	1%	7%	85 %	6%

The findings revealed most of the students were not familiar with the term intercultural communicative competence. However, that the majority of students consider ICC to be highly important in their English language education within Islamic universities. Respondents consistently emphasized that ICC is important to have effective communication in a globalized world. This sentiment aligns with the evolving nature of language education, which now places a strong emphasis on cultural sensitivity and adaptability. Participants generally expressed modest self-perceived ICC levels, highlighting the need for further development in this area. This finding suggests that while students recognize the importance of ICC, they acknowledge that there is room for improvement in their intercultural competencies. These self-assessments are consistent with the view that ICC is a skill that requires continuous growth and refinement.

However, data from interviews and open-ended survey questions illuminated several challenges faced by students in their pursuit of ICC within Islamic universities. These challenges included: 1) Limited Exposure to Diverse Cultures: Many students expressed that their interaction with individuals from different cultural backgrounds was limited within the university environment. They identified a need for more diverse cultural experiences to enhance their ICC; 2) Limited of exposure to authentic materials: Language barriers were identified as a significant impediment to effective intercultural communication. Students recognized that they rarely get authentic and meaningful experiences to the target language used. The disproportion values integrated between religious and cultural values make students lack of meaningful experiences.

The research findings provided substantial support for Michael Byram's model of ICC (Byram, 2021), which underscores the multidimensional nature of intercultural competence. Byram's model emphasizes cultural awareness, intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills, and critical cultural awareness. The students' recognition of ICC's significance in their academic journey aligns closely with Byram's emphasis on the importance of developing intercultural competencies alongside linguistic proficiency. Pandarangga and Kapoe (2021) argued that language learners must develop intercultural competence alongside linguistic competence is mirrored in the students' self-perceived ICC levels. Their recognition of having modest ICC levels suggests an alignment with previous research's perspective. This suggests that students are aware of the ongoing development required to achieve higher levels of ICC. Ahmed and Al-Mahrooqi's work (2019) emphasized the importance of considering the specific cultural and religious dimensions in ICC development within Islamic institutions. The students' expectations and suggestions, such as the integration of cultural awareness and sensitivity training and the incorporation of cultural exchange programs, align with this perspective. They underscore the desire to harmonize ICC development with Islamic values and principles. Arif and Jusuf (2022) and Iswandari and Ardi (2022) emphasis on involving students in the ICC development process is echoed in the research findings. Students' perceptions and expectations regarding ICC serve as valuable inputs for shaping effective pedagogical strategies. This supports the idea that student-centered approaches, which consider their perspectives and experiences, are crucial for ICC development. Furthermore, the challenges faced by students in developing ICC, such as limited exposure to diverse cultures and language proficiency barriers, resonate with previous study assertion that intercultural competence is a skill that necessitates focused attention and continuous growth.

In conclusion, the research findings not only validate but also enrich the existing literature and theoretical frameworks related to ICC, language education, and intercultural studies. They provide empirical evidence of the importance of ICC within Islamic universities and highlight the challenges and expectations of students in this unique educational context. These insights serve as a valuable foundation for further research and the development of targeted strategies to enhance ICC in English teaching and learning at Islamic Universities

CONCLUSION

This research sheds light on a vital aspect of language education within the unique context of Islamic universities. This study has revealed valuable insights into how students were not familiar about intercultural communicative competence and how importance to have this competence in English learning. However, most students perceive and expect Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) to be integrated into their English language education. The research has unequivocally established that students within Islamic universities highly value ICC as an essential component of their academic journey. They recognize that ICC transcends mere language proficiency and is intrinsic to effective communication in a globally interconnected world. This acknowledgment reflects the evolving landscape of language education, where cultural awareness and adaptability have become paramount. While students acknowledge the significance of ICC, the study findings indicate that they hold modest self-perceived ICC levels. This underscores the need for continuous development and improvement in intercultural competencies. It is a clear call to action for educational institutions to prioritize ICC as a skill that requires nurturing and enhancement throughout the course of students' academic careers.

The findings of this study have broader implications for the field of language education, emphasizing the necessity of equipping students with ICC skills to navigate the complex dynamics of our interconnected world. By addressing the challenges identified and aligning with students' expectations, Islamic universities can prepare their graduates to be effective communicators, both locally and globally, all while upholding the values and principles that define their unique educational mission. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on ICC in education and paves the way for further developments in the realm of intercultural language learning within Islamic institutions.

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