

# THE ROLE OF CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING FOR EFL STUDENTS IN REDUCING INTERACTION PROBLEMS

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## Abstract

Every country has its own characteristic and culture. Sometimes it makes some problems for foreigners to make interaction and communication. Its contradiction sometimes will make some problems such as inner conflict, frustration, miss understanding in communication goal even shock. It will be happened mostly for those who always think that their own culture is better than the others so they dislike or refuse even blame other cultures which do not match with them. If it happened it will show the gap and conflict between them even seriously big problems later. This problem can appear country and culture shock. This case must be avoided because it can cause some effects one of them they will not accept in certain community even because of the high speed of information in other communities and bad justification to them along their lives. This study intended to how the CCU can overcome the shock and country problems that impact in interaction and relationship based on the fact the interaction today it is not limited widely not just in a country. Based on analysis, the important of this case are learners must be learn another culture, custom, habit, perception etc and want to accept them as the differences, respect others with all differences as the effect of differences of thinking and throwing away that the own culture is always better. By learning CCU it will effect the understanding of learners in accepting those differences. It will be the important effort to eliminate the misunderstanding, shock culture and nation event the bad sense or feeling to the others, therefore CCU is important taught for ESL.

**Keywords :** *CCU, EFL students, interaction problems, reducing problems*

## INTRODUCTION

Every creature in the world has its characteristics and rules. Those are got from the interaction and agreement in a certain community that later it will be the consequence as community's members. From here, it appears the custom, regulations, norms etc that it must be obeyed by all the members. Because it will be the long agreement, automatically it is to be characteristic and the realizing of culture in a certain community and later there will be such a rule. This explanation is also deal with Hornby, Cowie & Lewis (1974) which culture was (1) advanced development of the human powers; development of the body, mind and spirit by training and experience. (2) evidence of intellectual development (of arts, science, etc) in human society. Culture includes 3 (three) aspects of human activities: personal or individual communication (self-communication), collective or communication in a social context, and expressive or society expresses. In line with it, culture cannot be separated from the people or community and their language used. The language cannot be separated from the people and their culture. As a social community, human needs to interact with others, here language has significant role. Like explaining by Valdes, (1986) said that the extent to which language, culture, thought have influenced one another, and which is the dominant aspect of communication. Therefore, almost all nations or countries in the world, even a group of community consisting of only a small number of families have their own cultures and languages.

However, the cultural variety sometimes might cause some problems to the other people or community who has different cultural background. To overcome this problem the knowing about Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) between the two groups of different community is required and really important. By knowing this, it can avoid miscommunication and

misunderstanding between the two groups of people from different background of culture. Besides the goals of communication and relationship can be obtained easily.

### **Problems of Interactions: Culture And Country Shock**

When learner studying a new language is confronted not only with new sounds, words, and structures but also with a new culture. If learners can not accept the differences, the new cultures often appear problems which are well known as shock and shock here is classified into 2 kinds culture shock and country shock.

#### **country shock**

Country shock is a kind of shock experienced by someone or a group of community moving to another country that has a significant difference in terms of their language background, culture, social community, economy, and even religion. For example, Indonesians who move to European countries often face some problems which are significantly different from their own country such as the language, people, climate/temperature and season, doing without, the loss of routines, unfamiliar faces, additional issues, and a new job.

When the learners make a new interaction they have to understand that everyone is different. They have to understand that a certain group has their agreements, they have been deal and as outsider they have to understand to accept and respect it included language. If they want to be accepted in a new community they have to learn one of them is their language. It is forbidden that they think that their own language is better.

People in the world has their own characteristics which are best. As new comers the learner must understand to accept it. Although they have bad sense of it, they are not allowed to say that others cultures are bad, even how the learners adopt it or learn it as the symbol to respect it.

Climate becomes one of the obstacles encountered by Indonesian who have two seasons rainy and dry season, with has mostly similar temperature and often stabil climate between those, just move to European countries which has slightly different situations. This condition often makes uncomfortable and stress. When someone having the own style for example dressing, make up, life style and when they go to another country they see unpredictable seeing, and they can accept it even ignore it or they feel stress about what they should do to suit themselves with the new culture even it causes personal conflict so it is the sample of doing without; The loss of some certain activities which somebody was previously used to do and became his favorite which make him very happy and impressed is very hard to forget.

However, all of them suddenly got lost and neither could be done nor repeated any longer when he had to move to another country;

Unfamiliar face such as anybody who goes abroad and he doesnot have any relative or friend there, of course he will see unfamiliar people. Furthermore, if we are still new, we will find it difficult to meet someone from their country. This sometimes makes them frustration sad, and another unpleasant thing. If this happens continuously, it will make difficult interaction and adaption with his new surroundings;

Additional Issues talks about The modern or up-to-date instruments, tools, or utensils as the current issues of high technology more often make us difficult to operate and control if we have not been familiar with those things before but we have to work with them;

A new job in overseas countries sometimes also makes us difficult, and usually it takes time to adapt with it quickly. However, how hard and difficult it is, we have to do it and keep on working as our consequence of job's acceptance.

#### **Culture Shock**

Storti, Craig (2001) defined that Culture shock is one condition encountered to have gone wrong whenever one or more of the parties is confused, offended, frustrated, or otherwise put off by the behavior of any of the other parties. This definition indicates that when a problem or bad experience faced by somebody or a group of people (more of the parties) in social interaction with foreigner(s) of different group of people or nations because of the different cultural background that makes them a sudden shock that has not been found and experienced before in his own culture. As we know that almost every group of community has their own habit and culture which is different between one and another. This cultural variety often makes the other group of community embarrassed, oppressed, offended, frustrated, and other unpleasant things. This might occur if one group of community finds the same kind of experience but it is contradictory with that of their own culture. For example, about life style, the style of teenagers friendship, perceptions, custom etc.

So for conclusion, culture shock can be defined as someone's expression, utterance, or action considered being a common thing in his culture but it might make somebody else unpleasant, offended and even get angry or shock due to the different cultural background.

### **The Important Roles of Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU)**

As EFL learners, they must understand that language and culture cannot be separated. They support each others to make warm situation when interaction happens. This effort automatically effect to the success or not communication itself. Related to the relationship between culture and a language, it is essential that the learners need to learn CCU for social interaction using the new language being learnt. Rivers (1981) stated that besides linguistic aspects, foreign language learners had also to learn a culture because it could not be separated from a language. Meanwhile, Levine and Adelman (1982) said that English as a second or foreign language cannot fully assist foreign and immigrant students to understand and adapt to important cultural differences of the host country. This statement could be inferred that the learners have to own strong desire or passion in efforts to adjust the culture of the new language and the natives of English speaking people to make communication run smoothly with no cultural shock. Furthermore, Stewart and Bennet (2011, p. 1) said that The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) in Foreign Language Learning lasting success in working or living with people from another culture ultimately rested on good relations. This statement is very great but very hard to realize. Therefore, within a long time of learning process sometimes the learners feel disappointed or even frustrated if they cannot achieve as what they expect to get because the adjustment process of culture (acculturation) was more often quite complex and complicated.

### **Some Stages of CCU**

There are four stages of CCU in efforts to avoid shock, they are

#### **Inconvenient**

One condition when someone feels to be forced to accept something new that he has never done, found and experienced in his own habit, culture or community before. In this condition, usually he will feel severe shocked for the first time; something that becomes contradictory or inner conflict between accepting and refusing. If he accepts his friends' habit or culture, it is contradictory with his own mind and heart. But if he refuses, he is afraid of being rejected to be a member of his new group of community.

#### **Adjustment**

In this stage, someone has been trying much to refuse something that he was not used to doing. However, the temptation and pressure from his new community to follow are much stronger. It seems that there is not any chance not to follow. Therefore, he will try to adjust and follow the new habit or culture although he feels it under

pressure and contradictory with his deepest heart. He does it just to be accepted in his new community.

### **Appreciation**

Someone has started to do and enjoy something that his new community is used to doing. However, he is still trying to make it accustomed when he stays around his new community. Furthermore, sooner or later he will start to appreciate and accept the new culture. Finally, he will do the same thing and make it accustomed in his new community something that was never done in his previous culture of community.

### **Culturation**

Culturation is a condition where someone has been willing to accept totally the new culture that at first was refused without frustrated and under pressure.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Solutions for EFL Students**

When learners want to make a good relationship especially to with different communities even countries with many background in it, as can as possible the learners must adopt themselves, without they leave their own characteristics or culture. They have to make activity called acculturation which the adoption or adjustment of traits or patterns of another group or culture. Although it looks like simple but it takes time, patience and sacrifice. It can be said like that because sometimes while or after make acculturation there are some conflicts or bad adjustments after that. The effective solution is by changing the mind set or way of thinking and how to feel something from different perception or somebody else's point of view. The learners or new comers must position themselves to accept not refuse, to learn not judge and to develop not to reject. So the comfortable communication and attitude really important here to show about the feeling in order to the new communities can feel it and accept the new learner existence in their community. In another word the intercultural awareness, intercultural skills, and existential competence are really important knowing by EFL learners so they can be easily adopt themselves to each others in community.

### **Intercultural awareness.**

Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the culture and the target community. It is important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of the regional and social diversity. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes.

### **Intercultural skills**

The ability to bring the origin culture and another culture into relation with each other; cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures; the capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and another culture and dealing effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations; the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships

### **Intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence is a unity of socio-cultural competence and socio-linguistic competence. It involves understanding of common cultural background, national culture of the country of studied language and the knowledge of history, geography, infrastructure and the way different people live. The importance of developing intercultural communicative competence alongside linguistic competence has resulted from learners' needs for acquiring intercultural skills for cross-cultural communication in which they may encounter linguistic and cultural barriers.

## CONCLUSION

Every community or country has its own culture which is different from that of any other. These differences often make some hindrance even conflict called country and culture shock. Culture shock is a shock experienced by someone due to the different cultural background. As EFL learners usually will face it if they do not want to accept or having no sense in adjusting different cultures while, country shock is a shock or conflict due to the condition or habit related to the new country where someone stays or lives.

To overcome the problems, learning of Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) is important which has four stages in learning; inconvenient, adjustment, appreciation and culturalization. Besides mastering CCU also the ability in having intercultural awareness, intercultural skills, and intercultural competence in order to decrease *the shock* in society

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