

## Investigating Intercultural Competence in EFL Teaching: Teacher Perception and Action Used to Promote Intercultural Competence

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### Abstract

**Background:** Integrating intercultural components in foreign language teaching is essential because of the interrelationship between language and culture and the need to understand native and target cultures. Integrating intercultural competence can be done appropriately if the English teacher applies appropriate teaching patterns or strategies to promote intercultural competence in the English classroom. Thus, after implementing intercultural competence, students can adapt to the global society in the future.

**Objective:** The study focuses on revealing (1) teacher's perceptions of intercultural competence in EFL teaching and (2) the actions they used in promoting intercultural competence in EFL teaching in some senior high schools in two different cities, Yogyakarta and Palembang.

**Methods:** The research is a descriptive study that investigates EFL teachers' perceptions and the application of intercultural competence in high school.

**Findings:** (1) Participants thought that intercultural competence was crucial to be taught in EFL teaching and that intercultural components such as attitudes, knowledge and skills must be introduced to students in English classroom. It is reflected in the teaching materials, teachers' syllabi, and information directly from participants. (2) In achieving the learning goals of promoting intercultural competence, all teachers used some actions including media, small group instructions, collaborative dialog, collaborative grouping, and internet-based intercultural contact.

**Conclusion:** Teachers have positive perceptions of integrating of intercultural competencies practices in EFL teaching. However, teachers also faced some problems in integrating intercultural competence such as time limitations in promoting it in EFL learning, another issue is related to the recent curriculum and EFL textbook, which does not support intercultural knowledge.

**Keywords:** EFL teaching; Intercultural competence; Intercultural pedagogy

## Introduction

Culture and language influence language speakers in communication and interaction, and effective communication skills are essential to consider in the current globalisation era when dealing with individuals from a variety backgrounds and cultures. According to Mostafaei Alaei and Nosrati (2018) and Fantini and Tirmizi (2006), the goals of teaching second and foreign languages have been greatly challenged by the phenomenon of globalization, the development of new communication technologies, and the resulting disappearance of national borders since in learning language means immersion in a new culture, environment, and thinking differently. For example, when people learn a second language, they expand their thinking horizons and develop a new perspective.

English is one of the international languages that is commonly spoken. Moreover, the aim of teaching English is more than competence in using other languages; they should involve intercultural communication competence (ICC) to develop truly interculturally competent language speakers (Byram & Morgan, 1994). In international language learning, ICC is described as a set of the main vital language learning goals by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (Celik, Cetinkaya & Kokoc, 2022). Thus, mastering the English language and gaining knowledge of other cultures is essential for developing lifelong skills and effective intercultural instruction despite being a requirement in the foreign language learning process (Abidin et al., 2024).

Moreover, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Indonesia, generally, teachers only teach linguistic facts of the target language such as phonology, morphology, and vocabulary in English classes at school. However, they are also expected to understand and know some sociocultural aspects of the target language they teach. According to Zhang and Zhang (2015), intercultural competence (IC) should be highlighted in English language teaching because language learners need to learn about heterogeneous cultures and how to communicate. In addition, Samia (2019) states that one of the main reasons why today's English language learners should be exposed to intercultural learning and have cross-cultural competence is because English has become a core language in the current stage of globalization. Therefore, in

addition to being a prerequisite for learning a foreign language, mastering English and knowing about different cultures is crucial for creating lifelong skills and effective intercultural teaching.

There is no doubt that intercultural competence is a necessary skill to develop by the teachers. Pre-service and in-service teachers must understand how to prepare their students with all the associated skills and encourage them to learn intercultural in various ways (Celik, Cetinkaya & Kokoc, 2022). Likewise, a teacher's understanding of the target language culture is also one of the elements that helps the success of foreign language learning and can build confidence when practicing a foreign language with people from different backgrounds. In short, things like attitudes, skills, behavior, and understanding are needed to make foreign language learners and users of that language feel confident in interacting with individuals. The sets of attitudes, skills, behaviors, and understanding are needed to give language learners and users confidence in interacting with individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Samifanni & Gumati, 2021).

Several studies have shown that integrating intercultural language learning can significantly benefit students. Chen and Yang (2016) explain that students who were involved in an intercultural language learning integration program improved their language skills, cultural knowledge, and attitudes toward other cultures. Promwatcharanon (2017) confirmed ICC integration in a case study of college English instructors. In this study, she found that the language instructors had a high level of ICC integration when teaching their classes. In addition, Chen and Yang (2016) found that students who participated in an international language learning integration program saw improvements in their language proficiency, cultural awareness, and attitudes toward other cultures. In addition, Nguyen (2013) used an ethnographic design, then interviews and observations to collect data with qualitative analysis. These results illustrate that when teachers introduce culture in their classes, they only focus on cultural products such as food, drink, lifestyle, or traditional festivals and their country of origin.

Furthermore, Moller and Nugent (2014) state that integrating intercultural competence in foreign language classrooms helps teachers prepare students for success in a globally interconnected world. Byram (2012) contends that language and culture education from an intercultural perspective needs to be integrated with citizenship education to foster the

realization of “social agency to be realized in the here and now”, which means that in foreign language teaching, teachers can build perspectives on intercultural citizenship education into their students' learning materials. Hence, inserting intercultural aspects into foreign language learning is important for teachers to address norms and diversity.

Some of the problems described indicate that English teachers have been unable to implement or have appropriate strategies to introduce intercultural understanding in the English classroom because they are too focused on teaching linguistic values. Therefore, concerning the importance of integrating intercultural competence in education, this study investigates teacher perceptions of IC and their actions in integrating intercultural competence in EFL classrooms, especially at senior high schools or *Sekolah Menengah Atas* (SMA) in some selected cities. Then, this study is worth conducting to establish a contribution to the field of intercultural competence, and the research questions are: 1) What are English teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence in EFL teaching? and 2) What actions are teachers' using to promote intercultural competence in EFL teaching?. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will reveal how teachers perceive intercultural competence and how it is applied in English language instruction. Additionally, by examining teachers' knowledge and practices, educational institutions will be better equipped to introduce intercultural understanding. This will help teachers prepare and inspire their students to raise awareness of intercultural in the future.

## Literature Review

### Nature of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is the capability to communicate effectively and accurately in diverse cultural contexts and is one of the crucial competencies these days. Odağ, Wallin, and Kedzior (2016), intercultural competence is the capacity to communicate and engage with others from different cultural backgrounds while also comprehending their worldviews. This indicates that to create a democratic society, intercultural comprehension focuses on appreciating and respecting the diversity and distinctions of others, whether they be individuals or groups. According to Dervin (2016), the goal of constructing relations through interactions among different cultures is to build links among them based on fairness and mutual appreciation.

Byram (1997) identified four key elements of intercultural competence in his most referenced work. The initial stage is knowledge, which is the comprehension of social groups and their cultural practices, beliefs, and artifacts at the individual and societal levels in one's own and one's interlocutor's country. The second category is attitudes, which includes qualities like admiration, readiness, openness, curiosity, interest, self-awareness, and the ability to suspend disbelief about other cultures and perceptions about one's own. The third component is a skill, which includes the ability to navigate and explore cultural beings (people), perspectives/knowledge, practices, and artifacts; to translate cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills into authentic communication and interaction; and to interpret a cultural document or event from another culture in order to explain it and relate it to documents or events from their own. The final component is awareness, which is the ability to evaluate cultural viewpoints, customs, and artifacts in one's own and other cultures.

Research studies from Bangjongjit (2018) confirmed that intercultural competence is a term that typically refers to the capacity to identify one's own cultural identity and comprehend that of others, preserve an upbeat viewpoint on differences, and engage in appropriate interaction to foster beneficial connections with individuals from diverse cultural groups. Therefore, the researcher notes that a student's IC skills are essential due to entail having a thorough understanding of cultural differences, being aware of different cultural norms and values, and having to adapt to and overcome these differences in communication situations, especially with people from diverse background (Abidin et al., 2024).

Due to the developing number of intercultural competencies around the globe, which phenomenon demands every individual to have effective and appropriate communication skills. Therefore, the awareness of intercultural values must be incorporated into foreign language teaching that aims to prepare and equip students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to communicate interculturally (Alptekin, 2002; Byram, 1997, 2009; Byram, Gribova & Starkey, 2002; Corbett, 2003; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Moreover, the goal of teaching foreign languages should be to help students become more proficient in both language and culture so they can interact with others from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Chen and Yang (2016), explained that students who were involved in an intercultural language learning improved their language skills, cultural knowledge, and attitudes toward other cultures.

### **Actions in Promoting Intercultural Competence in EFL Teaching**

The education institutions have a responsibility to consider the presence of cultural differences does not lead to automatic intercultural awareness. Likewise, incorporating intercultural competency into English language instruction is now required and ought to be a fundamental component of ELT rather than a choice. The ultimate objectives of studying English are to teach EFL students about the diversity of cultures and to help them understand and respect both their own and other cultures, as discussed by Wello, Nur, and Azis (2017). Similarly, regardless of cultural background variations, the primary objective of teaching intercultural competency is to help students build and enhance intercultural communication skills that may help them deal with various intercultural issues in the future (Snow, 2015). Then, establishing intercultural friendships among students is an excellent strategy for diminishing intercultural prejudice (Barret, 2018).

Moreover, intercultural communication skills must, therefore, be incorporated into English teaching and learning. According to Samia (2019), promoting the integration of culture into the study of international languages should be a continuing academic goal due to the number of advantages for language learners. Moreover, Hoa and Vien (2019) articulated that teachers' educational background, and experience of international teaching or the use of textbooks in foreign language learning, had a favorable influence on the way they taught cross-culturally. Although they rarely participated in cross-cultural activities in practice, the teachers were found to have a good understanding of cross-cultural integration (Abidin et al., 2024).

Furthermore, in success to promote intercultural competence for English learners, EFL teachers must make abundantly clear to learners that success in learning the English language requires not only knowing the words, spelling, grammar, and syntactic structures of the language but also a working knowledge of the cultural aspects and meanings as native speakers attach to their language (Yusri et al., 2023). As a result, EFL teachers' pedagogical competency must incorporate intercultural communication skills. In addition, English teachers also should have intercultural teaching pedagogy to undertake suitable activities to build up students' intercultural communicative skills that will last a lifetime, broaden their awareness of cultural diversity, and gain their understanding of the world (Abidin al., 2024).

To bridge and expand intercultural competence into EFL teaching, language teachers are able to use several methods (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) as the primary strategy is complimenting direction content material by facilitating practical and substantial experiences. Second, illustrating concepts and theories or content material through a global perspective. Third, it encourages students to reflect on the difficulties and experiences of intercultural competence. Thus, teachers can urge students to engage in extensive reflection on their experiences as a result.

In addition, according to Barrett (2018), there are several effective and applicable actions to promote intercultural competence in EFL teaching, such as encouraging intercultural friendship, organizing study periods abroad, organizing students for internet-based intercultural contact, building school-community relationships and partnerships, encouraging and supporting students' critical reflection of their own intercultural experiences and; cultural affiliations. Additionally, Barret (2018) further states linguistics learning may use cooperative learning and project-based learning approach and employ pedagogical strategies that enhance the growth of some particular components of intercultural competence (such as simulations and role-playing, analysis of texts, movies, and plays, and ethnographic projects); using a culturally inclusive curriculum; and adopting a whole-school approach to respecting human rights and diversity, and multiculturalism.

For instance, a study abroad experience could increase intercultural knowledge and awareness, increase motivation to explore their own and other cultures. Moreover, it helps learners identify cultural differences, improve language skills and non-verbal communication, encourage learners to use language learning strategies, improve their survival skills, gain awareness and appreciation of different perspectives, develop critical thinking skills, and as well teach learners to percieve comfortable in unpredictable situations (e.g., Czerwionka et al., 2015; Goode, 2008; Ramirez, 2016).

Based on the literature above, there are many strategies that teachers can use in promoting intercultural knowledge to EFL students. The actions that have been tested in previous studies are a means of developing intercultural knowledge in EFL students, so it can be applied by teachers and become a reference for strategies by participants in this study to teach intercultural literacy.

### Teacher Perception of Intercultural Competence

Perception is the method by which people take in and comprehend data from the environment. Physical energy exists in the universe in a variety of degrees and forms, and one of the human reactions, perception, governs how information is received. According to Kotler and Keller (2009), perception is the process of a person sorting, controlling, and interpreting the information they get to produce a meaningful meaning. In addition, perception is an idea, a belief, or an image people have because of how to see or understand (Hornby, in Srakang 2013). Wood (2015) explained that perception is a series of active processes consisting of steps of selection, organization, and interpretation of various things that are happening around us that produce the meaning of the things before for ourselves, others, and other things.

In foreign language teaching and learning, the teacher helps students to comprehend and accept people of other cultures who have different viewpoints, ethics, and behaviours. Therefore, teachers should first be conscious of and have a good perspective of their IC before imparting such information and competence to their students. Teachers' perception means the teachers' ability to observe and judge knowledge to certain aspects, in this case, IC. According to Tran (2015), teacher perception as the teachers' beliefs and the teachers' ability to define certain terms and should be about their competencies and their students regarding the IC.

Ho (2011), , and Jata (2015) investigated teacher perceptions and practices related to the application of the ICC model to English programs. Findings indicated that participants believed that an intercultural approach was appropriate and useful, but they did not seem ready to use it in practice. They used closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires, diaries, focus groups, and questionnaires to investigate Thai, US, UK, and French teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in EFL and ICC classrooms.

These studies have similarities to the objectives of this present research. However, while the previous research studies used open-ended questionnaires, diaries, and focus groups, this present study uses observation, interviews, and document analysis to obtain verifiable results.



## Method

### Research Design

The research was a descriptive case study designed to explore teachers' perceptions of the integration of intercultural competence and investigate the actions used by teachers in promoting intercultural competence teaching EFL in senior high schools. Hamadouch and Aoumeure (2024) investigate teachers' perceptions towards assessing learners' intercultural communication competence in the classrooms. An interview with open-ended questions was used in the study to get their opinions. According to the findings, teachers must receive training on creating communicative exercises for teaching culture that will enable them to evaluate their students' intercultural communication proficiency. Likewise, this study adds important details to the continuing discussion on the growth of intercultural competency in language instruction, based on the opinions of the teachers surveyed.

In addition, the method was chosen to obtain more concrete and in-depth research results. According to Kothari (2004), descriptive research is research that focuses on characterizing the features of a certain person or group. Moreover, Creswell (2012) states a descriptive research design is a method that uses a questionnaire to be given to a small group of participants (the sample) in order to identify trends in the attitudes, beliefs, actions, or other traits of a large group of people (the population). Then, descriptive strategy was used to collect, analyze and report the data on teachers' perception on intercultural competence in their EFL learning and teaching.

### Participants

The study's participants were English teachers from several selected high schools in Yogyakarta and Palembang. They are teachers of English in grade X during the second semester were chosen as study participants. The pre-observation of the learning syllabus and teacher pre-interviews were used to determine the grade. It was well known that their students will practice conducting interviews to the foreign people in the two cities throughout the semester.

Moreover, the teachers were asked for their opinions about intercultural competence integration and how they used to promote intercultural competence in teaching EFL to students. Additionally, during the research process, the researcher used Indonesian in all activities with the participants and for privacy matters, the participants in this study will be referred to as the first teacher (T1), the second teacher (T2) and the third teacher (T3).

Table 1. Participant(s)

No	Initial	Teaching Experience (Year)	Teaching Location
1	T1	15	SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta
2	T2	4	SMA Muhammadiyah 5 Yogyakarta
3	T3	13	SMA Olahraga Sriwijaya Palembang

## Data Collection

The data collection techniques in this study are audio and video recording analysis (observation), interviews, and document analysis (learning syllabus and learning curriculum). Ary (2010) asserts that observation, interview, and document analysis are the most qualitative instruments. These techniques are emphasized as the best for ethnographic research (Lodico, et al., 2010: 155). In this study, the research tools used are observation and document analysis.

The number of participants was three people from the total population, with consideration in qualitative research based on the completeness and depth of information obtained, which was adjusted to the need to understand the research problem (Sugiyono, 2013). Therefore, all participants in this study were considered important to provide valid and adequate data regarding integrating intercultural competence and practices to promote it in current EFL teaching.

Furthermore, both research questions were examined through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to present the data. In addition, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data because they could obtain more detailed affirmations from the participants.. Moreover, semi-structured interview were used to collect data since they can elicit more detailed affirmations from the participants. The semi-structured interview is perceived to have more potential than other types of interviews because it allows researchers to acquire in-depth information and evidence from interviewees (Ruslin et al., 2022).

Additionally, the semi-structured interview was divided into two phases. First phase was demographic questions which included participants' teaching experience, and their personal experiences of travel or teaching in overseas schools. The second phase of the interview explores the participants' perceptions and teachers' actions to promote intercultural competence in their EFL teaching.

Table 2. Interview Components

Variables	Questions
Components of intercultural competence integrated by teachers in the classroom	1. How do you do build students' tolerance towards other cultures or cultural differences? 2. How do you cultivate students' respect for the diversity of world cultures? 3. How do you promote an understanding of the different processes of individual and social interaction in English and Indonesian cultures?
Teacher's actions in integrating intercultural competencies	1. How do you integrate intercultural competence in the classroom? 2. Do you use technology to integrate intercultural competence in class and how do you practice it? 3. Do you do simulations or practice communicating in intercultural interactions in class? 4. Do you divide students into several groups to discuss intercultural competence in class? And how often do you use this strategy? 5. Do you use social media to introduce intercultural values in class?
The teacher's opinion on the integration of IC in the classroom	1. What do you think about the goals of teaching English based on the Merdeka Curriculum? Is promoting cultural diversity really important? 2. What do you believe in integrating intercultural competence in English class? 3. From your perspective, what are the key competencies students need to acquire to communicate effectively with people from other cultures? 4. In your opinion, how should intercultural competence be integrated with English classes?

## Data Analysis

Given all data from the semi-structured interviews collected, every participant's response was coded and transcribed. The coded data was then categorized into two types of groups: First, teacher perceptions of intercultural competence, and second, the actions used to promote intercultural competence.

Table 3. Overview of the research questions, data sources, and the analysis of research

Research question	Data source	The data analysis method used
RQ1: What actions are teachers using in implementing intercultural models in the EFL classroom teaching context?	Observation, documentation	Classroom discourse analysis
RQ2: What is the teachers' perspective on implementing intercultural competence in teaching English?	Interview	Thematic analysis

The transcription from the first section was coded based on intercultural competence components by Byram (1997). Then, the second section was coded based on what emerged in introducing intercultural competence based on Barret's theory (2018). Moreover, the frequency

of responses in each category was calculated to find out the common ideas of participants on intercultural competence.

## Findings

### Teachers' Perceptions of Intercultural Competence in EFL Teaching

All participants believed that integrating intercultural competence in their EFL class is necessary. The findings in this study indicate that all participants have similar ideas about intercultural competence. In the interviews that have been conducted, they stated that intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures. According to Bangjongjit (2018), the teachers claimed intercultural communication competence is a form of individual awareness of cultural diversity and the ability to communicate appropriately and efficiently to people with different cultural backgrounds.

T3 expressed the opinion regarding IC in the EFL class:

" It is important for students to understand the differences in the daily habits of foreigners in a social context."

Furthermore, during the interview, two participants T2 and T3, said that intercultural competence is not simply related to the ability to communicate with people from different nations but also other social groups such as gender, age, social status, etc. The latter idea agrees to the intercultural concepts by Byram et al. (2002). The intercultural concepts might be connected to various themes such as gender, age, region, religion, race, etc.

Moreover, all of participants agreed that cultural integration is essential in teaching English, and they also hope teachers place it in their EFL teaching. For example, they all said if the English teacher is required to introduce basic intercultural such as the characteristics of a foreigner, the character of a certain country's society as well as do's and don'ts actions when meeting foreigners. In addition, they said all students should understand the difference between local culture and foreign culture before they meet international people in real life.

T1 expressed the opinion regarding IC in the EFL class:

" It is important because you can know the characteristics of the people in that country

T2 and T3 stated:

" It's vital, to avoid shock culture and conflict in dealing with foreigner"

In addition, most of the participants confirmed the language is closely related to the culture they have and the culture of the target language they learn. Therefore, English teachers should promote intercultural knowledge when delivering materials. In addition, according to all participants, the foreign language they teach is related to culture the target language culture which is certainly different from Indonesian culture, and it is crucial to promote EFL learning. Thus, because of that, the use of language will later become more effective communication between the two parties with different cultures so that there are no mistakes in understanding the culture of others who have different cultural backgrounds.

T3 added the opinion regarding the importance of IC in the EFL class:

" The students get information about social interaction with other countries' cultures. For example, I tell my students that only invited people are allowed to attend parties or celebrations in western countries. Then, they understand the attitude of foreigners towards cultural differences between Indonesians and foreigners."

Table 4. Teachers' perceptions on intercultural competence

Statement	Descriptions	Unimportant	Less Important	Important	Very important
Teachers' view of integration IC	- Foster students' interest in the English study process				All participants
	- Promote students' understanding of other cultures				All participants
	- Guiding students to establish their capacity to communicate with people from other cultures				All participants
	- Promote students' understanding of Indonesian and target language culture				All participants

### **Actions Used by Teachers in Promoting Intercultural Competence in EFL Teaching**

The possible actions are alternating languages and media, translating, implementing intercultural competence in speaking, collaborative dialogue, small group discussion and multilingual listening/visual resources, collaborative grouping, and bilingual character (Barret, 2018). Then, teachers have implemented several educational methods to promote best practices in language and culture in EFL teaching.

Furthermore, the researcher presented data based on the interviews about integrating intercultural competence activities into their EFL teaching. Based on the attached excerpts from interviews conducted with all participants regarding the actions implemented in promoting intercultural competence in the EFL teaching. Also, based on observations conducted in English classes, it was found that actions promoting intercultural competence are very diverse. Some of participants used media technology and others used their personal experiences to promote intercultural competence in between them teaching.

For instance, the teachers uses some electronic media such as YouTube and google form during EFL teaching to introduce intercultural competence. One of the participants provided a video to illustrate the characteristics of Australia citizens and to inform about the country's culture. Moreover, she also claimed that after watching the video, she asked to her students to find information about the culture and characteristics of people from other countries with their own gadgets. Then, after the information was compiled, they were also asked to present their opinions by a short group presentation and make a report, which was then collected on Google Forms.

T1 expressed the opinion regarding actions in promoting IC in the EFL class as follows:

"I played a video from YouTube, for example, the characteristics of Australians and I instructed students to look for this information with their respective devices. After that, I asked them to give their opinion on their findings regarding the culture of the people of that country."

Meanwhile, T2 stated the opinion regarding actions in promoting IC in the EFL class:

"I give assignments or projects to students to practice speaking to native speakers and I make groups of one group consisting of 5 to 6 students. Next, I asked them to make 10 questions that would be used for interviews with these foreign tourists."

Last, the T3 delivered her opinion about the actions in promoting IC:

“We watch a video, then there is a worksheet that I share from the Google form while they watch and they make a reflection of the video they are watching. Sometimes I also insert quizzes that they have to work on in the Qiuzziz application.”

In another opinion, teachers also do some activities such as giving assignments or projects to students. For the example, in speaking class, all students are encouraged to make conversation practice with some native speakers by forming groups. Students are asked to create questions that will be given to foreign tourists and explore them by giving some questions regarding their cultural background.

Lastly, the participants agreed that the role of technology is very significant in promoting intercultural competence when teaching English in class. Watching videos is a common activity used by teachers. Additionally, there are many comprehensive activities carried out after that. Based on the observations implemented by researchers, students do or reflect on the culture they find in the video. At the end, after watching the video, a quiz must be done by students related to the culture they found.

It can be resolved from the table 5 that teachers have delivered the following actions in promoting intercultural competence in EFL teaching. It was in line with the has been theory of Barret (2018): presentations by comparing their culture with the target culture, group discussions, asking questions, debating, and real practice in social contexts and dramatizing their culture by using English. In addition, teachers also use social media to facilitate the process of conveying the culture of the target language's country, both for digging up information and submitting their learning assignments. This action focuses on the use of language in intercultural contexts. Also, this strategy reveals that students engage in direct interaction with their target language settings, language diction, meaning interpretation, linguistic and cultural reflections using the target language and culture.

Table 5. Actions used in promoting intercultural competence in EFL teaching

Types of Actions	Learning Topic	Observed Actions	Language Use			Document review
			ENG	IND	LL	
1. Actions based on contact between groups. (supporting intercultural friendship)	Listening song	1. Conveying the target language culture of English through songs on YouTube	T1, T2			1. The syllabus and materials show contextualized activities, interview with English.
2. Action based on contact between groups  (Encouraging intercultural friendship)		2. Interpret the song and compare whether the song is appropriate or not to the culture of Indonesia.	T1, T2	T1, T2	T3	2. Discussion, cooperative group, presentation, practice in procedural texts and persuasive texts shown in the syllabus
3. Action based on contact between groups. (Enable students to have internet-based intercultural contact)	3. Using YouTube to convey the habits of foreign people, asking students to find out the background based on the country they choose through their respective devices.	3. Promoting the characteristics of the community and culture of the target language in English with songs on YouTube.	T1, T2, T3	T2, T3		3. Discussions with small groups, presentations, practice of procedural texts and persuasive texts by making reflections according to the learning materials. Students submit projects on Google form.
4. Action based on intergroup connection. (Establishing school-community links and friendships, and conducting service-learning projects)	4. Find some videos of interviews with foreigners on YouTube and use online dictionaries on each student's device to learn the meaning and correct pronunciation.	4. Conveying to students the ethics and rules of interviewing foreigners by videos on YouTube.	T2			4. Discussions, collaborative group, presentations, practice speaking texts directly with the target language audience.
5. Action by means of the pedagogical approach.	5. Using social media to find information and examples of target language culture.	5. Show the culture and habits of the people in the target language country through social media: Instagram, Canva and Facebook.	T1, T2, T3	T1, T2, T3		5. Discussions with small groups, presentations, making reflections according to the learning syllabus. Then, submit the assignment on the Google form and their social media account.



## Discussions

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Intercultural Competence: Positive and Necessary with some challenges to implement**

Intercultural competence, according to the participants is the capacity to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds in a suitable and successful manner. In addition, all of them noted the intercultural competence not only about the capacity to communicate with people from different countries, but also related to other things like social groups such as gender, age, social status, etc. According to Byram et al. (2002), the intercultural notions can be related to various themes such as gender, age, region, religion, race, etc.

Furthermore, they together confirmed that integrating intercultural competence into teaching practice has several obstacles. Because of some challenges, all teachers submit complaints to other parties such as schools, the Ministry of Education, or even curriculum makers. As the duration of teaching English has been reduced nowadays, therefore promoting intercultural competence is limited. In addition, all teachers agreed that it is difficult to integrate intercultural competence because the available English materials and textbooks provide a small portion on cultural topics. Teachers need extra time to find and develop cultural materials on their own.

### **Internet-based Intercultural Contact as a Regular Action in Promoting Intercultural Competence**

The second research question considered the extent to which teachers integrate intercultural competence into their classroom practices and which actions are most frequently used in the EFL teaching. However, a few actions suggested by some scholars were not recognized at all, such as doing reflective tasks (Trede et al., 2013), applying portfolio and discussion, and reflective writing (Byram et al., 2002). These activities demand students with advanced language skills and probably prominence teachers' workload.

The finding reveals that most frequent actions that are applied in the classroom are integrating technology to illustrate cultural topics, such as videos, PowerPoint, and the internet. It was confirmed by the result of the interview and open-ended questions that most teachers integrated intercultural competence in EFL teaching by using technology or technology

applications. To integrate intercultural competence for example, to illustrate the intercultural attitude dimension teachers used videos or films from YouTube, followed by asking the students about their opinions before they opened a discussion related to the topic. Some studies by Gonen and Saglam (2012), Fungchomcoei and Kardkarnklai (2016), Bagui and Adder (2020) found that most of the activities that teachers in the classroom guide were managed using technologies or media.

Moreover, besides giving knowledge through watching films or videos directly to the students, the teachers also required students to learn about other cultures and share the information they have in English class. For example, some participants ask students to find out information about their dream country to travel to or to study in the future for. Meanwhile, other participant asks students to learn about ethics in inviting other people to certain events from overseas communities on the Internet. Then, as further activities, students presented the information they obtained and compared it to their culture through small discussions. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, in Young Lee, 2012) emphasized that class discussion, research, and role play accommodate students' comparisons and reflections on English culture from various countries and their own culture.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Teachers' perceptions of the integration of intercultural competence in EFL classroom are viewed positively by all participants. They recognize that the intercultural approach is an important skill that students must possess in learning the target language, especially English as their target language. The interviewed participants stated that intercultural competence helps students in some aspects, such as reducing misunderstanding and misinterpretation when communicating with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition, they also believed the integration of intercultural competence in EFL classroom can foster students' interest in learning foreign languages and their culture.

Moreover, in integrating intercultural competence into EFL teaching, all participants noted have a possible strategy to achieve learning goals. Some actions include small group instructions, cooperative groups, language and media, collaborative dialogue, discussion, and presentation. Based on that, the teachers significantly benefit for students' understanding of the

teaching and learning process. These activities impact on students' awareness of cultural differences, and they gain insight into their own culture and the culture of communities from other countries with cultural differences.

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