



## Students' Perception on Intercultural Reading Material for English Learning

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### Abstrak

Kelengkapan materi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris berbasis antar budaya tergantung pada banyak faktor, seperti latar belakang budaya siswa, kompleksitas situasi masalah yang diberikan dalam materi, kepekaan topik materi, dan pengalaman siswa terhadap topik diskusi. Oleh karena itu, perlu adanya respon siswa terhadap materi yang diberikan selama pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa tentang bahan materi pembelajaran berbasis antarbudaya yang dikembangkan oleh dosen untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Persepsi siswa terkait dengan motivasi, kesulitan, dan ketepatan materi. Penelitian dilakukan dengan pendekatan survei dan melibatkan 96 siswa. Partisipan dipilih secara acak dari dua program studi di Politeknik Penerbangan Surabaya. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara. Selanjutnya, data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan melakukan analisis deskriptif (persentase dan frekuensi) menggunakan SPSS versi 22. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki sikap positif terhadap materi yang diterapkan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

**Kata Kunci:** Interkultural, Keterampilan Membaca, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.

### Abstract

*The adequacy of the intercultural-based English material depends on many factors, such as the students' cultural background, the complexity of the problem situation provided in the material, the sensitivity of the material topic, and the students' experience to the topic discussion. Therefore, it was needed to get students' response to the material given during the English learning. The objective of this study was to investigate students' perceptions on intercultural reading material which were developed by the lecturers for English learning. The students' perception was related to their motivation, difficulties, and the material efficacy. The study conducted a survey approach and involved 93 students. The participants were randomly selected from two study program in Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic. The data were collected through questionnaire. Further, the collected data was analyzed by performing the descriptive analysis (percentage and frequency) using SPSS version 22. The findings show that students have positive attitudes towards the material implemented in English learning.*

**Keywords:** Intercultural, Reading, English learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

Based on the documents of UNESCO (2008), there are three principles of intercultural education that should be considered. The first principle is related to respect for the cultural identity of the students through providing culturally appropriate and responsive education for all. The second principle sees intercultural education can provide cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills for the students which are needed for joining and participating in global society. Finally, the third principle emphasize that intercultural education should promote respect, understanding, and solidarity among individuals, and among different ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.

The development of intercultural competence and should be learned, practiced and maintained (Lourenço, 2018). The most importance is an understanding that intercultural education is needed for all students, even in monocultural contexts, and should not be seen simply as a way to integrate migrant students or to deal with multicultural contexts. The students should get the opportunity to understand the diversity as a normal characteristic of current societies and realize it as a means of their personal development (Alred & Byram, 2002).

There are many approaches of intercultural education. The objectives of these approaches are promoting students' understanding of the world outside their own countries and communities, develop attitudes and predispositions that underpin a respectful and equal discourse between cultures and inspire them to act toward positive change. finally, these all create a transformative vision of education and a new paradigm that goes beyond local and national barriers, individualism and competitiveness, toward a feeling of belonging to a greater whole (Lourenço, 2018). This implies that an intercultural education is very important to promote. It can teach the students how to live together in global society, to respect other people and their environment, to promote their skill for critical, ethical and responsible action toward the equality and social justice in larger society.

Presently, intercultural learning concept has been implemented in English learning (Arshavskaya, 2020; Heggernes, 2021; Su et al., 2021; Vu & Dinh, 2021). Byram, Gribkova and Starkey postulate that it is necessary to provide learners not only with “knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language, but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (Alred & Byram, 2002). The other scholars, Baker (2011), and Canagarajah (2012) agree with the idea that language ability alone does not fully support students to effectively be taking part in the global communication. It means that the language teaching must enhance distinct opportunities so that learners can become successful intercultural speakers, as Byram explains, “in communicating information, but also in developing a human relationship with people of other languages and cultures” (Sercu, 2006). In addition, Intercultural learning has become important (Sevilla-Pavon, 2018) because people speaking different languages, representing different cultures, and residing in different countries are becoming “closer” to each other with the help of information technologies (Özdemir, 2017).

Developing intercultural competence can be implemented through reading comprehension (Roncancio, 2018). One of importance teaching process for reading comprehension is to choose the reading material. Besides, teachers should create their own libraries as well as design their own reading tasks (Harmer, 2005). Teachers also should consider that reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text, and it must be dynamic (Dutcher, 1990). Regarding this assumption, the reading material should be designed to make reading comprehension easier and interesting for the students. They should be involved in a dynamic process of reading and the connections students make while reading new information.

There are some principles that teachers should consider which help them in providing the reading material for the students such as adapt them to students' needs and characteristics, do research and evaluate students (Tomlinson, 2012). Creating own material help teachers to build their own library, engage students in

learning process and help the students to comprehend the reading text. Similarly, Núñez et al. (2009, 2013) conceived materials as “teaching resources and strategies used to maximize students’ language learning”. This implies that creating own materials can simply the students’ learning. Thus, it is the result of knowing students’ needs and learning styles. Finally, Núñez et al. (2013) argued that materials are “socio-cultural resources that facilitate not only linguistic interaction but also cultural exchanges between the various human groups”. In this sense, creating own materials helps to develop students’ intercultural awareness because it allows them to interact and share information about their own cultural experiences. Also, it helps them to be more critical about their contexts and more respectful about the differences.

This study aimed to explore students' perception of intercultural based reading material at the Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic. To be more specific, the students’ perception was related to their motivation, difficulties, and the material efficacy. The research question is formulated as follows: "What are students' perceptions on Intercultural Reading Material for English Learning?".

## METHOD

The study selected 93 participants from two study programs at Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic through purposive sampling. The rationale for adopting the nonprobability purposive sampling method is to access the participants who have required information to collect data to address the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researchers used the questionnaires to find out the students’ perception on intercultural reading material for English learning which related to their motivation, difficulties, and the material efficacy.

The study adopted a survey approach by involving 93 students. A survey questionnaire constructed in Google Forms was sent to the student through emails and WhatsApp. The obtained data was saved in excel format and then transferred to SPSS version 22 for data analysis.

The obtained data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis in SPSS (frequency and percentage) to investigate students’ the perception on intercultural reading material for English learning.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Students’ Motivation and Interest in Intercultural Reading Material

As shown in Table 1, the participants were interested to intercultural based reading material. There were 64 % of them "strongly agreed" and 36 % "agreed" to the statement that showed the students’ motivation and interest to the material given. The table showed that 91 % students "strongly agreed" that the language used in intercultural based learning material was easy to be understood. 86 % students also "agreed" that the learning materials made them easier to study independently. This finding clarified Romadloni’s (2017) finding that implementing intercultural approach in the learning process can increase students' motivation

**Table 1. Motivation and Interest in Intercultural Reading Material**

No	Questions	Students’ Responses				
		SD	D	A	SA	Total
1.	The learning materials of intercultural English class made me easier to study independently.	0 %	0 %	86 %	14%	100%
2.	Intercultural English class’ learning materials were composed specifically and there were illustrations and examples that made me easier to learn.	0 %	0 %	14%	86 %	100%
3.	I think, the language that was used in intercultural	0 %	0 %	9 %	91%	100%

English class' learning material was easy to be understood.					
<b>Mean (%)</b>	0 %	0 %	36%	64 %	100%

The students' motivation and interest are positive to intercultural based learning material. This is clarified by three of the interviewees.

Student 1: "Intercultural reading material given by the lecturer could help me in increasing my knowledge related to the various cultures of English speakers independently".

Student 2: "Intercultural-based English learning materials presented a variety of illustration which easy to understand".

Student 3: "I could get many information related culture dimension from the material given by the lecturer because the language was simple and easy to understand".

## 2. Difficulties

The data in Table 2 showed that there were some students faced some troubles in finding the source of intercultural English class' learning material and they also thought that the contents of intercultural English class' learning materials were too much and difficult to be understood. Even there were only a few students who got difficulties in learning the material, the teacher should pay attention to these problems. Rahayuningsih (2016) believed that the teaching materials must be suitable with the students' needs, even they are not designed specifically for them, the teaching materials should make it possible for students to preview and prepare their lessons, and the teaching materials should allow for adaptation and improvisation. It means that the lecturer should improve the learning material to be better for the next learning.

The information obtained from the interview clarifies that some students got problems in dealing with learning material given by their teacher.

Student 1: "The content of learning material was too much, especially the culture of English speakers that I have never known before, so it made me difficult to understand the material if I studied independently".

Student 2: "I think, the students should be guided to access the sources of digital intercultural material which was appropriate for learning".

**Table 2. Difficulties in Learning Intercultural Reading Material**

No	Questions	Students' Responses				
		SD	D	A	SA	Total
1.	I mastered only a few learning materials in intercultural English class.	10 %	90 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
2.	I faced some troubles in finding the source of intercultural English class' learning material.	0 %	84 %	16 %	0 %	100 %
3.	The contents of intercultural English class' learning materials were too much and difficult to be understood.	3 %	75 %	22 %	0 %	100 %
<b>Mean (%)</b>		4 %	83 %	13%	0 %	100 %

### 3. Intercultural Reading Material Efficacy

Based on the data shown in Table 3, The students believed that the learning materials of intercultural English class were suitable for their needs. 81 % "strongly agreed" that the learning materials of intercultural English class related to what their needed for their job future.

Margana and Widyantoro (2016) propose six criteria of good materials. First, they have to present suitable basic and core competence in reference to the content. Second is the organization and language skill areas. Third is the contexts of language use. Fourth is critical thinking skill development. Fifth, culture has to be integrated into the materials as it could provide students with a comprehensive understanding on how language is used according to the social contexts both in target and local contexts. The last, the materials should in accordance to the student's needs.

The information obtained from the interview clarifies that learning materials of intercultural English class were suitable for their needs.

Student 1: "By reading the material, I could get the objectives of the learning because it was stated clearly in the material. Therefore, this material could assist the students to achieve the goal of learning".

Student 2: "I got much information about culture of English-speaking countries. I believe that this material supports me for my job future after I graduated from this college".

**Table 3 Intercultural Reading Material Efficacy**

No	Questions	Students' Responses				
		SD	D	A	SA	Total
1.	I achieved the learning objectives of intercultural English learning' syllabus through the learning materials.	0 %	0 %	9 %	91%	100 %
2.	The learning materials of intercultural English class were able to motivate me in the learning process because they were suitable for my needs.	0 %	0 %	86 %	14 %	100 %
3.	I was able to know the objectives of the learning materials that had been prepared in intercultural English class.	0 %	0 %	90%	10 %	100 %
4.	The learning materials of intercultural English class related to what I needed for my job future.	0 %	0 %	19 %	81%	100 %
<b>Mean (%)</b>		0 %	0 %	51 %	49 %	100 %

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions above, it can be concluded that the students in this study had positive perception on intercultural based reading material in English learning. They are interested in the material because it motivated them to learn English. The materials were suitable with their needs. Aside from that it also supported them for their job future. However, there were some students who got difficulties in learning the material. The students got difficulties in finding the source of intercultural English class' learning material and saw that the contents of intercultural English class' learning materials were too much and difficult to be understood. It means that the development of the materials is always needed for the next learning.

Further, Since the participants in this study were of a single educational institution, the findings could not be generalized to other populations outside of study program. Future studies are recommended for to involve a larger number of participants from various educational institutions to make it safer to make generalizations. Also, the indicators of the instruments include statements related to the intercultural based reading material in general. Future researches are recommended to investigate students' perception of using intercultural based English material for other language skills, e.g. speaking, listening and writing.

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