Incorporating Intercultural Competences in Developing English Materials for Writing Classes

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Abstract—Teaching English as a foreign language has been focused on cultural aspects. Teachers studied English from their cultures and then they compare those with the target cultures. This was aimed to facilitate English students to communicate orally and in written, linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate. Therefore, this research study was aimed at developing English materials based on intercultural language learning for writing classes. To reach the maximal materials, the researchers applied need analysis to identify cultural materials based learning model that feeds students' needs and expectation. Based on the result of research study, students like cultural topics for their level, such as wedding ceremonies, historical buildings, and traditional music. These topics showed that the set of interculture-based instructional materials was appropriate to be utilized in the teaching of writing skills for English department students.

Index Terms—intercultural language learning, cultural materials, teaching writing

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years English teachers have been paying increasing attention to intercultural language learning to explore intercultural competences and to facilitate their students to write. The intercultural language learning gives opportunities for students to increase linguistic knowledge and cultural communication of English natives. Xue (2014) depicts that intercultural competences lead students to understand the language target (p.149). These competences are acquired by students through culture teaching because teaching cultures is to acquire communicative competences (Sun, 2013. p.371). Yue et all (2014) argue that language and culture are inseparable, hence when teachers teach a language they teach cultures (p.371). The linguistic knowledge and cultural aspects are acquired when teachers develop instructional materials containing cultural aspects. Liddicoat (2013) inserts also that cultural aspects are brought as learning materials into classrooms to reach intercultural competences (p.126) and then they are assessed as intercultural competences (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p.123). Therefore, intercultural language learning is able to bring students to get intercultural competence in ELT (Zhu, 2010, p.107).

This research has explored the intercultural language learning in writing classrooms. In EFL classrooms, writing is the most difficult language skill for Indonesian learners. The ability to write fluently and accurately presupposes not only good knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process and shape in mind based on English natives. Richard & Renandya (2002) state "whenever you teach a language, you teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting" (p.303). That is why non-native English teachers have been increasingly aware that writing skills are learned hardly without addressing the cultural aspects reflected in English language in which it is spoken (Kanp & Watkin, 2005, p.19). The culture of the community determines how the language itself to be expressed to others.

In writing classrooms nowadays, the linguistic knowledge alone is not enough in guaranteeing for a successful writing (Atay et all, 2009). Linguistics features are necessary and cultural aspects are more crucial. Cultural mistakes are worse than linguistic ones because they tend to create misunderstanding between English natives and non-natives. Cultural aspects are necessary to be learned by students to avoid misjudgments or ill feeling. For this reason, English teachers should devote English instructional materials that containing cultural aspects for their students in writing classrooms although the writing anxiety is needed to be paid attention (Berk, 2017, p.237).

In Indonesia, English is regarded as a foreign language and is largely treated as an academic subject in the school and is not widely used outside of the classroom. In Indonesian curriculum, writing knowledge and skills are embedded in the course subject of English and Indonesia, each with two credit hours (Sinaga & Feranie, 2017, p.69). Therefore,

students face difficulties in performing English in writing. The students are required to master linguistic competences and even sociocultural competences (Murcia, 2007, p.41). Therefore, acts of writing need various processes for students to be a good writer. What Indonesian students face is similar to what students are faced in the countries where English taught as a foreign language.

Sharp (2016) in his research found that teachers of writing potentially lack an understanding for the various processes at work during the acts of writing among each student. This process would be that the writing instruction potentially was narrow, rigid, and inflexible. Non-native teachers and even native English teachers face difficulties in acts of writing because writing is a developmental and flexible process. Language learners from different cultures have their own cultural beliefs, values and social customs that strongly determine the communication way orally and in written (Zhang, 2010, p.224). In his research in china, he dwells on the four dimensional approach to develop students' intercultural competences, i.e. teaching students' basic knowledge of western cultures in class and providing more teaching practice chances for all kinds of activities in class.

Teaching of writing skills based on intercultural learning is proposed to stimulate and increase students' writing skills through developing intercultural competences. The development of intercultural competences helps students to increase their ideas and thoughts. To gain intercultural competences, teachers need to develop a particular instructional model oriented to intercultural language learning. Intercultural competences are assumed to be closely integrated with learning to know, learning to do, and learning to be (UNESCO, 2013).

Based on the consideration above, this research was aimed at developing intercultural competences by designing tasks to support the intercultural language learning model for teaching writing skills. The problems identified in private universities in west Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The learning materials and tasks for writing skills in English language department should be appropriate to the students' level and interest. The problem is how to develop appropriate materials so that the students are able to improve their writing skills. Thus, the learning materials for writing skills based on intercultural language learning have not been thoroughly developed to improve the students' writing proficiency. The learning tasks for writing skill based on intercultural language learning have not been thoroughly developed to improve the students' writing proficiency.

The problems of the research study was formulated into the following research questions; 1) what are the appropriate materials of interculture-based language learning (IBLL) model in the teaching of writing skills at the English department in higher education like?; 2) what are the appropriate learning tasks of interculture-based language learning (IBLL) model in the teaching of writing skills at the English department in higher education like?; 3) what is the quality of learning tasks of interculture-based language learning (IBLL) model for teaching writing skill at the English department students in higher education like?

The contributions of this article to literature are: 1) The intercultural language learning model can be utilized to teach English students in writing classrooms; 2) identifying needs refers to needs analysis result of gathering information on the students' necessities (what kinds of cultural topics they prefer), lacks (what kinds of problems they have in language skills), and wants (how they want to learn the intercultural competences and writing skills); 3) developing tasks for teaching materials can be arranged based on the learning needs and target needs for teaching writing skills.

II. METHOD

The research study was a research and development (R & D) that is expected to produce a certain product of instructional materials designed within intercultural language learning. This research study used the stages of development that has been developed by Thiangrajan in Sugiyono (2011). There were carried out in four stages: (1) Defining, involving needs analysis to know the gabs between realities and wants in teaching writing, (2) Designing, involving designing the course grid and the first draft product, (3) Developing the product, involving developing the product through preliminary try-out and main try-out. (4) Disseminating the product, involving stakeholders and user of the product. There were two kinds of data in the research study, qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data provided information about students' needs (target needs and learning needs), the result of interview and the quality of instructional tasks. While the quantitative data indicated information about the score of questionnaires.

The subject of the research study was the English language educational students at some private universities in Indonesia. The try-out of the product was conducted at IKIP Mataram involving 32 students. The instruments were questionnaire and interview guidelines. The questionnaires comprise the needs analysis and evaluation questionnaire. The needs analysis questionnaire was carried out to gain the target needs and learning needs of students at writing classes, while the evaluation questionnaire was distributed to reach feedback from students. The interview guidelines have been used to reach the empirical evaluation data and it has been conducted after try-out. The results indicated the information about the appropriateness of instructional tasks for teaching writing classes at English language educational students.

The data of needs analysis and evaluation were analyzed quantitatively. The results were explanation about the students' needs (based on the target needs and learning needs) in learning writing skills and their responses toward the instructional tasks designed. The data of tasks evaluation questionnaire were analyzed by using central tendency (Creswell, 2012). The data were converted into the interval of mean score in scale 1 to 4 by using a range of factual score. The developed instructional tasks were said appropriate as mean score indicated 3.01 up to more than 3.51.

Meanwhile, the tasks were inappropriate as the mean score showed less than 3.00. The data from interview were analyzed qualitatively by conducting recording and then transcribing. The researchers carried out some stages qualitatively such as collecting, reducing, selecting, displaying and describing the data.

III. FINDINGS

In general, the finding indicated that intercultural language learning in Indonesian context was not different from countries in expanded circles, where English is as the foreign language. Nevertheless, there were some appropriate materials and tasks presented to support the intercultural language learning in order to reach intercultural competences for English students for writing classes, as discussed further in this section.

A. Result of the Needs Analysis

The data from needs analysis in term the target needs comprise the students' necessities, wants and lacks. Based on the data of needs analysis, the students mostly needed materials that facilitate them to write. They needs appropriate topics to lead them to produce texts, linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate. The topics chosen to facilitate them to write were the topics reflecting the cultural identity such as wedding ceremonies, and engagement process (53.12%), students showed that they want the topics containing the religious ceremony as Happy *Idul Fitri*, Marry Christmas (75%) in the agree category. Then, students showed that they needed the cultural topics reflecting the family expression such as kissing, shaking hand, and embracing (68.75%) in agree category.

The results of data analysis dealing with aspects hoped to develop in writing class indicated that aspects of vocabulary and knowledge about text types (96.87%) and aspects of teaching materials (90.62%). Meanwhile, they wanted to improve the aspects of punctuation, spelling and grammar (87.5%) as well. Dealing with kinds of text, the data showed students needed the imaginary texts (87.5%), literary text (84.37) and factual texts (75%).

The data of students' lack indicated that they faced difficulties in expressing ideas into paper (65.62%), lacks of understanding about English structure (59.37%), difficulties in developing ideas into paragraphs (56.25%), and in selecting the words correctly (55%). The data of the target needs, such as necessary, want, and lack, were utilized to develop the instructional tasks for writing students. Meanwhile, the results of the learning needs were applied to set the classroom learning activities. The learning needs consist of the input, teacher's role, students' role and setting. Most of students needed various learning activities in writing class. As input, they needed cultural texts produced from native speakers or countries in inner circles, where using English is spoken as first language (62.5%), outer circles where English is used as a second language (53.12%), and also expanding circles where English is used as a foreign language (50%) as table 1.1 below.

TABLE I
CULTURAL TEXTS FROM ENGLISH COUNTRIES

Rank	The cultural texts derived from English countries	Percentage			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I	Expanding circle (Countries using English as foreign language) China, Sweden, Japan, etc.	31.25	62.5	6.25	0
II	Inner circle (Countries using English as L1) such as Australia, Britain, US	37.5	53.12	9.37	0
III	Outer circle (Countries using English as L2) such as Singapore, India, Malaysia, etc.	21.87	50	25	3.12

(Source: Bearne & Wolstenscroft, 2007)

In learning activities, the students needed the teacher play a role as assessor for their drafting writing activities (68.75%), feedback giver and facilitator (65.62%). Meanwhile, the students wanted to play a role as reviser or reviewer for their classmate drafting each other (46.87%) and as corrector for grammatical items in their classmate writing (53.12%). In term of setting classroom, the mostly students preferred the effective way for writing class which was autonomous learning (59.37%) in making writing drafts. Meanwhile, students preferred in pair learning (56.25%).

B. Results of Development

Based on the result of needs analysis, the researchers developed the interculture-based instructional tasks in teaching writing skills for English department students in private universities in Indonesian context. The instructional tasks comprise four chapters and each chapter was made seven activities based on intercultural instructional model. Those were developed based on objectives of teaching of writing skills which have goals to improve student competences particularly as means of communication in written, linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate.

In designing the instructional tasks, the researchers referred to the task based language learning proposed by van Braden (2001). The tasks were divided into two parts; focus on reading and then writing activities. The designed materials consist of seven learning stages in activities which are; *warming up, noticing, comparing, reflecting, concluding tentatively, constructing* and *presenting*. Each stage provided cultural texts to be read by students. The text derived from Indonesian cultures (as local cultures) first and then from countries spoken English as a first language (L1),

L2 and foreign language. The proposed texts are altered to make it easy to be understood by students. At the end of the chapter, the researchers carried out evaluation to see the students' comprehension of the materials.

The components of each chapter were: (1) tittle; (2) learning goals; (3) warming-up; (4) noticing; (5) comparing; (6) reflecting; (7) concluding tentatively, constructing, and presenting. The firs component was 'title' which was topics or themes will be studied. It was chosen based on the basic competence. Choosing a topic referred to what the students wanted to do to get the learning goals. The next component was 'warming up'. Before the teacher gives students a cultural topic, students were given some pictures or question lists to help them to build their background knowledge about the tossEpic. This component leaded the students to notice the cultural or intercultural features. In the noticing process, the students are given a reading text. The text content was from their culture and foreign cultures. It presented to give them the prior knowledge to write.

After noticing section, the students moved to comparing component. This leaded them to compare their own and foreign culture. It provided to get the understanding about both their cultures and foreign cultures. Their comprehension was presented in written drafts. From this section, they did reflection and they will realize what and how their own cultures are and be able to respect to foreign cultures. After that, the component was 'concluding tentatively-constructing-presenting'. It provided to help students to understand and respect to people who have different culture with them. All the students' understanding about their own cultures and foreign cultures was shown in written paragraphs.

To help them easy to write, researchers provided the graphic organizers. Besides, researchers provided some difficult vocabularies with the phonetic transcription and their meanings or explanations dealing with the topic that they were learning. Before the first and final draft of the developed tasks was tried-out, it had been consulted to the experts. The experts involved were the expert of English language instruction, language teaching media and language evaluation. The final draft was revised mostly on language rather than on content.

C. Results of Tryout Tasks and Revision

The field-testing of the product was held on May 2nd until June 6th 2016. It was carried out in 6 meetings in writing class. It was attended 32 students. The data collected by using questionnaire of Unit I were evaluated.

The mean value of each task ranged from 3.33 – 3.43 and the mean score of the whole tasks was 3.34. The results indicated that the Unit I was appropriate for the students. Nevertheless, there were some tasks needed to be revised. Some tasks should be designed in pairs, small group and individually. Besides, the cultural reading texts cited from Wikipedia sources should be modified to make it easy to comprehend. Students still faced difficulties in understanding the grammars and in predicting the meaning of some vocabularies. It was suggested to use another technique to solve the difficulties.

The data collected from evaluation of Unit II showed that the mean value of each task ranged from 3.32 – 3.44. The average of the whole task was 3.33. This indicated the Unit II was appropriate for students in writing class. Nevertheless, there were revisions in the setting of task design, such as set of cultural pictures and reading texts. Meanwhile, the data collected from materials evaluation of Unit III showed that the mean value of each tasks ranged from 3.33-3.44. The average of the whole task was 3.42. This presented the materials of Unit III was appropriate with some revisions, such as it should be added more explanations and examples about communicative grammar in writing process.

The last materials evaluation of Unit IV presented that there was 3.33-3.42 of the mean value of each task. The average of the whole tasks was 3.33. This indicated the materials were appropriate for students writing class. The revision was only in the setting of tasks and the students should carry out the task in pairs as well as individually.

IV. DISCUSSION

The materials developed were based on the intercultural language learning model. Meanwhile, the task was designed based on task-based language learning. It was presented for students in writing class. The materials consist of four chapters and each chapter has some tasks. The numbers of tasks in each chapter were different. Each chapter was developed based on a certain cultural topic to facilitate students to write. Each part was sequenced dealt with task level of complexities. The sustainability or dependency among some tasks was considered. The designed tasks were in line with Nunan's (2004) and Nation & Macalister's (2010) principles of grading, sequencing and integrating tasks.

The proposed topics were cultural topics, such as wedding ceremony (in unit I), historical building (in unit II), Music (in unit III) and Myths (in unit IV). Students started studying their own culture first and then target culture related to the topic. For target culture, the topics were adapted and adopted from English countries found in website. Those were appropriate as materials to facilitate students to get knowledge or understanding about cross cultures among countries using English as L1, L2 and foreign language. It indicated that the students can import their knowledge based on the topics into well paragraphs.

The materials were developed based on the learning goals. The learning goals were to improve students' writing skills, linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate. To gain the goals, the researchers proposed the intercultural language model in the teaching of writing skills through cultural topics deriving from countries categorized as inner

circle, outer circle and expanding circle. To make it easy in practice, the researchers applied the learning stages which were; *noticing, comparing, reflecting, concluding tentatively, constructing* and *presenting stage*.

In the topic of wedding ceremony, the students were learning about wedding traditions both their own culture and target culture. Through intercultural knowledge, they were able to write a descriptive text as manifesting their understanding about both local culture and target culture. To know their knowledge of culture, the students then implemented it into paragraphs. To support them to write, the researcher gave them some explanation about how to write a descriptive text through good English structures. The students also were provided a graphic organizer to guide them to write.

For example in the topic of historical building, the students were presented texts with serial pictures about familiar historical building, such as historical temples (Prambanan and Borubudur temple), *lawang sewu, Sade* House and the like from Indonesia. Local cultures were presented first to build their prior knowledge. This process was conducted in noticing stage. They noticed their own culture. After that, they moved to compare with the target cultures. The target cultures proposed here were *Trully* Houses in Italy, Taj Mahal in India, cathedral heritage building in Britain and the like. The students read the texts relating with the topics and then they compare them with what they had. The process of comparison was focused on the content of texts. It was to get understanding between the local culture they had and target culture. In practice, they were provided with a graphic organizer.

After doing comparison, students did reflection about the topics. It meant that they thought how they understood the language, culture and relationship between those. Students involved in being aware of concepts, such as diversity, identity, experience and how one's own intercultural feeling. To keep it in mind, they made a writing draft as result of their reflection. They were also provided some learning tasks such as identifying English parts of speeches, phrases and clauses from the original text. This aimed to imitate how the target language operated in texts.

The comparing and reflecting process was not aimed to judge that this culture was right and another was not right. To avoid this stigma, the researcher proposed a process namely concluding tentatively. In this process, students took decision about their view of their culture and target culture and then they expressed it into written form. They analyzed how the language functioned in a text. The target cultures became their consideration to develop a conceptual category of cultural differences and similarities. To help students to do that, researcher provided some tasks with serial pictures. They were asked to write the scene activity from pictures. The form of instruction was such as 'in pairs, write the scene activity from each picture below based on your current knowledge'.

The results of students' conclusion were constructed in descriptive, recount, explanation and narrative text. This process was done in constructing stage. This stage involved students to construct their understanding based on what they compare and reflect in descriptive text for a topic. They were presented explanation how to write a descriptive text and an example of its structure. They did check and recheck among them about their draft. They did revision based on feedback among them. The end of the stage was a presenting stage. The students' final draft would be presented in front of class.

In Indonesian context, these activities could be considered as interesting activities. These were challenging and giving the students' opportunities to know the target culture and imitate the patterns of English language they used in a written expression. These could also develop their knowledge and skills dealt with their reading comprehension. The developed materials and tasks here were in line with the Grave (2000) in which the good materials should provide stimulus to learn and should motivate the students to use their existing knowledge and skills.

In term of task setting for example, it was found that both individual and pair or group works motivated students to learn. The appropriateness of tasks setting was determined by the types of tasks presented. The tasks related to grammar focus, such as identifying the main verbs, phrases and clauses through authentic texts, were provided with explanation. The students discussed it in pairs and group works. Therefore, it was easier for them to understand and imitate them in written expression. Meanwhile, the tasks concentrated highly were conducted individually. This, in term of task setting in pairs, allowed students to work and interact independently without guidance from teachers and in task setting individually, this improved the students' autonomy and allowed the teacher to respond differently based on the their rate of learning and their learning styles.

The teacher had important role during the task implementation. The appropriate teacher roles here were facilitator, feedback giver, assessor, and organizer. This indicated that it was in line with the opinion of Harmer (2001) who stated that the roles of teacher can be as a controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor and observer. Meanwhile, the students' role was being active and creative participant. Dealing with teacher's and students' role, Richard & Rogers (in Nunan, 2004) argued that a task in the learning process reflected an assumption about the contribution of the students and teachers.

V. CONCLUSION

The research study was administered to develop the tasks through the use of intercultural language learning in teaching writing for English department students in Higher education. It was found that the instructional model was beneficial for English department students in the writing classes. It was proven from the teaching stages applied in the writing class that were based on intercultural language learning. These teaching stages were noticing, comparing, reflecting, concluding tentatively, constructing and presenting. The use of interculture-based language learning for

teaching writing skills was responded positively by students. Meanwhile, the developed tasks were appropriate. It was seen from the mean value of each item from the questionnaire of students' responses. The range was 3.14 to 3.64. It was in the good category.

The topics provided as materials were the topic of wedding ceremony, historical building, Music and Myths. Students started studying their own culture first and then target culture related to the topic. For target culture, the materials were adapted and adopted from English countries found in website. Those were appropriate as materials to facilitate students to get knowledge or understanding about cross cultures among countries using English as L1, L2 and foreign language. It indicated that the students can import their knowledge based on the topics into well paragraphs.

The organization of the learning materials was described as follows.

Title

The title of each chapter was going to introduce the goal of each chapter to the students. It was aimed to give information for students about the topics would be studied.

Warming up

The warming up was going to build students' prior knowledge about their own culture before they would be introduced the target culture. They started learning the local culture first. The knowledge of local culture became a basic thing to view the target culture.

Main activity

The tasks in main activity facilitated the language function, reading cultural text, grammar and vocabulary builder. In implementation the tasks in a writing class, the researchers applied intercultural language learning stages that were; noticing, comparing, reflecting, concluding tentatively, constructing and presenting. In each stage, there were the supported certain tasks.

Closing

This section was aimed at checking the students' improvement about what they have learnt. The students' improvement here indicated that the instructional process and materials were effective for them.

Finally, the appropriate tasks had the characteristics below.

Goal

The English learning materials was aimed at facilitating students to communicate in written form, linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate. It was also to enable them to read cultural texts and then they analyze and imitate the language patterns of the text. The written product of students comprises descriptive, recount, explanation and narrative text.

Want

Students were very interested in knowing their own cultures comprehensively and it was become as prior knowledge to compare the target cultures. Therefore, students were presented the intercultural language learning for teaching writing skills.

Input

As inputs, students were given the comprehensible materials about local and target cultural topics. The topics were wedding ceremony, historical building, music and myths. They were tasks comprising reading texts and pictures followed by questions, explanation, and examples of language function, true-false, and exercise of grammar and vocabulary list. To help students in writing process, it was provided the graphic organizer in each unit of the tasks.

Procedure

The procedure of writing activities was reading a text first and then answering the questions. Students then tick the name of country based on the cultural pictures, completing the sentences based on the reading text following by pictures, adding the supporting ideas based on the topic, determining and analyzing the language features from descriptive, recount, explanation and narrative text. Students also studied about the grammar in each unit. The learning activities were divided into warming up, noticing, comparing, reflecting, concluding tentatively, constructing and presenting. Those activities had certain tasks to support the learning stages.

Students' and teachers' role

The students' role was being active learner and the appropriate teacher roles were organizer, assessor and feedback giver about students' work.

Setting

The setting here was individual, pair and group work,

VI. SUGGESTION

The English teachers should provide and develop their own language learning materials dealing with the students' needs referring to target needs and learning needs. It aimed to improve the quality of their language learning especially for English language department in private universities. Because writing skills were the productive skills, the English teachers should find a good instructional model to facilitate student to write. Besides, the Dean of Language Program in private universities should support and facilitate the lecturers to provide their own materials not only for writing classes but also for extracurricular classes.

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Incorporating Intercultural Competences in Developing English Materials for Writing Classes