

## INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AS A RESPONSE TO WESTERN HEGEMONY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INDONESIA

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### ***Abstract***

There is nothing wrong with using English as a knowledge-generating language alongside Indonesian. The most important part is that we as an Indonesian-speaking community must be able to choose and sort out the elements of English that we want to be included in Indonesian without forgetting our identity as Indonesians. Indonesian people as users of the Indonesian language, use Indonesian. Therefore, we need an innovation in foreign language learning (English) that prioritizes local cultural elements so that students only learn elements of the foreign language. However, the learning content still includes elements of local Indonesian culture. Two things can be done as a form of innovation in learning English that can maintain noble Indonesian values, namely by learning with an intercultural perspective. With this model, students who study a foreign language will not necessarily take on the cultural values of native speakers. Still, rather they will have a comparison of values with the students' local culture and students will be able to take the best attitude from the foreign language learning process.

***Keyword:*** intercultural insight learning, western hegemony, English language learning

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### **1. Introduction**

Hegemony comes from the Greek word eugemony which means ruler or leader. In practice, in Greece, as in the city-states of Athens and Sparta, it was used to indicate the superior position claimed by each city-state and other states of equal standing (Hendarto, 1993). Hegemony here is not a relationship of domination by using power through coercion, but a contractual relationship under political and ideological leadership. (Simon, 2004). Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be further explained through his explanation of the fundamentals of class

power. These fundamentals include two forms of group supremacy: one being physical dominance and the other being intellectual and moral leadership. (Gramsci, 1976).

Hegemony is a covert system of control that can be easily practiced by dominant social groups. It operates through subtle mechanisms that maintain its power and suppress trust in other groups within society. The aim of hegemony is to influence and shape the opinions of individuals in a way that serves the interests of the dominant group. Through this process, certain ideologies are propagated while others

are deemed incorrect. Hegemony has a seductive quality that often goes unnoticed by its victims. Its ultimate goal is to establish a dominant way of thinking that is accepted as correct while marginalizing other viewpoints. As hegemonic values become more widespread and entrenched, they are assimilated into the common context of human thought.

Initially, the West faced difficulties in experiencing a revival due to the power of Islamic countries. The only way for them was to penetrate these countries by doing various research on how to conquer the sea and various continents, making it easier for them to conquer. In this difficulty, the idea of conquering a particular region emerged. The main purpose of this scientific expedition was trade, and the Europeans aimed to find sources of supplies of spices, luxury goods, and other objects that had to reach Europe via the Islamic countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. If there was armed resistance against these traders, war was necessary. However, slowly but surely, this trade progress is increasing, and political involvement is becoming greater (Mawardi, 2019).

Europe and the West still hold more dominance in various aspects of life, including education, technology, military, transportation, and monetary systems. Western superiority has both negative and positive influences. The negative impact of Western progress, such as secularization, goes against Islamic values. The positive impact is that the progress of the Western world

has created awareness among developing countries that they need to rise up and catch up to the West. (Mawardi, 2019)

Globalization is often viewed as a tool used by Western powers to maintain their control and influence over the rest of the world. The concept of globalization is based on an agreement with the international community. According to Etienne Perrot, globalization is the result of a combination or accumulation of internationalization and homogenization. This definition takes into account the many differences between internationalization, globalization, and technology. Here, internationalization refers to the process of disseminating knowledge globally. It also includes a global dimension in every problem. In the current era of globalization, any issue or action has the potential to affect people worldwide (Kushendrawati, 2006).

The spread of certain values and cultures throughout the world has long been associated with globalization. This has been made possible by the exploratory journeys of Western Europeans to various parts of the world. However, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century, with the development of communication technology, that cultural globalization became intense. Mass communication media replaced physical contact as the primary means of communication between nations. This change has facilitated communication between countries, resulting in the rapid

development of cultural globalization (Donny Ermawan T., 2017).

Indonesia has been facing the dilemma of whether or not to embrace globalization, a prevalent international trend. As a result, Western culture has seeped into the country. The exact timeline of Western influence in Indonesia is unclear, but experts, such as Al-Nadwitt, suggest that Westernization began with the onset of Western imperialism and colonialism in the 19th century, although the roots of Westernization can be traced back to the 18th century. The country has a history of imperialism and colonialism, having been ruled by the Portuguese, British, Dutch, and Japanese. The impact of these foreign powers has contributed to the Westernization of Indonesian society, given that the three colonial powers in Indonesia were Western nations (Larasati, 2018).

During the Cold War, the United States emerged as the sole superpower after defeating the Soviet Union. This victory allowed the United States and European countries to increase their influence, leading to the growth of Westernization. The United States, in particular, has been driving this growth through the use of media, which has been made easier by the rapid development of communication technology in the era of globalization. The Internet, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and other forms of media are being used to spread Western culture, including pop culture such as films, music, fashion, and food (Larasati, 2018).

The Westernization of Indonesia is viewed negatively as it promotes Western cultural values that are often at odds with Indonesian culture, which is rooted in Eastern cultural values. This is particularly evident in the case of the Indonesian language, which holds a significant place in the country's culture. The 2009 Law of the Republic of Indonesia states that Indonesian is the official language of the country and must be used for communication by Indonesian citizens throughout the country. Therefore, it is clear that Indonesian is the language that should be used for official communication in Indonesia.

The use of Indonesian language is declining in the modern era. It seems that foreign languages, especially English, have become more popular and preferred because of their global capabilities. The pride that should exist within society about establishing a language as a national identity in Indonesia is disappearing and replaced with an overreliance on foreign languages. As a result, it can be concluded that the Indonesian language is weakening due to the increasing usage of foreign languages and its inability to compete with them (Saragih, 2022).

The Indonesian language has a rich history and is considered a very important aspect of Indonesian culture. It became the official language of Indonesia on October 28, 1928, after a long and historic struggle by nationalists who aimed to achieve an independent and sovereign Indonesian

state. The term 'Indonesia' was chosen for its political significance and to unite the diverse people of the archipelago. Interestingly, the name was already in use before the Youth Pledge and had been adopted by an emerging national movement. This shows the depth of the Indonesian identity and the importance of the language to its people (Ade Suryani Nasution, 2022). It is essential to take prompt action to safeguard the Indonesian language. Please let me know if you need any further assistance.

Indonesian, as the national language, has been the subject of various efforts to preserve it. The government and language experts organize the Indonesian Language Congress regularly to discuss the development of the language. The success of this congress is crucial to the process of improving Indonesian. As a result of the Indonesian Language Congress, the content in Indonesian has become more comprehensive and up-to-date (Repelita, 2018).

The Indonesian government is taking steps to enforce Article 29 (1) of Law No. 24 of 2009, which requires the use of the Indonesian language as the medium of instruction in education. According to Paragraph 2 of the law, foreign languages, including English, may be used to support teaching and help students develop foreign language skills. For instance, English teachers can teach English in English subjects to improve students' proficiency. Paragraph 3 specifies that foreign languages may also be used in foreign schools that teach foreigners.

As per Article 41(1) of Law No. 24 of 2009, it is mandatory for the government to promote, preserve and safeguard the Indonesian language. The term 'development' implies refining the Indonesian language to enable it to fulfill its role as a state language and a language of knowledge. This can be achieved by expanding the vocabulary of Indonesian or by incorporating it in various fields of knowledge and activities. Education is vital to ensure that every member of Indonesian society can not only speak Indonesian fluently but also take pride in the language. Any foreign student studying in Indonesia must become proficient in Indonesian as a second language. Since most scientific works in Indonesia are in Indonesian, it is crucial to master the language to help in the education process. The language choices of multilingual individuals are influenced by several factors and have specific meanings (Anggraini, 2013).

The author contends that governments must pay attention to current world developments and not turn a blind eye to them. English, as a language, is increasingly important to the global community. This is understandable as it has a very wide distribution in various fields of use, making it a world language. In the current era of globalization, it is essential to have a good command of English. It is the fundamental capital required to compete in this era. English must be taught to the nation's future generations starting from primary education up to university.

In this era of globalization, opportunities to expand reach between countries are increasing. People who have mastered a foreign language have more opportunities compared to those who do not have proficiency in English. It is not only essential for those who are going abroad but also necessary because English is now an international language that dominates global communication. It is undeniable that English language skills are essential nowadays as it is recognized and accepted internationally as an official language and is widely used in the fields of technology, education, business, politics, and culture. Almost all tools and technology today are in English. In such circumstances, having proficiency in English will provide an added advantage for the Indonesian people, enabling them to compete on the international stage (Budiarti, 2013).

In today's era of globalization, English language proficiency has become a necessity that must be mastered. It is no longer something extraordinary, but rather a basic requirement for succeeding in almost all aspects of life. Speaking English fluently and confidently has become a demand and need for everyone. It is evident that English has a significant influence in almost all fields, and being proficient in the language can be a supporting factor for success in academics and other career paths. Therefore, it is crucial for Indonesian people to learn English in this era of globalization.

It is perfectly fine to use English alongside Indonesian as a knowledge-

generating language. The most crucial aspect is that the Indonesian-speaking community should have the freedom to choose and incorporate English elements into the Indonesian language without losing our identity as Indonesians. As Indonesian language users, we should use Indonesian. Therefore, there is a need for innovation in foreign language learning (English) that emphasizes local cultural elements. This way, students can learn English while still being exposed to local Indonesian culture.

## **2. Result and Discussion**

Foreign language learning can help maintain noble values with intercultural insight. Indonesia is a nation that values its cultural heritage and traditions. The principle of Pancasila, which embodies the values of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and justice, reflects the nation's personality and is at the core of its identity. While other nations may also espouse these values, Pancasila is unique to Indonesia because it is based on the cultural values of the Indonesian people themselves. It represents the culmination of centuries of cultural evolution and is deeply ingrained in the mental attitudes, behavior, and actions of the Indonesian people. Before Pancasila was established as the legal basis, Indonesia had long adhered to the noble cultural values that had been passed down through generations. Pancasila is the personality of the Indonesian nation, which has only been owned by the Indonesian people since its existence as a nation. It is a

manifestation of the cultural values that are believed to be good and true, and that have helped shape the identity of the Indonesian people. (Warsito, 2017)

The Indonesian people place a high value on the societal values that govern their actions. Pancasila, the official ideology of Indonesia, is based on the cultural values that the country holds dear. A societal value is easily embraced when it aligns with the values that exist within the society itself. Therefore, it is undeniable that people's behavior and way of living are influenced by their cultural values. National character and culture development is an integral component of the national education system. Cultural values can manifest in the form of concepts, ideas, laws, social order, value systems, and behaviors that reflect the identity of the Indonesian people. Pancasila constitutes the country's cultural and social environment, and thus, cultural education in the country should be based on Pancasila values. Therefore, national education promotes Pancasila values in students through moral, intellectual, and physical education. (Maulana, 2013)

The origin of the word "culture" can be traced back to the Sanskrit term "buddhayah". It is the plural form of "budhi" which means reason. Therefore, culture encompasses all aspects related to reason. Additionally, culture also signifies "spirit and power" or the power derived from the spirit. Thus, culture represents all the cultural powers such as creativity, taste, and determination (Gunawan,

2000) According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, culture refers to thoughts, reason, and habits that are difficult to change. (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2000)

Edward B. Tylor defined culture as the social behavior, knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, skills, and habits of human society (Edward B. Tylor, 1987). Culture refers to a collection of practices, codes, and values that are unique to a particular nation or group. People or groups tend to place a high value on professions such as literature, art, and music. There is often a distinction made between high culture, which includes literature and art, and low culture, which encompasses attitudes, values, beliefs, and everyday lifestyle. The combination of culture and language creates what is known as discourse, which is a way of speaking, thinking, and behaving that reflects a person's social identity (Schmidt, 2010).

In strategies for participatory cultural development, the concept of culture as identity can be problematic. However, cultural identity should go beyond stereotypes and become a standard structure that strengthens society. Cultural diversity should not compromise any concept and should be recognized as a value in the process of universality. These are the conditions that sustain historic life. (Suryani, 2018)

Culture is a way of life that is developed, shared, and passed on from one generation to the next. It consists of various complex elements such as religious and political systems, customs, language, tools, clothing, buildings, and

works of art. Culture is so deeply ingrained in human beings that it is often thought to be genetic, but in reality, it is learned. When people try to communicate with individuals from different cultures and adjust to their differences, it proves the significance of culture.

Cultural characteristics can be categorized into several types, which are as follows:

- a. Culture is learned and not innate.
- b. Culture can be transmitted between individuals, groups, and generations.
- c. Culture is based on symbols.
- d. Culture is a dynamic system that continues to evolve over time.
- e. Culture is selective, representing only a limited number of behavioral patterns from human experience.
- f. The various elements of culture are interconnected.
- g. Ethnocentrism refers to the practice of considering one's own culture as the best or standard for evaluating other cultures. (Mulyana, 2005)

Culture is a complex and significant aspect of human life. In simple terms, we can understand the essential characteristics of culture as follows:

- a. Culture is expressed through human behavior and is shaped by it.
- b. Culture is not limited to a particular generation and has existed before and will continue to exist in the future.
- c. Humans need culture, and it is reflected in their behavior. (M.Setiadi, 2008)

Human creativity and ingenuity result in culture, which can be inherited and transmitted between individuals and groups.

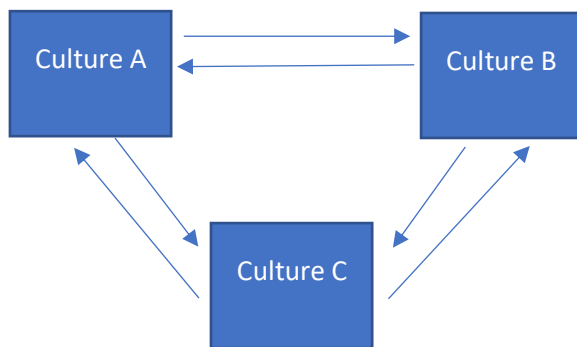
Culture is a form of communication that occurs between humans. Even if we have never met someone in person, we can understand their facial expressions from images sent through photos. However, in a cultural context, the meaning of an expression is determined by the social conventions and symbols used. This is known as a semiotic perspective (Nasrullah, 2012). Communication serves as a means of transferring culture itself. Any transfer of culture from one individual or group to another is made possible through communication.

In any communication process, there are always expectations, perceptions, actions, and interpretations involved. It is important to keep these factors in mind to ensure effective communication (Mulyana, Ilmu Komunikasi Suatu Pengantar, 2013). When we communicate with other people, we create messages that we receive in verbal and non-verbal forms, each with its own set of standards. Intercultural communication is similar to general communication but involves people from different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural communication, as defined by Larry Ein Samovar and quoted by Rini Darmastut, is a type of communication that occurs between people of different cultural backgrounds. It involves the exchange of ideas and messages in situations

where the cultural concepts and symbol systems of the communicators differ. Cross-cultural communication takes place when members of one culture communicate with those of another culture, regardless of whether they share the same ethnicity or not. Even when there are stark cultural differences, cross-cultural communication can still occur without involving racial or ethnic differences. (Rini Darmastuti, 2013)

It appears that intercultural communication is the primary source of pressure, particularly the interpersonal communication that occurs between individuals from different cultures. Figure 1 illustrates that intercultural communication is a form of interpersonal communication that happens between people of diverse cultures. Please refer to the image below for a visual representation:



**Picture 23 Intercultural Communication**

Based on the description provided, the author's conclusion is that intercultural communication refers to communication that takes place between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and where messages are conveyed through various forms of media. Additionally, the author

believes that language is the most effective medium for conveying cultural messages in the context of intercultural communication.

Language is the most effective tool we have for communicating our thoughts, aims, and objectives to others. The main function of language is to guide messages or meaning from one person to another. There are five basic functions of language as a tool of human communication: expression, information, search, persuasion, and entertainment. Different fields of human life require different functions of language, which also depend greatly on the situation and location where the language is used. As a means of communication, language is essential for humans.

Language is an essential tool for communication, allowing individuals to express themselves and converse about anything. Language is divided into two forms of communication: written and spoken. Both forms serve the purpose of communicating and influencing social interactions in society. (Okarisma Mailani, 2022)

The author argues that Western culture has been widely spread to other countries, particularly Indonesia, due to the use of language media in classrooms. The West has made English an international language which is necessary for all global citizens to learn. Possessing the skill of speaking English provides a strong foundation for surviving in the global competition. Therefore, foreign language education, specifically English, is essential in



schools to prepare the upcoming generation to face international competition.

According to the author, it is crucial for schools in Indonesia to teach a foreign language, particularly English, to their students. However, in addition to language skills, students also need to develop intercultural insight to be able to understand and appreciate foreign cultural perspectives that may differ from their own. This will enable them to filter and evaluate cultural aspects presented in the foreign language learning material more effectively.

Deardorff and Lambert offer different perspectives on what constitutes intercultural competence. According to Deardorff, it involves having knowledge about other cultures and oneself, as well as possessing interpretive, relational, discovery, interaction, and language skills. Additionally, having an appreciation for the values, beliefs, and behaviors of other people is crucial. On the other hand, Lambert believes that intercultural competence is made up of five components: world knowledge, foreign language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, acceptance of foreign people and cultures, and the ability to perform one's profession in an international setting. (Smrekar, 2015)

Learning a language cannot be separated from its cultural context. To avoid cultural confusion, it is essential to prioritize intercultural communication in language teaching. This refers to communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In

order to develop communicative language skills, foreign language teachers encourage the development of "intercultural competence" (IC) in their students. Effective implementation of this concept in the classroom requires teachers to not only have a thorough understanding of the concept, but also to think creatively about how to teach it. Some strategies that can be employed to achieve this include teaching culture explicitly, integrating culture into the four language competencies, teaching bilingualism, prohibiting culture from the start of language teaching, conducting intercultural research, and supporting students to continue learning. (Sumarti, 2019)

A social learning strategy can be used to effectively learn a foreign language with an intercultural perspective. There are three effective learning strategies in the learning process: asking questions, collaborating, and empathizing with others. Among these three methods, the author considers questioning to be the most important aspect of learning. Asking questions is crucial for students because it helps them gain insight and explore information that is not provided by the teacher. According to Cholifah et al., asking questions is a way to understand lessons, broaden new students' insight, and clarify what was previously unclear (Siti Cholifah, 2013).

Thought-provoking questions can be used to encourage students to think critically. It is an effective method to stimulate their minds and promote active learning (Ward, 2010). When

students ask thought-provoking questions, they can use them to build on their previous knowledge, even after acquiring new knowledge.

As per the author, asking questions is an essential activity in foreign language learning. This is because questioning encourages students to think critically about the learning material or problem they are studying. If the students lack the critical thinking ability to ask questions, then it is the teacher's responsibility to guide, direct, and provoke them with a question.

The author presents a reading text to exemplify learning a foreign language from an intercultural perspective:

*It has been noted in a recent study that more and more couples in the United States are opting to live together before marriage. The study showed that only 23% of women eventually married their partners. Although this culture may not be widely accepted in our society, it is important to be aware of the facts surrounding cohabitation before marriage. In the United States, living together before marriage is a common practice, with approximately 75% of women living with a male partner by the age of 30. According to Susan Brown, a professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, highly educated and financially stable individuals are more likely to cohabit before marriage, viewing it as a stepping stone to marriage. For instance, a CDC report revealed that 53% of women who lived together before marriage held a bachelor's degree or higher, while 30% had at least one degree.*

*Many couples prefer to settle down before marriage, finding a steady job and a good salary. Consequently, they choose to postpone marriage. Living together without marriage allows couples to operate without the boundaries and conditions that marriage entails. Many couples believe that this arrangement is more advantageous, as it provides them with an opportunity to decide whether they are compatible and ready to commit before actually settling down and getting married.*

In the given text, it is mentioned that in America, it is common for couples to live together before getting married. Students can be encouraged to discuss the values that are prevalent in American society by comparing them with the noble values that are inherent in Indonesian society, originating from both religion and local cultural wisdom. The discussion can also include questions on a linguistic perspective such as: (1) Did couples decide to live together before marriage to avoid family rules? (2) In your opinion, is such a practice acceptable in Indonesian society? (3) Does the American government permit living together before marriage in their state system?

To continue the discussion, students can be invited to examine the relationship patterns between men and women in Indonesia. By comparing two distinct cultural situations in Indonesia and America, it is possible to confirm the noble values that the Indonesian nation holds regarding the relationship between genders. It is important for the teacher to explain to the students that what is depicted in the reading may be

common in America and other European countries, but it is not representative of all men and women in those countries. This should be emphasized so that foreign language learners do not form negative stereotypes about other nations.

By learning a foreign language with an intercultural perspective, students will not necessarily adopt the cultural values of native speakers. Instead, they will be able to compare these values with their own local culture, and take on the best attitudes from the foreign language learning process. This way, foreign language learning can help students develop a more nuanced and culturally aware worldview.

### 3. Conclusion

Foreign language learning in Indonesia is responsible for two things - developing communication skills in the foreign language being studied while also sowing the seeds of character in the learner. This can be achieved by using an intercultural approach.

An intercultural perspective in foreign language learning aims to develop both communicative and intercultural competence. There are several aspects of intercultural competence that align with character education. Firstly, expanding cultural insight by appreciating foreign cultures based on an understanding of one's own culture. This will help students continue to appreciate and love the culture and noble values of the Indonesian nation. Secondly, learners will be guided to have the ability to tolerate and empathize with something unfamiliar and develop a cautious approach towards negative perspectives.

With this model, students who learn a foreign language will not necessarily adopt the cultural values of native speakers. Instead, they will compare the values with their local culture and choose the best position in the process of learning a foreign language, like English.

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