Correlation between Students' Reading Habit and Their Cross Cultural Understanding

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to describe the correlation between reading habit and cross cultural understanding. The subject of this study is students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin. The data are obtained through questionnaire, to find out students' reading habit, and test, to measure students' intercultural knowledge. SPSS is used to analyze the correlations between these two variables. The result of the test shows that most students make mistakes in answering the questions related to cultural knowledge. However, the reading habit is not the determinant factor of the test's result. This means that there is no significant correlation between students' reading habit and the cross cultural knowledge.

Keywords: reading habit, intercultural knowledge, cross cultural understanding

Introduction

As language and culture are intertwined, it is then only natural to say that learning the culture of the target language is as important as learning the language itself. Language is the projection of the culture where the language is spoken. The values hold by a society is reflected by the language used. The teaching of a language should not only be limited to the transfer of tangible knowledge, such as the pronunciation, vocabularies, sentence structures or the expressions. The teaching process should include the exploration of the values hold by the language native speakers, such as words or expressions that should not be said in certain situations. Thus, teachers are encouraged to introduce the target language culture in language classroom.

English, as a lingua franca, is not only used by the native speakers or in countries where the it is the first language. English has been used to communicate by speakers from countries across the globe. English enable people to access information from different sources and to build a network without any boundaries. This means that English learners will face people with many different cultural background.

It has been a recent debate topic in EFL community on which culture should be taught in English classrooms. Knowing that English is not only spoken by English native speakers and within the boundary of certain countries only, it is, then, understandable that many English teachers and experts expand the culture introduced in EFL classrooms. Instead of introducing a particular culture, the teachers are expected to integrate cultural difference awareness among the students.

American or British culture should not be the only focus of English language learning, but it should be more about helping students on being an open minded speaker and building their cultural difference awareness. The language teaching should emphasize on understanding different culture and not judging or comparing one culture to another. It is essential to prepare the students to not only ready to use the language but also to build a communication across culture without any prejudice. Knowing that cross cultural understanding is important in a language learning, including English, this research is conducted to describe the students' knowledge about other cultures.

On the other hand, students should develop reading habit as reading is the gate to acquire many information. Through reading, language learner might learn different culture as well as understand different values hold by different communities. A language learner who likes reading might have better understanding about different culture and be more open minded. Therefore, his research is conducted to describe the correlation between students' reading habit and their cross cultural understanding.

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Theoretical Framework

Culture and Cross Cultural Understanding

Language conveys the speaker's message as well as the cultural value the speaker holds. It is part of culture as well as the tool through which culture is introduced and transferred from one generation to another, from one community to another. Since language is an integral part of culture, it is quite impossible for a learner to learn a language without understanding the culture. The use of a language itself, on the other hand, is tied to the culture where the language origins. Whether a word is regarded as a taboo word or whether an expression is appropriate or not heavily depends on the culture of the speakers involve in the conversations.

Some experts identify intercultural understanding as the fifth skills of learning a language after listening, speaking, reading and writing. Hence, intercultural understanding should also be part of language learning process (Zhou, 2017). In addition, Tanaka (2006) also stated that cultural awareness is important in English, as well as other languages, learning and teaching. By acquiring this fifth skill, a language learner is expected to be more open minded when it comes to intercultural communication. This skill will also help learner to avoid having any prejudice towards certain races or cultures. Consequently, cultural misunderstanding could be mitigated.

Furthermore, some experts have pointed out how it is important to introduce some different cultural values, norms and belief to language learners in the classroom (See: Choudhury, 2014; Ratnasari, 2018, Hsin,2008). Understanding that people may behave and response differently based on the cultural values they hold is one of the keys to build successful communication. Thus, some studies on how language teachers can infuse the cultural awareness in the language classrooms have been conducted.

Pratama (2017) explored the strategies that can be used in Cross Cultural Understanding course. The course itself is usually offered by English Language Teaching Department. However, the strategy offered in the study could be implemented in any language classroom with some adjustment. Pratama described how active learning strategy could be an alternative in raising students' cultural awareness. Further, the implementation of intercultural understanding in EFL classroom in high school level is described by Budiarti in her article. These two studies show us that cultural awareness could be introduced in one specific course, such as Cross Cultural Understanding, or it could be an integral part of the language teaching itself.

Reading Habit

Theoretically, the sole purpose of reading is not only about entertainment. Beyond that, reading can shape or change one's perspective. Sethy (2018) stated that reading can influence the reader's affective, perception, and cognitive system. In addition, both reading and writing take certain role in learning process. Reading allows people to obtain information and knowledge which by the end of the day will help them to broaden their perspective towards different issues (McShane, 2005).

Therefore, it is clear that reading habit is one of the key factors that shape a community. Reading habit can be defined as the behavior that shows someone's interest in texts. In addition, reading habit is also related to how often and how long someone read (Lestari, Sofendi, & Petrus2018).

Some studies have been conducted related to reading habit. Janthong & Sripetpun (2010) tried to improve students' reading comprehension by improving their reading habit. Different study is also conducted to find out if there is any correlation between students' reading habit and their writing ability and intelligence (Lestari, Sofendi, & Petrus2018). Some studies suggested that reading habit can help people improving their intelligence, including the language ability.

Further, it is also safe to assume that reading habit will not only help learners in improving their language skills but also their intercultural understanding. Reading can be the medium to learn other cultures. Thus, good reading habit can help people in acquiring information related other cultures, which eventually will lead to cross culture awareness.

Method

This research is a mix-method study. The study is identified as a quantitative since the data was tested and analyze by using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS). Qualitative method was also applied as the objective of this research is describing the correlation between two variables – cross cultural awareness and reading habit.

The subject of the study is the students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin. The data were obtained through questionnaire by using Likert scale. The indicators of the first variable, reading habit, were adapted from Janthong and Sripetpun (2010) with some adjustment. The questionnaire covered the questions related to students' reading habit and their reading frequency.

The second variable was the students' perception towards different customs and cultures. The data were obtained through test given to the students. The result of the questionnaire and the test was tested and analyze by using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS). The result of this analysis was further used to discuss if the reading habit was indeed influence students' intercultural awareness.

Result and Discussion

The questionnaire and the test were given to English Department students. The questionnaire was adapted from Janthong and Sripetpun (2010) to find out students' reading habit and frequency. In addition, the test was given to measure students' knowledge related to other cultures' values, habits, and beliefs.

Variables Entered/Removed [a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	TOTAL_RH [b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: INTERCULTURAL

b. All requested variables entered.

The table shows the entered and removed variables and the method used. In this study, the variable entered is the score of the Reading Habit (TOTAL-RH) as the predictor and the method used is Enter method. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is the intercultural knowledge of the students. The code is Intercultural. The Reading Habit score is obtained through questionnaire with Likert scale while the intercultural knowledge score is gained through test with the score interval of 0-100

Model Summary [b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.092 [a]	.008	-.026	12.293

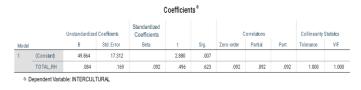a. Predictors: (Constant), TOTAL_RH

b. Dependent Variable: INTERCULTURAL

The table above shows the correlational score (R) of 0.0092. It also shows the correlation between the dependent and independent variables or the determinant coefficient in percentage which is adjusted R square. The output is the determinant coefficient ($R2$) of 0.008. This means that the Intercultural knowledge of students is influenced by Reading Habit by 0.8%, and there are other variables that influence the students intercultural knowledge.

ANOVA [a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.230	1	37.230	.246	.623 [b]
	Residual	4382.125	29	151.108		
	Total	4419.355	30			

a. Dependent Variable: INTERCULTURAL

b. Predictors: (Constant), TOTAL_RH

The table shows if there is any significant correlation between Reading Habit (X) and Intercultural knowledge of the students (Y). Based on the output of the test, it can be seen that F is 0.246 with significance of 0,623 > 0,05. This means that the regression model can be used to predict the Intercultural variable.

Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Correlations Zero-order	Partial	Part	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	49.864	17.312		2.880	.007					
	TOTAL_RH	.084	.169	.092	.496	.623	.092	.092	.092	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: INTERCULTURAL

The value of Constant (a) in column B is 49.864 while the score of Reading Habit (b) is 0.084. Thus, the equation is presented as below:

$$Y = a + bX$$

$$Y = 49,864 + 0,084X$$

The b coefficient is the coefficient of direction which signifies the average changing of Y for each changing of X. This changing is an increase if b is positive and a decrease if b is negative. Thus, the equation can be described as follow:

1. The value of constant is 49.864. This means that if there is no Reading Habit value, then the Intercultural value is 49.864.
2. The regression coefficient of X is 0.084. This means that for every 1 Reading Habit score, there will an increasing of 0.084 of the Intercultural score.

In addition, the equation of this output also indicates the significance test of t-test. The result of the test signifies the correlation between two variables of Reading Habit (X) and Intercultural (Y). There are two hypotheses underlying this study:

> H0 : Reading Habit (X) does not influence the Intercultural variable (Y)

> H1 : Reading Habit (X) influences the Intercultural (Y)

Some studies investigating reading habit have suggested that reading would improve students' cognitive abilities (Sethy, 2018; Janthong & Sripetpun 2010; Lestari, Sofendi, & Petrus, 2018). However, encouraging reading culture to students is not easy task as well as there are those who are not fond of reading. Iftanti (2012) stated that many EFL students do not have good reading habit. Reading is only done for the sake of doing assignments instead of gaining new information and knowledge.

The result of the questionnaire shows that most students do not do extensive reading. This means that they read only when they need to do some assignments. In addition, the result of the test shows that most students makes many mistakes in answering the questions related to some cultural values and norms.

This study is conducted under the assumption that reading habit might influence one's intercultural knowledge. The more someone read, the more they are exposed to the outside world. However, the t-test value is 0.496 with significance 0.623 > 0.05. Thus, H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected. This means that there is no significant influence of Reading Habit (X) towards Intercultural variable (Y). It is believed that there are other variables influencing students' intercultural knowledge.

Conclusion

This study focuses on students' reading habit and their intercultural knowledge. Questionnaire with Likert scale was given to the students to identify their reading habit. The result of the questionnaire shows that the students have low frequency of reading. On the other hand, test was conducted to identify the students' intercultural knowledge. The result shows that most students' score are below 60. Based on the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that reading habit does not significantly influence students' intercultural knowledge.

The researchers urge students to improve their reading habit as it will lead them to many information and knowledge they might find useful. It is also important for the teachers or lecturers to develop a reading culture in their classrooms. Further, language teachers are encourage to raise the cross cultural awareness in their classrooms.

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