

**THESIS JOURNAL**

**ASPECTS OF CULTURE IN CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING  
CLASS: LECTUERERS AND STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES "A CASE  
STUDY AT THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT MATARAM UNIVERSITY"**



Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Sarjana Degree in English  
Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Mataram University

ZAHRATUN AINI  
E1D113166

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
MATARAM UNIVERSITY**

**2017**



**KEMENTERIAN RISET, TEKNOLOGI DAN PENDIDIKANTINGGI**  
**UNIVERSITAS MATARAM**  
**FAKULTAS KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN**  
**JURUSAN BAHASA DAN SENI**  
*Jl. Majapahit No. 162, Telp: (0370) 623873, Mataram*

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#### **RATIFICATION**

A journal entitled: **Aspects of Culture in Cross Cultural Understanding Class: Lecturer and Students' Perspectives "A Case Study at the English Department Mataram University"** by Zahratun Aini (E1D113166) has been accepted by the board of advisor

Mataram, 08 September 2017

First Consultant,

**Dra. Henny Soeprivanty, MA., Ph.D**  
**NIP.19611225198703 001**

Aspects of Culture in Cross Cultural Understanding Class: Lecturer And Students' Perspectives "A Case Study at the English Department Mataram University"

**By: Zahratun Aini**

English Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Mataram University

[ainizahratun@gmail.com](mailto:ainizahratun@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

This research is aimed to describe: 1) What aspects of culture taught in Cross Cultural Understanding Classroom and 2) What are the students' perceptions toward the cultural aspect taught in Cross Cultural Understanding Classroom. The data of this study are collected from documentation and questionnaire. From the documentation, the researcher analyzed the syllabus and the textbook used in the classroom of Cross Cultural Understanding. Beside, data from questionnaire used in order to find students' perception towards cultural aspects taught in the classroom. The aspects of culture which analyzed by the researcher is divided into 3 categories which is included the aspect of culture related to things and products owned, cultural aspect related to attitudes and habits, cultural aspect related how to communicate verbally and non-verbally. After analyzing the data from syllabus, textbook, and questionnaire, concluded that From the result and finding that have been explained, we may conclude that aspects of culture should be taught in Cross Cultural understanding (CCU) class are: 1) Aspects of culture related to attitude and habits which I included: a) Institution system, b) Family life, c) Meeting People, d) Goal of life, and d) Work custom 2) Aspects of Culture Things and Products which is included a) Food b) Transportation c) Clothes 3) Aspects of Culture Related to Language which is included verbal communication such as word choice, intonation in speaking and non-verbal communication such as hand gesture, facial expression, eyes contact. Moreover, students' perception toward the aspects of culture that have been taught and have not been taught is positive proven by all of the percentage of students' perception is in important and very important. Meanwhile, students' perception toward the aspects of culture which have not been taught is some of them considered to be important and some considered to be very important. In the aspects of culture related to products or thing (transportation, food, and clothes considered to be important), while (art are considered to be not important). Furthermore, in the aspects of culture related to attitude and habits, men and women treatment and table manner considered being important while leisure activity and humor considered being not important.

**Key term: Cultural aspect, Cross Cultural Understanding**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) is one of subjects taught to students of English Department in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education University of Mataram. This subject is discussing about the differences between native speaker culture and target language culture. Culture itself is taught to students of language is because communicating with a native speaker of other language is not only about the fluency of speaking, the accuracy of the grammar or pronunciations, or mastering a lot of vocabularies but also have to understand how to use the language in different context in society. Looking at this, language learners cannot deny that they communicate with people who are in different culture where the values and customs are different. If they communicate without knowing how the language is used in the society, misunderstanding will be easier to appear. It makes teaching target language culture in this case English to language learners is very important.

Although teaching culture has been widely conducted, some language learners are still doing inappropriate behavior when they are communicating with interlocutors from other culture, in this case English. Moreover, here culture has very much variation. Culture is not only about some tradition had by certain group people but culture involves the whole aspects of human's life from the language, the way of thinking, the way of behaving, art, artifact, and some others. Moreover, here English is an international language which is used in several counties as first language, in many countries as second language, and almost in all countries in world as foreign language where culture of each country is different. The aspects of culture taught to student will be wide and has a lot of variation. Looking at this variation, in this research I am interested to find what aspect of culture taught to language learners of English and how the learners' perception on the teaching and learning culture in the classroom.

## II. RELATED LITERATURE

### **Aspects of Culture Taught in EFL Classes**

In previous part, I have stated and explained several elements of culture in general. In this next part, I am going to show several aspects or elements of culture that could be taught to language learner both based on expert's opinion and my opinion.

Thus, Sugirin (2009) stated that there are three elements of culture that should be understood the differences by language learners "Thus learners of English have to understand the differences of cultural elements viewed from the **point of knowledge** (the thing refers to the norm and it refers to what people should or should not do), **patterns of behavior** (e.g. how a person gives

something to another, should be with the right hand, should be with the left hand, or either one is equally acceptable), and **objects of culture owned**, recognized and respected or valued by the community (building design or architecture, clothing, furniture, household utensils, ornaments, souvenirs, etc.)”.

In the case of Sugirin’ opinion could be concluded that the aspects of culture that should be known by language learner is divided into 2 which are aspects of culture that related to attitude and habits and objects of culture owned. In this case, pattern of knowledge and pattern of behavior could be combined into one because both these aspects are discussing about what should or should not be done by people where these two aspects are related to attitude and habits of certain group of people.

Beside Cakir (2006) stated that there are some topics that can be presented in teaching culture in second language acquisition:

1. Climate	12. Leisure Activities
2. Clothing	13. Meeting people
3. Crime	14. Money
4. Eating	15. Pet
5. Education	16. Population
6. Family Life	17. Religion
7. Biography	18. Social Occasion
8. History	19. Sport
9. Holiday	20. Transportation
10. Humor	21. Vacation
11. Language	

In this part, Cakir (2010) provided some topics that could be discussed in cross cultural understanding. As seen, topics provided by Cakir is included almost the all aspects of culture from things that certain culture owned (transportation, pet, money, etc), attitude and habits which is like (social occasion, holiday and vacation, family life, clothing, eating, etc), and physical knowledge such as biography, climate, and population.

Moreover, Sterns (1993) cited in Han and Bae (2003) suggests five topics which cover most of the aspects of culture teaching that the typical language learner seems to require. They are stated as follows:

1. Places (physical locations of the target language)

2. Individual persons and ways of life (local life style, ideas, values of the individual) people and society in general (various groups by social stratification)
3. History (historical development; historical perceptions of the native speaker).
4. Institutions (government, schools, social welfare, economic institutions, the military and the police, religious institutions, political parties, media).
5. Art, music, literature, and other major achievement (artifacts commonly accepted in the target society).

Another argument comes also from Meiki (2010), as she stated that popular cross-cultural issues important for the student who is studying English are presented as class topics to analyze; for example are:

1. Personal spaces
2. Work customs
3. Death and funeral customs
4. Expressing feelings
5. Table Manners
6. Family Life
7. Men and Women

Looking at some topics provided by Meiki above (personal space, work custom, death and funeral, expressing feeling, table manner, family life, and men versus women treatment), we can conclude that those topics into aspects that related into the aspect of culture related to attitude and habits.

Finally, looking at this, I try to conclude by combining and omitting those some aspects and topics to be discussed in this research. This conclusion then I use as my data collecting references which I put on my questionnaire.

In making the conclusion, the researcher prefers to choose Stern' opinion because Stern' opinion covers most of the aspects that language learners' seems to know. However, although the researcher prefers to choose opinion from Stern, it is not totally claimed the aspects of culture from Stern as the perfect one. Thus, here the researcher still combines the suggestion from Stern with others'. As stated in the part of Stern opinion, there are five topics that could be presented that covers the aspects of culture that should be known by language learners, which are:

1. Place or physical location of target language
2. Ways of life of people of target language (moral and value)

3. History
4. Institution system
5. Art, music, and literature.

Then, the weaknesses from Stern is that there is not clear discussion about topics that could be presented in Cross Cultural Understanding Class such for ways life (moral, value, ideas), there is not clear discussion what kind of moral and value should be discussed and in what scope moral and value should be discussed. Therefore, I combined the aspects from Stern with topics discussion from Sugirin, Cakir, and Meiki.

Moreover, in Stern's opinions, the aspect of culture related to place and history, I consider them as unimportant part to be known by language learners because if we back to see the general elements of culture according to C Kluchohn (see page 8) physical location and history could not be included to a single element.

From the explanation above, the following are the conclusion of the aspects of culture that should be taught to the language learners.

1. Things or Products Owned

Aspect of object of culture owned is an important aspect because this aspects are could be different as explained below:

- 1) Food
- 2) Clothes
- 3) Transportation
- 4) Art

2. Differences in Attitude and habits

- 1) Institution which included the system of political, education and economic.
- 2) Men and women treatment
- 3) Family life
- 4) Meeting people
- 5) Goal of life
- 6) Time and space
- 7) Table manner
- 8) Leisure activity
- 9) Work custom
- 10) Humor

3. Knowledge of Verbal and Non-verbal communication

The last aspect that's being the aspects that could be discussed in Cross Cultural Understanding is knowledge of language (Verbal and Non-verbal communication). As stated earlier, non-verbal communication include such as: Kinesics, haptic, proxemics, paralanguage, concept of time, space, and silence. This aspect is much clearer important because as

language learner, they are not only communicating verbally since in this world communication non-verbally also occurred. Moreover, for the aspect of verbally may include like choice of word, intonation in speaking, and so on. I included the aspect of language here because as stated in the part of general element of culture, I found that language stated as a part of culture, and in this study, I try to find out what cultural aspects should be taught to language learners. Automatically, the aspects of language take a big part of cultural aspects that should be known by language learners.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was belonged to descriptive qualitative research. The populations of this study were lecturer of Cross Cultural Understanding class and students' of fourth semester. The sample of this study was a lecturer and 15 students. There are two kind of instrument of collecting data of this study which are documentation and questionnaire. Documentation is part of analyzing the syllabus and textbook of cross cultural understanding and questionnaire is part of gaining students perception toward cultural aspect taught is Cross Cultural Understanding class. In analyzing data from documentation, the researcher list aspects of culture taught. After finding the aspects of culture taught, the researcher compare with the related literature. Through that comparison, the researcher found some aspects have been taught and some have not. After getting some aspects that have not been taught, I try to find students' perception toward those aspects.

### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

#### a. Cultural Aspects Taught in Cross Cultural Understanding Class

Here is the finding of aspect of culture taught in Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) class. Then, the table below shows the aspects found based on syllabus and textbook

#### **Cultural Aspects Taught in Cross Cultural Understanding Class Based on Syllabus and Textbook**

NO	Aspects of Culture		Unit of Lesson	
			Textbook	Syllabus
1	Individuals and collective characteristic of culture.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Goal of life</li> <li>2. The important space and privacy (in home, in the office)</li> <li>3. Pattern of</li> </ol>	Unit 1	Meeting 3

		communication. 4. Business tradition and competitive		
2	Low and high context of culture	1. Pattern of communication (tend to be implicit and emphasizes indirect. 2. Pattern of family and friend relations	Unit 2	Meeting 4
3	The concept of time	1. Linear 2. Flexible 3. Cycle	Unit 3	Meeting 9 – 10
4	Non-Verbal communication (writing form)	1. Eye contact 2. Facial expression 3. Hand gesture 4. Space 5. Silence and rhythm of language	Unit 7	Meeting 11 – 12
5	Power	1. Hierarchy 2. And democracy culture	Unit 4	Meeting 7
6	Negotiating	In negotiation part of discussion, most of the topic discussion discussed is how to negotiate or communicate verbally.	Unit 8	Meeting 13 – 14
7	Using Language	1. Pattern of communication (choice of word, intonation in speaking, grammar etc) 2. Directness and immediacy	Unit 7	Meeting 6

Therefore, there will be comparison of the data found based on the syllabus and textbook with what have been stated in related literature in chapter 2. Thus, here is the table that shows the comparison between what have been stated in based on related literature in chapter 2 and what have been found based on the syllabus and the textbook.

**Table 4.2 Comparison between what have been stated in chapter 2 and what have been found.**

No	Aspects of Culture		Unit of Lesson	
			Syllabus	Textbook
1	Things and Products Owned	Food	-	-
		Transportation	-	-
		Clothes Tradition	-	-
		Art	-	-
2	Attitude and Habits	Institution System		1,2,3,
		Family life	-	Unit 4
		Meeting people (socializing)		Unit 1, 2,3,
		Goal of life	-	Unit 1
		Men and women treatment	-	Unit 4
		Time and space		Unit 3
		Table manner	-	-
		Work custom		Unit 1-8
		Leisure activity	-	-
		Ways of humor	-	-
3	Verbal and non-verbal communication	Word Choice	-	Unit 6
		Intonation	-	Unit 6
		Hands gesture	-	Unit 7
		Eyes contact	-	Unit 7
		Facial expression	-	Unit 7
		Silence	-	Unit 7
		Intonation	-	Unit 7
Touching	-	Unit 7		

In short, from the data in two tables above (table 4.1 and 4.2), found that these are the aspects of culture taught and have not been taught in Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) class

**Table 4.3 Aspects of culture taught and not taught in the classroom of Cross Cultural Understanding**

ASPECTS OF CULTURE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT	ASPECTS OF CULTURE HAVE NOT BEEN TAUGHT
Attitude and Habits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institution System</li> <li>• Family life</li> <li>• Meeting people (socializing)</li> <li>• Goal of life</li> <li>• Work custom</li> <li>• Men and women treatment</li> <li>• Ways of humor</li> </ul>	Things or Products Owned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Clothes Tradition</li> <li>• Art</li> </ul>
Verbal Communication	
Non-Verbal Language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands gesture</li> <li>• Eyes contact</li> <li>• Facial expression</li> <li>• Silence</li> <li>• Touching</li> </ul>	Attitude and Habits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table manner</li> <li>• Leisure activity</li> </ul>

Moreover, after getting what have been taught, here are the students' perception toward aspects of culture taught and not taught in Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) class.

**Table 4.4 Students' perception toward cultural aspect taught in Cross Cultural Understanding Class**

NO	Aspects of Culture		Students' response					
			Not important		Moderately important		Very important	
			F	%	F	%	f	%
1	Individuals and	1. Goal of life	3	20.00 %	8	53.33 %	4	26.6%

	collective characteristic of culture	2. The important space and privacy (in home, in the office)	0	0.00 %	10	66.67 %	5	33.33%
		3. Pattern of communication.	0	0.00 %	6	40.00 %	9	60.00%
		4. Business tradition and competitive	3	20.00 %	10	66.67 %	2	13.33%
2	Low and high context of culture	1. Pattern of communication (tend to be implicit and emphasizes indirect.	0	0.00 %	7	46.67 %	8	53.33%
		2. Pattern of family and friend relationship	3	20.00 %	6	40.00 %	6	40.00%
3	The concept of time	Where in this part, there are three main concepts of time which are linear, flexible, and cycle.	0	0.00 %	10	66.67 %	5	33.33%
4	Verbal communication (writing form)	1. Eye contact	0	0.00 %	7	46.67 %	8	53.33%
		2. Facial expression	0	0.00 %	4	46.67 %	11	53.33%
		3. Hand gesture	1	6.67 %	6	46.67 %	8	46.67%
		4. Space	1	6.67 %	6	46.67 %	8	53.33%
5	Power (hierarchy and	1. Hierarchy 2. And democrac	3	20.00 %	5	33.3%	7	46.67%

	democracy culture)	y culture						
6	Negotiating		0	0.00 %	4	26.67 %	11	73.33%
7	Using Language	1. Pattern of communication (choice of word, intonation in speaking, grammar etc)	0	0.00 %	7	26.67 %	8	53.33%
		2. Directness and immediacy	0	0.00 %	7	26.67 %	8	53.33%

**Table 4.5 Students' Perception Cultural Aspects Not Taught Related to things and product**

NO	Aspects of Culture Not Taught (Related to Things and Products)	Not important		Moderately important		Very important	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Transportation	4	26.67%	8	53.33%	3	20.00%
2	Clothes	5	33.33%	9	60.00%	1	6.67%
3	Food	5	33.33%	7	46.67%	3	20.00%
5	Art	10	66.67%	4	26.67%	1	6.67%

**Table 4.6 Students' Perceptions Toward Cultural aspects Not Taught related to attitudes and habits.**

NO	Aspects of Culture Not Taught (related to attitude and habits)	Not important		Moderately important		Very important	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Table manner?	2	13.33%	9	60.00%	4	26.67%
2	Leisure activity	8	53.33%	5	33.33%	2	13.33%

## V. CONCLUSION

From the result and finding that have been explained, we may conclude that

1. Aspects of culture should be taught in Cross Cultural understanding (CCU) class are:
  - a. Aspects of culture attitude and habits which I included:
    - a) Institution system, b) Family life, c) Meeting People, d) Goal of life, and d) Work custom
  - b. Aspects of Culture Things and Product
    - a) Food b) Transportation c) Clothes
  - c. Aspects of Culture Related to Language
    - a) Verbal communication such as word choice, intonation in speaking and non-verbal communication such as hand gesture, facial expression, eyes contact

Moreover, students' perception toward the aspects of culture that have been taught and have not been taught is positive proven by all of the percentage of students' perception is in important and very important. Meanwhile, students' perception toward the aspects of culture which have not been taught is some of them considered to be important and some considered to be very important. In the aspects of culture related to products or thing (transportation, food, and clothes considered to be important), while (art are considered to be not important). Furthermore, in the aspects of culture related to attitude and habits, men and women treatment and table manner considered being important while leisure activity and humor considered being not important.